5-1998

In Union is Strength Mormon Women and Cooperation, 1867-1900

Kathleen C. Haggard
Utah State University

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

Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation
Haggard, Kathleen C., "In Union is Strength Mormon Women and Cooperation, 1867-1900" (1998). All Graduate Plan B and other Reports. 738.
https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports/738
"IN UNION IS STRENGTH":

MORMON WOMEN AND COOPERATION, 1867-1900

by

Kathleen C. Haggard

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

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

History

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
1998
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Anne Butler, for never giving up on me. She not only encouraged me, but helped me believe that this paper could and would be written. Thanks to all the many librarians and archival assistants who helped me with my research, and to Melissa and Tige, who would not let me quit. I am particularly grateful to my parents, Wayne and Adele Creager, and other family members for their moral and financial support which made it possible for me to complete this program. Finally, I express my love and gratitude to my husband John, and our children, Lindsay and Mark, for standing by me when it meant that I was not around nearly as much as they would have liked, and recognizing that, in the end, the late nights and excessive typing would really be worth it.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** .............................................................. ii

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** .................................................................. iii

**ABSTRACT** .............................................................................. iv

Sections

- **INTRODUCTION** ................................................................. 1
- **COOPERATIVE STORES** ..................................................... 10
- **SILK INDUSTRY** ................................................................. 27
- **GRAIN STORAGE** ............................................................... 51
- **CONCLUSION** ...................................................................... 65

**REFERENCES** .......................................................................... 70
ABSTRACT

"IN UNION IS STRENGTH": MORMON WOMEN AND COOPERATION, 1867-1900

by

KATHLEEN C. HAGGARD, MASTER OF SCIENCE
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY, 1998

Major Professor: Dr. Anne M. Butler
Department: History

In 1847, the Mormons entered the Great Basin and under the direction of Brigham Young, began an era of cooperation. The cooperative efforts of the Mormons extended to all aspects of their economic life and was designed to bring about a self-sufficient community. This paper examines three geographic areas in Utah and, using a comparative framework, studies the cooperative efforts of Mormon women from these regions with regards to three business initiatives: cooperative stores, sericulture (silk culture), and grain storage. Within this context, the economic impact of Mormon women on their communities, through the church's female organization, the relief society, is analyzed and discussed, demonstrating the significant contribution these women had on Mormon economic endeavors and their own lives. (72 pages)
On December 23, 1866, President Brigham Young spoke to a congregation of Latter-day Saints assembled in the Salt Lake City tabernacle. He focused his remarks on how the Saints should interact with "gentile" merchants. Young perceived many of these tradesmen to be a serious threat to the burgeoning Mormon communities, claiming that they wanted the "Mormons to build cities for them to possess. This we shall do no more," he announced. "If we build cities, we mean to possess them." To achieve this end, President Young instructed his people to be one in "temporal and financial interests." "If we are [one] . . . then are we a powerful and influential people. . . . To be one in all things . . . will prepare every person for a life of usefulness."¹ Throughout the next decade, Young returned often to his theme of usefulness. That theme was the foundation of the era of cooperation that followed.

For women, this mandate took several forms. With male labor in short supply, women roofed their homes, plowed fields, or pitched and loaded hay. At all times, they performed their traditional domestic labors of caring for the home and garden. Within the Mormon community,

¹G. D. Watt, "Remarks by President Brigham Young," Salt Lake Daily Telegraph, 6 January 1867.
women also participated in various forms of home industry. This third factor represented an expanded economic role, somewhat different than Mormons had previously experienced in their earlier community of Nauvoo, Illinois. In short, under the direction of the church's male hierarchy, Utah Mormon women broadened the sphere of their economic influence.

The LDS church agency through which Mormon women collectively defined their economic role proved to be the relief society. Established in 1842, as a female auxiliary group, the relief society dissolved after the death of Joseph Smith in 1844, when Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, resigned as president. Years of disorganization followed. Even without a formal church organization after 1847, women responded favorably to the call from religious leaders to be producers who contributed to the self-sufficiency of the community.

From time to time, women attempted to reorganize the relief society in local areas, but no one undertook a systematic endeavor. In October, 1867, Brigham Young, acting on his statements of 1866, appointed Eliza R. Snow general president of all female relief societies. He gave Snow the primary responsibility of assisting the bishops in organizing local societies in every ward and branch within the territory. She recalled that "it was quite a mission, and I took much pleasure in its performance. I felt quite honored and much at home in my associations with the Bishops, and they appreciated my assistance."  

---


In 1868, the Deseret Weekly News outlined the duties of relief society women as described by church leaders. The women were instructed to visit and give assistance to the needy and the sick. In addition to this responsibility, they were advised to provide employment for those with the "strength to labor." As a result, able women would cease to be idle, they would earn needed funds, and they would obtain satisfaction from using "the fruits of their own labors." According to the historian Leonard Arrington, the recommended job opportunities were to be found in the "silk culture, the manufacture of hats, basket making, broom making, and sewing." These industries "could be carried on in the home and would be at once remunerative to the individual and beneficial to the commonwealth."

The organization of the women into relief societies and female cooperatives was partially dependent on the development of the settlements where the women lived. For example, the society in Ogden, Utah, was one of the first and better organized societies. It had the advantage of a close proximity to Salt Lake City and the leaders of the church. Questions and concerns could more immediately be addressed, whereas societies located on the fringes of the territory,

---

3Deseret News Weekly, April 22, 1868. It could be asked, who had time to be idle? It was an integral part of Brigham Young's plan that Mormon women, as well as Mormon men, grow as individuals by helping to build the Kingdom of God. This meant going beyond the daily tasks required by home and family, and devoting time and energy to the cooperative endeavors advocated by Young. In 1869, Young stated: "The females are capable of doing immense good if they will, but if you sit down and say 'husband, or father, do it for me' or 'brother, do it for me, for I am not going to do it' when life is through you will weep and wail, for you will be judged according to your works, and having done nothing you will receive nothing." Brigham Young Sermon, 5 August 1869, in Deseret News Weekly, 11 August 1869, quoted in Jill Mulvay Derr in "Woman's Place in Brigham Young's World," BYU Studies 18 (Spring 1978): 391.

such as St. George, Utah, had to rely almost solely on the mail for communication with church headquarters.

Another factor that may have inhibited the initial growth of the relief societies was the ignorance of local leaders as to the manner in which the societies should be organized and managed. Even as late as 1873, Eliza Snow found that many of the brethren of the southern wards and branches were in as much need of further instruction as the sisters. Eliza, herself, was slow to give the sisters needed instruction. Although President Young plainly told her shortly after the reorganization "to instruct the sisters," Snow did not immediately respond. She delayed, because to do so involved "public meetings and public speaking,"duties she did not yet feel capable of performing. However, by 1873, a uniformity began to emerge among all the societies in the manner of organization and responsibilities regardless of location.

In August and again in October of 1873, Eliza Snow addressed the sisters of Ogden, Utah, expressing her views on the mission of the newly reorganized auxiliary. She stated that every settlement and ward should establish a relief society. She noted that women had as much work to do as the brethren in establishing the Kingdom of God, the stated goal of the LDS


8Snow, *Personal Writings*, 35. On March 19, 1874, Eliza R. Snow addressed the Ogden sisters about speaking in their meetings. She told them not to "be discouraged by using the gift of speech, you will get so you can speak and edify." She then spoke of some women who were too afraid to even stand in the meeting and vote another member in, but they wanted to "become blessings in the Kingdom of God." Now, replied Snow, some of them "can speak as well as the brethren." Weber Stake, Ogden City Female Relief Society Minutes, 19 March 1874, Historical Department Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Perhaps it can be assumed that one reason Snow felt it was important to discuss public speaking with the women was because she herself had difficulty with it when first called to lead the relief society.
church. "It will not do to say that we have so much to do that we cannot do any more, because the works and duties for women in Zion are constantly increasing. No where on the earth has woman so broad a sphere of labor and duty, of responsibility and action, as in Utah."9 Through the relief society, sisters would be bound together. They would be "instruct[ed], elevate[d] and refine[d]" until they were perfected. Not only were the sisters encouraged to become good "financiers," they were told that they were "born to be useful" and unified.10

The relief society organization had a significant impact on Mormon women's attitudes towards work and the role of women in the "building of Zion;" many of the subsequent economic endeavors have received scholarly attention. However, Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, and other scholars indicated that the existing studies often gave the impression that all Mormon women and all relief societies participated equally in the programs sent down from church headquarters. This is far from the case, since each ward relief society determined the specific course of action it would follow. As Madsen stated, no two relief societies "functioned exactly alike." They devised their own "meeting schedule, course of study, and economic and welfare projects that fit the needs and resources of its own particular community."11 In fact, it appears the women of the relief societies enjoyed a great deal of autonomy within their organizations.

9"An Address," Woman's Exponent 2 (15 September 1873), 62.

10Weber Stake, Ogden City Female Relief Society Minutes, 30 October 1873, Historical Department Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as LDS Archives.

11Carol Cornwall Madsen, "A Mormon Woman in Victorian America" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1985), 188; see also, Derr, Women of Covenant, 98.
The differences and similarities of the relief societies of Ogden, Manti, and St. George, Utah, form the focus of the remainder of this paper. They provide representation of the southern, central, and northern communities located in Utah. Each society owned and operated its own cooperative store, participated in the silk industry (sericulture), and stored grain. This paper examines the organizational chain of command and the subsequent gender tensions, considering the ultimate goal of each cooperative endeavor -- self-sufficiency.

Organized on December 16, 1867, the Ogden group was one of the earlier societies. It remained intact until 1878, when its president, Jane S. Richards, became president of the Weber stake, and the society was divided into four groups. It enjoyed a close proximity to the leadership of the church located in Salt Lake City. Visits from the general presiding leadership occurred regularly and in many cases were expected. Ogden provided an urban setting that apparently enabled women an element of leisure from their home duties. This is manifest by the frequency of their meetings (they began meeting bi-monthly, then in 1877, following a smallpox epidemic, the sisters decided to meet weekly), the length and content of their minutes, the number of members in the society, and the number in attendance at meetings. In addition, the urban location, with its diversified economic opportunities, may have given women more expendable income to use for fund raising than rural women in Southern Utah who donated crops and home-made articles rather than cash.

12 Church leadership encouraged all Mormon women to become members of their local relief society. To become a member, a woman need only attend a meeting and express her desire to join the society. The current members would take a vote, which was always unanimous, and her name would be added to the society's records. Membership, however, did not guarantee a woman's attendance at meetings. In fact, each of the three societies not only made efforts to increase their membership, but improve attendance to meetings as well.
The St. George relief society was organized almost a year later than Ogden's, on August 24, 1868 with a membership of twenty-five. By October, it had a membership of eighty-eight. While the relief society of Ogden initially represented one ward or branch, the society of St. George comprised the women of four wards, or geographical areas. The leadership of the relief society was centralized, until 1877, when the society was separated into four groups complying with ward boundaries. At its inception, the St. George society held monthly meetings. A few months following its organization, the women wrote a letter to church headquarters requesting a set of rules or regulations to use in instructing the society. They stated, "we do not clearly understand the separate duties of each office and desire explicit rules to guide us." Ultimately, they wished to be "equal and side by side" with their sister societies in the north.

Because of the distance and relative isolation of St. George from the center of "Mormondom," the society was unable to receive the degree of personal instruction from general leadership so readily available to the Ogden society. Nevertheless, President Snow, Brigham Young, and other leaders occasionally made trips south, visiting some of the other southern relief

13 St. George Stake, St. George Female Relief Society Minutes, 24 August 1868 - October 1868, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

14 Although relief society minutes do not specify why only one society was organized for the four wards, two factors should be considered. First, the reorganization of the relief society was fairly recent and Eliza R. Snow and her counselors were still learning their duties and had yet to develop a format for instructing the local leaders of new societies. Second, the people who lived in St. George faced the challenges of extreme heat, long distances to travel, and frontier conditions. A centralized relief society allowed the sisters to become familiar with the new church auxiliary before greater demands were placed upon the women for leadership. The presidency of each relief society consisted of a president, two counselors, and a secretary. Throughout the minutes, women leaders often express their feelings of inadequacy.

15 St. George Relief Society Minutes, 28 November 1868.
societies along the way. St. George received the same counsel from Snow and her presidency as every other relief society: subscribe to the Woman's Exponent, a journal published for Mormon women by Mormon women, and glean as much information about the relief society organization as possible. Although the Woman's Exponent was never officially acknowledged by the Mormon church, throughout its forty-two years of publication it "served as a facilitator for the work of the woman's Relief Society."17

Even after their 1877 separation into four separate societies, the sisters continued to meet as one group at a monthly meeting held in the St. George tabernacle, a building used for general church meetings comprised of all four wards. The presidencies of all four relief societies took turns conducting the meetings and taking minutes. The four societies also met separately, usually bi-monthly, to conduct ward business and tend to the economic endeavors each had chosen to pursue. The general meeting contained the bulk of information disseminated to the women, while the individual gatherings were devoted primarily to work.18

Still, the women of St. George faced specific challenges. Minutes of summer meetings blamed poor attendance on the severity of the heat. They reported postponing meetings until cooler temperatures arrived. Due to frontier conditions, daily work and activities were often


17Carol Cornwall Madsen, "'Remember the Women of Zion:' A Study of the Editorial Content of the Woman's Exponent A Mormon Woman's Journal" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1977), 3.

18St. George Stake Relief Society, Minutes, 1877; St. George Stake, St. George First Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1877-1900; St. George Stake, St. George Second Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1877-1900, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
more demanding and attendance at meetings was quite sporadic for many of the members, especially the elderly and those with small children.\(^\text{19}\) However, the leaders of the societies did not let this detract from their efforts to comply with the mandates sent to them from church headquarters, and the St. George sisters engaged themselves devoutly in several enterprises.

The Manti relief society was organized a few years after the societies of Ogden and St. George. Early records consist of account books documenting donations received and disbursements. In 1882, the relief society was divided into Manti north and Manti south, and more detailed notes became available for the following years. From 1882 until 1884, much like those of St George, the Manti societies continued to meet together. Even after their total separation in 1884, the societies kept enterprises such as their cooperative store, in the hands of both societies.

Although located several miles south of Salt Lake City, the women of Manti did not seem to experience some of the severe physical conditions of their counterparts in St. George. Neither did they receive the frequent visits of church leaders so prevalent in Ogden. In some respects, Manti was a blend of the Ogden and St. George societies.

As communities developed and their economies changed, so did the role and participation of Mormon women and the relief society. Brigham Young, as early as 1847, directed that every member of the growing communities work together to ensure success through usefulness and self-sufficiency. As President Young campaigned for exclusive Mormon control of the Great Basin economy, he championed two concepts: the cooperative store and home industry. Each of

\(^{19}\) "Relief Society Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 6 (1 April 1878): 167.
these endeavors took a prominent role in the Mormon community with women as principal players. The relief societies of Ogden, Manti, and St. George all took part in the cooperative movement by owning and running their own stores. Each of the three cooperative stores co-existed with male-run stores. Nevertheless, the nature of the female store varied from those directed exclusively by men.

**COOPERATIVE STORES**

In the first few years of Mormon settlement in the Great Basin, non-Mormon or gentile merchants had a monopoly on trade, especially eastern goods. This was due primarily to Brigham Young’s distrust and abhorrence of all traders. He looked upon the occupation as destructive to community industry and cooperation. He believed that individuals were stripped of their economic independence when forced to pay the outrageous prices charged by merchants. This in turn contributed to the indebtedness of the community. While many Mormon men stayed out of trade for fear of being charged with profiteering, church leaders took further action by counseling all members to devote more time to developing industries that would replace eastern commodities. In this way, they hoped to keep Mormon money in Mormon hands, as well as provide employment opportunities for the influx of European immigrants pouring into the territory during the 1850s.20

By 1868, church leaders were preparing to confront the challenge of the “gentile” merchants. At the October general conference, Young laid the groundwork for an extensive

---

organization of cooperative stores owned and operated exclusively by Mormons. During this same year, Eliza R. Snow "proclaimed that the time would come when the Female Relief Societies in Utah would establish stores, to sell things that they would manufacture."22

In 1869, a wholesale cooperative called the Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ZCMI) was established. This parent institution provided goods at wholesale prices to other cooperatives located throughout the territory. It was the objective of church leaders that every ward and branch have its own cooperative store to replace other "gentile" mercantile establishments. Six weeks following the opening of ZCMI, eighty-one cooperative stores were in operation throughout the territory, some of them owned and managed by the relief society women.23

The opening and operation of female cooperative stores did not progress without some resistance from local male leadership. On February 18, 1869, bishops from the Salt Lake area asked President Young "whether the relief societies were intended to control and carry on the cooperative stores of each ward, or simply to aid and assist in these stores." President Young responded that he had given the charge of opening cooperative stores in the wards to the brethren, "and as they did not do it, he turned around and asked the sisters knowing that they


would do it." Upon further discussion, it was determined that the stores would be under the direction of the first presidency of the church, but would be managed by the women of the relief society.24

Young encouraged women to be active in trade. In his opinion, it was disgusting "to see a big, fat, lubberly fellow handing out calicoes and measuring ribbon; I would rather see the ladies do it... why not teach more of them to keep books and sell goods and let them do this business." According to Susa Young Gates, this counsel "was taken literally and liberally by the women of the Church."25

On April 1 1876, J. E. Johnson urged the women of local societies to become involved in female cooperative stores.26 By October 1876, a general female cooperative was organized in Salt Lake City under the direction of Eliza R. Snow. The store was located in the Old

24Presiding Bishopric, Minutes of Bishops Meetings 1851-1884, February 18, 1869, LDS Archives; quoted in Derr, Women of Covenant, 96. Dean L. May in his article "Mormon Cooperatives in Paris, Idaho, 1869-1896," stated that during the late 1860s and early 1870s, feeble attempts were made by priesthood leaders to establish a cooperative store in their community. None of the attempts met with success. The women of the community decided to take the matter in hand, and on April 11, 1874, the President Julia Parks Lindsay proposed to the sisters of her society that they organize a "female cooperative store' as soon as possible." Within a week they had sold several shares. However, on April 16, the male leaders met with the sisters and stated that the general feeling was that a general cooperative be established rather than a female co-op. The sisters conceded to turn the cooperative efforts over to the men. This time the store was successfully established, but it took the efforts of the women of Paris, Idaho, to push the men of their community into "cooperative" action. "Mormon Cooperatives in Paris, Idaho, 1869-1896," Idaho Yesterdays 19 (Summer 1975): 22-25.


Constitution building across from ZCMI and operated by an association of relief society women.27

Due to the lack of capital, the association sold all goods on commission. Prior to the store's opening, a notice was sent out informing relief society women that the cooperative would accept "home made useful and ornamental articles of all kinds."28 These women also expressed confidence that they would "not only have the support of all branches of the Relief Society throughout the valleys of the mountains, but also of our brethren and all others who feel an interest in the future welfare and prosperity of Utah."29 It was President Young's desire that those working in the store receive no wages. Therefore, Eliza Snow and other volunteers managed the store. President Elizabeth Weiler of Salt Lake City's Third Ward Relief Society "applauded her members for joining other sisters" who went to the Woman's Store and "spent their time for nothing."30

27 Susa Amelia Young Gates, "Drafts of History of Women," [microfilm, Susa Amelia Young Gates Collection, 1852-1951], n.p., LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Old Constitution building became the logical choice as a location for the "Women's Cooperative Mercantile and Manufacturing Institution" also known as the "Woman's Commission Store," as it had been the location of the Women's Centennial Territorial Exhibit, which opened on July 4, 1876, and concluded two months later. The fair had been such a financial success, that Brigham Young requested that the exhibit be turned into a commission store for the primary purpose of selling homemade goods. According to Jill Derr and others, "Soon even more diversified stock filled the shelves, ads appeared in local newspapers, and President Young was holding up the enterprise as an example 'to the sterner sex.'" Derr, Women of Covenant, 84-85.


30 Salt Lake Stake, Salt Lake City Third Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1868-1884, 4 January 1877, LDS Archives; quoted in Derr, Women of Covenant, 454, footnote 9.
After the store had been in operation for six months, an article appeared in the *Exponent*, reminding the Mormon women that the success of the commission house relied on their patronage.

We sincerely hope the presidents and officers of Relief Societies will bear in mind that this institution represents their interests; and do whatever is in their power to sustain it... Complaints have been made in the past, that there was no place where homemade work could be offered for sale, and fairly represented; now let the sisters be earnest in sustaining a place where all have equal opportunity to dispose of such articles.  

According to Susa Young Gates, this store "prospered and grew gradually into a considerable business. . . . It became a nucleus for manufactured articles especially designed for women's and children's wear. As the population increased throughout the territory and in Salt Lake City" competition became very active. The industrial revolution introduced technologies which bespoke the eventual demise of home industry. Knitting needles were replaced by machinery, and home-made lace and clothing were crowded out by machinery-made lace and

31 *Woman's Exponent* 5 (15 April 1877): 173.

32 Gates, "History of Women," n.p. Gates also indicated that two specific innovations in the 1890s enabled the store to remain open for so long. One was the introduction of the sale of burial clothes in 1896 which became very popular with the relief societies since they found it more convenient to purchase the clothes instead of spending so much time and labor making them. The second innovation occurred in 1897 when Maria Francis and her daughter, Mary F. Kelly, took over management of the commission house. Gates claimed that the store was in considerable debt, brought about by the period of the "boom" (assumed to mean the increased importation and access to eastern products due to railroad transportation). During the celebration in July of the Pioneer Jubilee, Francis and Kelly shelved all the "millinery and other merchandise and turned the store into a restaurant." They were so busy during the four-day celebration, that at times they were "obliged to close the doors to keep the hungry crowds out while others were being served." They were able to clear the store of all debt, and remained in charge until 1902. Ibid.
ready-to-wear clothing imported from the East. Nevertheless, through the ingenuity and perseverance of relief society volunteers the store remained in operation for thirty-five years. Not only did this store's early success prompt the opening of other female-operated cooperatives throughout the territory, but the example set by Eliza Snow encouraged local relief society leaders to involve themselves in the ownership and operation of cooperative stores as well.

The Ogden society began its efforts towards establishing a female cooperative store as early as April 1, 1869. The members discussed "their ideas and feelings in regards to the best interests of the Society, home manufacture, etc." The general consensus of the women was to invest the society's money, obtained through donations, "in some business that would bring a return."33 Two weeks later the sisters continued their discussion but decided to ask the advice of their stake president and bishop before making any specific decisions.34 On May 6, Bishop Chauncy W. West35, Brother Franklin D. Richards and Brother John Taylor met with the women. Brother Taylor "thought a properly organized Co-operative Store would be beneficial to this Society."36 A committee was appointed to attend to the details.

On May 10, the Ogden group received the endorsement of Eliza R. Snow. She said she "thought a Co-operative Store was necessary so that the Sisters could set their own fashions."37

33 Ogden Relief Society, 1 April 1869.
34 Ibid., 14 April 1869.
36 Ogden Relief Society, 6 May 1869.
37 Ibid., 10 May 1869.
However, the women encountered a major obstacle when Sister Lamont reported at the end of May that she had been unable to secure a piece of land due to the "high rents."\(^{38}\) Determined not to be discouraged, the society concluded its meeting with a selection of officers for the "co-operative department" and the appointment of a committee to "collect means for the House."\(^{39}\)

Two primary factors enabled the women to succeed in their efforts. One was the support morally and financially of their principal priesthood leader, Bishop West. He continually praised the women for their efforts and encouraged them through challenging times. When they were unable to obtain a piece of ground, he stepped in and purchased one for the society. He then placed the remaining responsibility of building their "house" on the members of the relief society, stating that he knew they could raise the two thousand dollars it would cost to complete the store.\(^{40}\)

Second, the success of the society resulted from the determination and perseverance of the women themselves. Throughout the ensuing months, the group endeavored to collect funds while the building was constructed. They solicited donations, sold shares, and held a picnic as a fund-raiser. The male leadership of their ward told the society that the store would "speak well of the industry of the Sisters of Ogden Society."\(^{41}\) By July 21, 1869, President Farr advised the

\(^{38}\)Where no first name is available for the women, the title "Sister" or "Mrs." will be used. For the men, their church title, such as president, or the title "Brother" will take the place of the omitted first name.

\(^{39}\)Ogden Relief Society, 24 May 1869.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., 10 June 1869.

\(^{41}\)Ibid., 9 July 1869.
women to "have plenty of straw braid on hand by the time the store was finished." In August, Brother Richards praised them for their fund-raising efforts and said he would help collect money so that the work would not stop because of lack of funds.

Not everyone in the community was supportive of the women's efforts, however. On October 20, Sister Bingham stood in meeting and proclaimed that even though "some people thought the Sisters would not be able to pay for the House," she felt they could do it, provided they remained united. Sister Canfield commented on Bingham's remarks and added that "unity was the great secret by which much could be accomplished," and she "did not intend to get discouraged." The relief society president, Mary West, concluded the meeting by telling her members they had come too far to think a failing now. She was correct. On November 17, 1869, President Brigham Young attended the dedication of the Ogden City Female Relief Society Millinery Establishment.

The "ladies" cooperative store remained linked solely with the Ogden society until 1872, when it was decided that each relief society in Weber county should own shares. Consequently, it became the property of several societies which had claim to its profits and dividends and a voice in its operation. The problems in this system materialized quickly. In 1875, the Ogden relief society found that it had lost total control of the sale of hats from its straw business.

42 Ibid., 21 July 1869.
43 Ibid., August 1869.
44 Ibid., 20 October 1869.
45 Ibid., 16 December 1873.
46 Ibid., 11 November 1875.
By July 22, 1875, the society considered the possibility of purchasing or leasing a piece of land to devote entirely to the manufacture and sale of straw work. The women discussed their options: fix up the place where Adelaide Smith was currently making straw hats, or move to a better location and start over. The debate continued for several months and seemed to be a source of contention within the society. In November, 1875, President Jane Richards remarked, "I believe every sister desires to do right but one thinks one way is right and another, another way...I wish all could be [united] and satisfy every one."47

Stake President Franklin Richards then counseled the women to consider the facts carefully. Some wished the straw braid to remain in the current store, although it appeared the society was not being compensated for all its work. Richards told the women that although their straw business was a duty, they should receive adequate compensation for their work. Others favored the building of a new store that would be devoted solely to straw work. The stake president counseled the society not to "fret or let any passions rise. You will profit by it, your minds will enlarge on the business sphere and you will learn."48

On November 20, the group again met to transact important business. In deciding about the store, the women also considered whether they wanted to retain their shares in the current cooperative, sell out, or buy the stock of the other societies. Apparently they owned two-thirds of the cooperative and there was some question as to whether they could buy out the other societies. If they continued the current status-- keeping their shares and straw business in the

47Ibid., 11 November 1875.
48Ibid.
current store--President Franklin Richards advised them that each business should have its own officers. The debate continued, but the women did not make a decision. A committee was appointed to review the matter, and the members of the society voted to uphold the decision of the committee.49

By February 1876, there was some doubt as to whether the straw business should or could continue. It seemed that the contention evident in the society during the past year had taken a toll on Jane Richards' enthusiasm. She told the women they did not have to wear a straw bonnet to remain in good standing within the society, and asked the sisters to vote. Only a majority of the women rose in favor of the straw business, unlike the unanimous vote often received in the past.

Several women spoke in favor of the straw business and of building a "place of our own." President Richards reminded the group that although a majority voted in favor of the business, it was "not the business of one, but of all. If the sisters had felt as I do, we would have had a house all done."50 Although Richards appeared to reprimand those opposed to a new store, she insisted that she would not force her opinions upon them. She then asked for a vote about the store. "The vote was fully sustained" to press forward.51

It may be that some of the women were opposed to a new store due to the monetary commitment involved. The proposed building consisted of three rooms: "one for a sales room,

---

49Ibid., 20 November 1875.

50Ibid., 3 February 1876.

51Ibid.
one for sewing in, and one for pressing." Builders estimated the cost at $900.00. However, the relief society had no obligation to pay anything until completion of the building.\textsuperscript{52}

This decision had weighed heavily on Jane Richards' mind, as seen by her remark: "I am so glad to get rid of business that it is a pleasure for me to get up and tell it to you and to get it off of my mind."\textsuperscript{53} The matter, however, was far from resolved. Although a consensus had been reached concerning the store building, the society had yet to obtain a lot. The membership devoted the following meeting to choosing the ideal location for its new business endeavor.

Eventually the members of the Ogden society, relying on the advice of their male leaders, chose to lease a piece of land from James Stevens on a seven-year lease, and paid $8.00 per month. At the end of seven years, the lease could be renewed or Stevens would buy the building. Because the society was not legally allowed to hold the lease, three of the male church members, Lester J. Herrick, Walter Thompson, and Robert McQuarrie, signed the lease on its behalf.\textsuperscript{54}

The "Ladies' Straw Store" was completed in March 1876 and remained in business until 1880, when it was sold to Elizabeth Brewer and her daughter.\textsuperscript{55} During the fiscal year of 1875 to 1876, the Ogden women collected $4,976.05 through donations, sale of rag carpets and quilts, and "by giving parties and other social entertainments." They had disbursed these funds towards building the county cooperative, the silk culture, building and furnishing the straw store, and the

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 17 February 1876.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 30 March 1876; Hunter, \textit{Beneath Ben Lomond}, 406.
cultivation of flax.\textsuperscript{56} The other cooperative store, held jointly by the societies of Weber county, continued to operate until 1882, when it also was sold to a private operator marking the conclusion of this cooperative endeavor.\textsuperscript{57}

Like the women of Ogden, relief society members in St. George organized in the fall of 1868, and by June 1869, they had defined their role in cooperative institutions. As "co-operators" with the men, the women of "Dixie" (southern Utah) were instructed to obtain a share in the "co-operation." In addition, Joseph Birch advised them to organize a bazaar to sell homemade articles, offering to give $10.00 when they were ready. He stated, "I desire to see you continue to progress in prosperity."\textsuperscript{58} While a bazaar was not a female store, it did represent the interest the priesthood leadership took in ensuring the women had a place to sell their articles produced at home and the importance placed on the society's ability to raise money for future economic endeavors.

At this same meeting, Bishop Henry Eyring told the sisters that relief societies were organized along with home manufacture to influence the saints to be more industrious and useful. Not only did these plans provide the opportunity of a new female vocation, the women had the "power to form fashions, neat, durable and tasteful. . . . We must economize," Eyring continued, and "encourage home manufacture" by importing "less even if home manufacture costs more."\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56}Ogden City Relief Society, n.d.
\textsuperscript{57}Arrington, "Economic Role," 151.
\textsuperscript{58}St. George Relief Society, 8 June 1869.
\textsuperscript{59}Ibid.
During 1869, the women devoted most of their meetings to the support of homemade items. They knitted, braided straw, cut patchwork, and quilted. By 1870, the records indicated that although no formal "ladies cooperative" had been organized, the women had begun to use the relief society as a type of clearing house where goods could be traded. For example, 16 ½ pounds of molasses were received in payment for one pair of child's shoes valued at $3.00; 18 pounds of salt paid for in flour; 25 gallons of molasses for $25.00 in factory orders; and 9 pounds of peaches exchanged for 9 pounds of cotton.²⁰

Male leaders in St. George continued to counsel the women to support home industry by wearing homemade articles and to invest their funds in local cooperatives. In September of 1870, the women purchased one share in the St. George cooperative store, and in November, they invested money in the Rio Virgin Manufacturing Company.²¹ In its annual report for the year from September 1870 to September 1871, the society reported it owned $128.00 of stock in the Rio Virgin Manufacturing Company, and one share of stock in the cooperative store. These shares of stock, combined with factory orders and goods and manufactured articles gave the relief society a positive balance of $305.00, with an outstanding balance of $137.27 for goods sold yet to be collected.²² This annual report demonstrated how each society made, according to general organizational guidelines, an annual fiscal accounting to determine either its indebtedness, or profitability.

²⁰Ibid., 9 August 1870, 5 September 1871, and 14 November 1871.

²¹Ibid., 8 September and 29 November 1870.

²²Ibid., 5 September 1871.
The St. George society continued to increase its operating capital, and throughout 1871 to the end of 1873, it held work meetings where members knitted, sewed, and made quilts. Although evidence exists that the women eventually invested in a cooperative store of their own, exact details are unavailable. Records show that on June 7, 1877 the society completed its reorganization into four separate groups, and a vote was taken to equally divide all property and stock between each ward. There is, however, no record of the property and stock in question.63

After the separation of the society, the women continued to meet together at a general monthly meeting. As individual societies, they usually met twice a month. During these bi-monthly meetings, the societies operated independently of each other and pursued those industries specifically chosen by the women of each ward.

At the August 1st general meeting of that same year, it was asked if the members would sell artificial flowers in the women’s store.64 The record shows that the women were also engaged in braiding straw and making hats, which they probably sold in their own store. According to the historian, Leonard J. Arrington, St. George developed a successful store patterned after the "Women's Cooperative Mercantile and Manufacturing Institution" established in Salt Lake City in 1876 under the direction of Eliza R. Snow. The store in St. George, along with several others in the territory, continued to operate successfully until the turn of the century.

63St. George Stake Relief Society Minutes, 7 June, 1877, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
64Ibid., 1 August 1878.
In fact, "they were singled out for special praise by church officials because of the very real way in which they cut down importations and 'kept money in the territory.'" 65

While the societies of Ogden and St. George began their operation in the late 1860s, the Manti relief society was not organized until 1871. Two years after its inception, the society began investing some of its money into the Manti cooperative store. It received the majority of its operating capital from the donation and resale of eggs. By April 1876, the women had organized their own store. A report sent to the Woman's Exponent indicated that the Manti female cooperative store began with a capital of $200,000, which according to other sources should have read, $2,000. 66 After six months in operation, the store was "in a flourishing condition, notwithstanding hard times, opposition, and other adverse circumstances." What these adverse conditions were, the women did not say. Nevertheless, they were quite proud of their accomplishments. They boasted that at the end of the first six months, the society paid to all stockholder holding shares in the store a dividend of 34%, and the members continued to raise funds by selling more shares. 67

Nearly eighteen months after the store began, the Manti group sent another report to the Woman's Exponent describing its success. The women stated that the store had doubled the


66 "Relief Society Reports," Woman's Exponent 5 (1 December 1876): 98. This amount of $200,000 is a typographical error. According to the ledger book of the Manti Ladies Cooperative Institution, the actual cost of the store building for purchase and erection of buildings was $1,044.64. This a more reasonable figure since the cost of the store in Ogden was approximated at $2,000.00. "Ledger Book of the Manti Ladies Cooperative Institution," p. 309, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

67 Woman's Exponent 5 (1 December 1876): 98.
relief society's capital in the eighteen months of operation. They remarked, "this ought to speak well for the management and the interest the sisters have taken in it." The society was grateful for the support and confidence the general authorities of the church had given the members and their community. They reported that a "good feeling prevails, and a spirit of generous rivalry pervades all." The president of the society "has determined that the gentler sex shall not be behind in fulfilling the duties and meeting the responsibilities with which the times are pregnant." The Manti society was moving forward with great enthusiasm and anticipation of "a glorious future." 68

In 1882, the relief society was divided in two, but the store continued to be operated as a combined venture. The "ladies" store remained in operation until 1897, when the members determined it was no longer profitable to maintain. On December 6, 1897, at a meeting of the board of directors, the women reviewed an offer made by James Hoggan to buy the store for $1,062.62, 80 percent of the original cost of the property, valued at $1,328.28. Although the Manti Ladies Co-op claimed to have $2064.77 in capital stock, the offer was accepted and the money used to pay accruing debts. 69

Each of the cooperative stores operated by the three relief societies met with a measure of success. During the early years of operation, the stores not only provided the women with an income, but enabled them to develop a sense of pride in their personal achievements. Mormon women successfully fulfilled their role as entrepreneurs and made significant fiscal contributions


69"Ledger Book of the Manti Cooperative," 265-66 and 299.
to their society by supporting home industry with mercantile institutions. The stores provided a local clearing house for merchandise, thus encouraging home production. The profitability of each store had a direct impact on the supply and demand of goods, and thus affected the participation of Mormon women in home manufacture.

While female cooperatives generally housed homemade items, it can be seen from the Ogden society, that some stores were more specialized. The Ogden straw store met the specific needs of that society, and was representative of the individual nature of each cooperative mercantile association. The St. George society, on the other hand, in addition to operating a women’s store, invested money in other local cooperatives. This not only served the interests of the society’s members, but supported the St. George economy as well. Thus men, as well as women, benefitted from this endeavor.

In spite of their success, Mormon women faced several challenges as they stepped beyond the boundaries of home into the business world. Some people doomed the women to fail, others, including some members of the local priesthood leadership, felt that women should not be business operators. In 1877, President Young said the men had been "anxious in times past whether women would make wise use of means at their disposal." Young felt that the accurate accounting of funds presented at annual meetings demonstrated the women’s ability to be fiscally responsible and should dispel any doubts as to their capabilities.70

With the support of general church leadership, the encouragement of local relief society presidencies, perseverance and dedication of individual women, relief society members

70"Home Affairs," Woman's Exponent 6 (15 November 1877), 92.
embraced a new vocation, turning it into a relative success. The demise of each cooperative store was not the result of mismanagement, but rather the advancement of technology. The rapid advance of industrial technology not only precipitated the cooperative store's development, but also ensured that its success would be short-lived. This was also true of the silk culture, another form of cooperation pursued by Mormon women during the nineteenth century.

**SILK INDUSTRY**

While the local cooperative stores provided a central location for the sale and purchase of cooperatively produced goods and homemade items, it proved impossible for the Mormons to manufacture all their needs. They continued to import items like tea, coffee, sugar, hardware, leather goods, and a variety of silk, wool, and cotton fabrics which they were unable to produce for themselves. 71 According to the historian Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, eastern fabrics were the most sought after of all imports, because Mormon women associated gentility and refinement with the fashions worn by their eastern counterparts. 72

As such, the women were often the audience for several of Young's sermons on dress reform which began as early as 1852. Young stated:

> I have no hesitation in saying that our true interest is, and will be most wisely consulted in domestic manufacturing, to the exclusion of almost every article of imported goods. Our clothing, of every description... and many other articles, for which our merchants continually drain the country of money, might be manufactured just as well at home... Produce what you consume; draw from the native element, the necessaries of life; permit no vitiated taste to lead you into the

71 Leonard Arrington, *Building the City of God,* 79.

indulgence of expensive luxuries, which can only be obtained by involving yourself in debt; let home industry produce every article of home consumption.\textsuperscript{73}

Church leaders took further action by counseling all members to devote more time to developing industries that would replace eastern commodities.\textsuperscript{74} To assist in this effort, during the 1860s, Young asked Mormon missionaries serving in Europe to "send men who had knowledge of manufacturing to the new territory." Church members donated sufficient funds to purchase machinery in England and France, which enabled the number of manufacturing cooperatives to increase significantly.\textsuperscript{75} Many of these manufactures relied heavily on the work and leadership of women.

Young also specifically counseled the women to manufacture from straw or grass the materials needed for bonnets and hats. They were told to stop selling grain or going into debt to obtain imported goods. (It appeared that Young felt some of the women were spending money they could ill-afford on material and trimming for dresses, even to the extent that they sold the grain Young had advised his people to store.) In several communities the women organized themselves into "female home manufacturing societies," where they made hats, bonnets and other clothing.\textsuperscript{76} For the most part, however, imported fabrics continued to cost less than home

\textsuperscript{73}Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, January 5, 1852; quoted in Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, 113.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75}Joel Edwards Ricks, Forms and Methods of Early Mormon Settlement in Utah and the Surrounding Region, 1847-1877 (Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1964), 117.

\textsuperscript{76}Leonard Arrington, "Economic Role," 145-46.
manufactured cloth. While women continued to buy eastern cloth, many engaged in spinning and weaving in an attempt to follow the counsel of church leadership.

The introduction of the "Deseret Costume" by Eliza R. Snow demonstrates the importance church leadership placed on dress or rather fashion reformation. This apparel consisted of "bloomers and full skirts, without hoops, trimming or trains." According to Brigham Young's daughter Susa Gates, "the effort set thoughtless women to thinking, and paved the way for the Retrenchment Society, which was formed later." She indicated, however, that "Mormon women were too truly women to carry such a movement long. . . [and] a few years saw the matter dwindle into neglect." This supports Beecher's observation that the main reason for the "costume's" failure was the reluctance of Mormon women to give up their ties to gentility. As they perceived it, by fastidiously following the fashions found in Godey's Ladies Book, women felt they were bringing a higher standard of civilization to their frontier surroundings.

Thus, it was during this decade that an interest in sericulture first surfaced in the Mormon community. Several European immigrants had brought with them a working knowledge of the silk industry, and shared their interest with others. The philosophy of home manufacturing encouraged the transplantation of sericulture which was declining in Europe due to the spread of pebrine, a disease that killed silkworms. Not only did Young and other leaders hope to fill this void in the market, but they saw it as an opportunity for their own women to produce fine

77 Gates and Widstoe, 300.

material for their "better" dresses. By reducing the importation of silk, the community would be one step closer to self-sufficiency.79

As early as 1859, Nancy Barnes of Ogden made the first dress of Utah silk, which she had produced in its entirety. Others like her worked as individuals to raise silk.80 It was not long before others became interested and silk cooperatives were organized. These early organizations were managed exclusively by men, although women were encouraged to participate.81 Nevertheless, by the late 1860s, sericulture emerged as a predominantly female enterprise.

Newspaper articles appeared in the Deseret Weekly News and Woman's Exponent offering reasons why women should take up silk manufacturing. For example, in the second issue of the Woman's Exponent, dated June 15, 1872, the editor heralded the straw and silk industries as perfect economic opportunities for women and children. She argued that the business of straw braiding could be pursued in the winter and spring, with the summer months devoted to raising silk. The article stated that the outlay for straw was comparatively nothing and the sale of silk worm eggs alone produced a "handsome" income. There seemed to have been some objections to the straw business because "home-manufactured straw goods...cost more than imported goods." The solution to this problem, stated the article, was for workers to keep prices reasonable and for dealers to accept the lowest possible profit. By so doing, it was

80 Ibid., 379.
felt that Utah straw goods could "be made and furnished as cheap as those imported if not cheaper." The article served as a reminder to Mormon women of female economic industries that had already been heavily discussed in the press and from the pulpit.82

In 1875, President Brigham Young issued a church call to Zina D. H. Young to develop sericulture among the Mormon women. After Young completed "extensive canvassing [and] criss-crossing the territory to teach the proper method of feeding and caring for silkworms," an official association formed in June 1875. The Deseret Silk Association stated its objective to develop an education system and help the women launch their own silk businesses.83

At the general conference held in St. George, April 1877, the relief society received the admonition to engage fervently in sericulture. Eliza Snow reminded members of this mandate in a letter published in the Exponent.84 Nearly a year later, in a meeting of the Deseret Silk Association, the prominent leader Emmeline B. Wells recommended that local relief society presidents be appointed to act as vice-presidents of the parent association, and promote sericulture in their region. The association accepted this motion.85

The Deseret Silk Association worked on behalf of Mormon women to solve some of the silk industry's problems. Not only did the association provide necessary training materials, it assisted the women in obtaining worms and cocoons. It also worked to buy machinery for

83 Chris Arrington, "Finest of Fabrics," 387.
84 “To The Relief Society,” Woman’s Exponent 5 (15 April 1877): 173.
85 Woman's Exponent, 6 (1 February 1878): 133.
processing the silk and to find markets for the finished product. In 1877, the association helped relief society women send a silk display to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. According to the historian Chris Rigby Arrington, "during the existence of the Deseret Silk Association, many Utah women tried sericulture for the first time."

In 1880, a new association was organized to replace the Deseret Silk Association. The Utah Silk Association was incorporated, with many relief societies purchasing shares. Men were excluded from membership, since the women now viewed sericulture as their sole responsibility.

The women of St. George began their efforts in sericulture as early as 1869, long before the formation of the Deseret Silk Association. Caroline Jackson led the way when she responded to an advertisement in a local paper and purchased mulberry seeds. She planted a small grove and shortly thereafter, other St. George residents involved themselves in the cultivation of mulberry trees.

Nonetheless, no official efforts were made until 1877. During the April general conference of the church, President Young gave women the "mission" to raise silk. During their October general meeting, the St. George societies discussed the possibility of "having a plot

---

87 Ibid., 388.
88 Ibid., 389.
89 Ibid., 391.
90 Ibid., 386.
of land given to us and have a cocoonery in the center that we might make a beginning." Two sisters, Mrs. Godfrey De'Friez and Mary Eyring, said they had some experience with silkworms and offered to help the others get started. 92 By December, the fourth ward had planted mulberry trees. 93 In a correspondence to the *Exponent* in October 1877, one St. George woman wrote that she had the pleasure of "saying we as a people in St. George, discard the foolish fashions of the day and have set our faces against them." She also noted that the people in "Dixie have had 'hard times,' and have felt isolated and almost forgotten." 94 The great distance of St. George from Salt Lake City was undoubtedly difficult for many Mormons, and pushed these southern "saints" closer to self-sufficiency.

On January 3, 1878, Lucy B. Young told the relief society women that she had sent Zina D. Young a request for help with sericulture. She had asked Young to send a sericulture expert to teach the business. A few days earlier, Lucy Young met Susan Stringham, who had the needed experience. She had arrived to instruct the sisters. Stringham accepted a minimal pay for her efforts, wanting to be paid in raised cocoons. 95 Stringham helped the St. George society for five months.

Many women expressed an interest in learning more and told Stringham that they had already planted several small groves of mulberry trees. With so many interested students, Stringham felt sericulture would be successful in St. George. Sister Church was especially

92St. George Stake, 4 October 1877.
93Ibid., 6 December 1877.
94"Correspondence," Woman's Exponent, 6 (1 November 1877): 86.
95St. George Stake, 3 January 1878.
enthusiastic. She said she had been a member of the LDS church since Nauvoo, but "felt better and happier in her labors and more satisfied than she did in her early days." 96

During February, the excitement over silk culture continued to grow, but some frustrations surfaced. Lydia K. McLellon said she "had good success in silk raising for three years but since then she had not done well." This was due primarily to neglect. She had taken a trip to the city in haste, and "left her silkworm eggs and forgot to take care of them." Since then, she had tried a different type of egg, but had not done well. McLellon had also attempted to raise mulberry trees. They looked fine the first year, but then turned yellow and looked as though "it was too hot for them or the soil [was] not right." Despite her failings, she encouraged her friends to persevere and hoped some could do better than she. 97

It seemed the others were not deterred from their efforts by McLellon's failings because they continued to embrace the industry. Anna Ivins told the women that when she first looked upon the worms she "realized that all our silk came from them and they seemed quite near to her. She hoped to see the day when we would be able to make our own fine apparel" and not be ashamed of it. 98 Margaret Snow felt the worms were no trouble at all since they did "not require their food cooked." She indicated she had not become involved because of the promise of remuneration, but because she wanted to help build the Mormon Zion. 99

---

96Ibid.

97Ibid., 7 February 1878.

98Ibid., 2 May 1878.

99Ibid.
During the April 4th monthly meeting, Hannah Romney reported that the first ward had purchased a lot to begin its silk industry. George Jarvis had already planted fifteen hundred mulberry cuttings, and had offered to care for them. President Hannah Romney "did not wish the other sisters to think they were running ahead of them," but Bishop Romney and his counselors had helped the women acquire the $180.00 needed to purchase the land. From this remark it appeared that some tensions existed between wards, although they tried to remain united. These tensions may have stemmed from competitions between families jockeying for powerful church positions within the community.

The relief society women continued to devote their meetings to sericulture, although they had some differing opinions about their work. While Margaret Snow praised her worms saying "they were the cleanest and kindest things" she ever had, Elizabeth Morse contradicted her. According to Morse "silkworms were not fit to have in the house where we have to eat and sleep." In July 1879, Margaret L. Snow told how she had made a serious mistake that nearly cost her all her worms. She intended to persevere and hoped other sisters would do likewise.

Despite these disparate views, Sister Eyring felt the women were doing well, even though attendance at meetings had dwindled. She counseled the women not to expect too much profit from silk, and felt they would improve with more experience and the purchase of machinery. In addition, more trees needed to be planted before the business could progress much farther.

---

100 Ibid., 4 April 1878; "Relief Society Report," Woman's Exponent, 6 (1 April 1878): 167.
101 St. George Stake, 6 June 1878.
102 Ibid.
From August 1878 to July 1879, the St. George women devoted their meetings to the discussion of other industries--artificial flowers and straw braiding. Difficulties continued to mount. By May of 1880, the survival of St. George's silk industry was questionable.

At the May meeting, the many problems, especially between men and women laborers, became apparent. President McAllister promised that the men would do all that they could to help the women. He noted men in the north were donating money to purchase machinery, and the people in the south needed to support that effort and do all that they could to make sericulture profitable. He instructed the women to put aside other duties (such as making a carpet) and concentrate on raising their worms.\(^{103}\)

President Anna Ivins did not seem pleased with these comments and responded that the women needed the men to plant more trees, as the many labors of females kept them from taking on more field work. The main problem faced by the sisters was lack of feed for their worms. Many of the trees planted on the first ward's lot had died, depleting the worms' food supply. Margaret Earl exclaimed she had several hatched eggs but "not much to feed them. Sister Eyring had to give her eggs to Brother Bragner because she had stripped her trees the year before, and they had not produced much. She was willing to give what leaves she had to those in need. Ivins wanted the women to have the leaves, from the groves planted by the men, without paying for them."\(^{104}\)

\(^{103}\) Ibid., 6 May 1880.

\(^{104}\) Ibid.
Bishop D. H. Cannon "felt interested in the business but would not labor as he had seen his sister do." She worked hard to take care of her worms, carrying mulberry branches on her back and received nothing for her work. Cannon expressed serious reservations about the silk endeavor, saying if he had to work as hard as the women he would be happy to feed the worms to the chickens. While not all shared Bishop Cannon's sentiments, they readily acknowledged the challenges faced by the women, and sought to find solutions.\textsuperscript{105}

Henry Eyring thought the silk should be sent away "to be worked up." Lucy B. Young wanted a loom in St. George. She offered to donate between "one and two hundred dollars towards the purchase of suitable machinery."\textsuperscript{106} Thus, the discussion ranged across many suggestions. Basically, St. George needed more trees, and the women needed more physical labor from the men.

In June 1880, the St. George Silk Association was organized, its membership comprised of men and women.\textsuperscript{107} It raised $500.00 and purchased a spinning machine, which replaced the women's spinning wheels. Once the silk was processed, many women took it to Armond Hoff, a Swiss German known for his silk-weaving expertise. He wove the silk into fabric. In this way, the people of St. George produced several hundred yards of silk.\textsuperscript{108}

As the historian Chris Arrington pointed out, despite these valiant efforts to keep the silk industry alive in southern Utah, it was "less profitable than other commodities." It limped along

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., June 1880.

\textsuperscript{108} Potter, "History of Sericulture," 34.
until the turn of the century when "it died in the state generally." 109 Technology, climate, and labor supply all played a role in its collapse.

The Ogden relief society also began its awareness of silk raising efforts early when in January of 1869, at the recommendation of Bishop Aaron West, a "piece of land [was] set apart for silk culture." The priesthood leadership counseled the women to wear "the work of their own hands", and become active participants in this new industry. 110 However, according to the historian Chris Rigby Arrington, "only a few citizens responded by raising silkworms on their own land." 111

The women of Ogden may not have enthusiastically embraced sericulture because they focused on the manufacture of straw braid and hats as the society's choice of home industry. Adelaide Smith, assigned to managed the business with the help of other relief society members, instructed several young girls in the making of straw braid. By 1874, the Ogden relief society had a flourishing straw business.

This was done amidst severe opposition in the community. Many opposed the straw business because goods could be imported and sold cheaper than the women could manufacture them. According to Franklin D. Richards, the Weber stake president, "There has been thrown cold water continually on home manufactory."


110 Ogden Relief Society, 6 January 1869.

111 Chris Arrington, 386.
In fact, Jane S. Richards initially had not embraced the work herself. She first took a vote of the young and old to determine the community's support which seemed to be "well weighed." It was not until President Young and Eliza Snow counseled Richards to pursue the straw business that she became its strongest advocate. Consequently, the Ogden society, according to Franklin D. Richards, was "the first society that has led out... Let the sisters know you want braid. The business of the other store is to keep the best assortment they can so as to accommodate gentile customers." He reminded the women that it was their duty to be united and follow the counsel of the church.\(^{112}\)

Although Franklin D. Richards spoke with the Ogden women about President Young's desire that they continue to make their own hats, he also reminded them that "mulberry and silk" was a "hallowed endeavor." The men in the area were beginning to embrace the industry, and he encouraged the women to follow, thereby making it possible for Ogden females to come to church meetings dressed in silk.\(^{113}\)

Whenever male church leaders appealed to the women to become involved in sericulture, they almost always mentioned fashion. President Young continually fought a battle with the women to get them to dress simply and avoid the purchase of eastern fabrics. Perhaps it seemed a logical course of action to remind the women that if they assisted in the development of sericulture, they would be able to dress in fashionable clothing, without disappointing Brigham Young himself. If home-produced silk replaced eastern silk, the women would have no reason to

\(^{112}\)Ogden Relief Society, 8 July 1875.

\(^{113}\)Ibid., 21 January 1875.
purchase imported fabrics. Despite this counsel to engage in sericulture and the appeal to the women's fashion sense, the straw business continued to take precedence in Ogden. This is evidenced by the vote taken at the end of the Ogden society's March meeting in 1875; that vote asked, "Who would wear straw hats?" No vote was taken to determine who would raise silk.

April 15, 1875, brought another visit from Eliza Snow, who also encouraged the sisters in their straw work. She stated that Brigham Young believed that the women could accomplish what he could not "by making some things popular. If we can succeed in making home made hats popular we are sure of success."114 Snow sported an "Ogden Zion bonnet" at the meeting. She expressed her pride in wearing the hat, although some, who believed homemade products to be inferior, had remarked that she had no fashion sense and blamed her poor taste on her advanced age. But Snow felt it would not be long before a prophecy of Joseph Smith would be fulfilled when the world would "come to Zion for the most beautiful things," including homemade straw hats.115

Snow had other reasons for her encouragement of women's industry. In her opinion, every woman should learn a trade in the event that she would have to support herself. Such a possibility was very familiar to Mormon women who often saw husbands leave for distant missions or become leading authorities in the Utah church. These duties required men to be away from their families and home, and in the case of missions, gone for years. Consequently,

114 Ibid., 15 April 1875.

115 Ibid.
many Mormon women openly acknowledged the importance, and the desirability of learning a trade should family need occur.

For Snow, sericulture served these womanly economic demands and she applauded the efforts of those sisters engaged in sericulture. She encouraged the society members to seek out those individuals experienced in the various aspects of the silk industry and follow their lead. She concluded her remarks by declaring that it was impossible to wear homemade articles, if they were not produced. She counseled the leaders to demand the most participation from those who attended relief society meetings, since in her opinion, they were the most diligent and reliable.116

Ogden relief society members responded to the remarks of Snow and their male leaders by sending "teachers" to each woman in the ward to see who would raise mulberry trees. When the society met again on April 29th, the teacher reports indicated that many women responded favorably. Women not only volunteered to cultivate mulberry trees, but some were already raising worms; others knew how to weave silk and offered to teach other members of the society.

The enthusiasm carried over into the May meetings. Sister Harris told the society that raising silk was very easy and "none need be afraid to take hold of it." Many expressed a desire to try. Ellena McKay even proposed an alternate idea, that of raising flax, an occupation with which she was more familiar. Jane S. Richards decided it was in the society's best interest to develop both industries, stating, "we certainly do not want Silk towels but linen ones."

116Ibid.

117Ibid., 29 April 1875, and 13 May 1875.
While the record showed that many women expressed their support for either the silk or flax industries, the remarks by Harriet (Hattie) Brown indicated that there may have been those who were not too eager to embrace more work. She stated, "there may be many like me feel they have not the time." 118 Nevertheless, having been the relief society president herself, she urged the members to support Richards in any way possible. 119

It appeared that other societies faced a similar challenge. In a letter to the relief societies, published in the *Exponent* June 1, 1873, a woman wrote, "Think not, because your time and means are limited, you can do nothing to forward the work." The author implied that it seemed hardly possible for anyone to be unable to donate either money or handiwork. Nevertheless, for those who continued to believe they had nothing to give, the letter suggested they appreciate and support those involved in the "cause." "It is by union of many littles that great things are achieved." If women could afford the "less desirable," they could afford to contribute to their relief society. By leaving "off the ruffles from Mary's dress and the braid from Johnny's jacket" women could not only save a little money but strength and patience as well. "Bear in mind," the letter concluded, "that any organization requires time to grow mature by experience, so be not discouraged if you make some mistakes." 120

---

118 Ibid., 13 May 1875.

119 In 1870, Mary West, president of the Ogden society died, and Harriet C. Brown was elected president. On August 8, 1872, Brown tendered her resignation and Jane S. Richards was elected to take her place. Ogden Relief Society Minutes, n.d.

120 *Woman's Exponent* 2 (June 1, 1873): 3.
In these struggling endeavors, visits from LDS general authorities had a major impact on hard-working relief society woman. Their enthusiasm multiplied and it can be assumed that efforts either resumed or redoubled to follow the counsels of prominent leaders. The women of Ogden held Eliza Snow in high esteem as evidenced when Richards announced that she felt "Eliza R. Snow was to the sisters what Brigham Young was to the brethren." It was not uncommon for the members to express their desire to renew their efforts in meetings following Snow's visits, and meetings where she spoke were widely attended.

Although members of the Ogden society often renewed their attempts to comply with church mandates following Snow's visits, they sometimes found it difficult to do so. On June 24, 1875, Richards glimpsed her first silk worm. She exclaimed, "Today is the first time I ever saw a silk worm. [I] don't like the looks of them, am willing to do anything to help any one that will take care of them." Apparently, no one readily volunteered for the job because it was suggested by Esther Pingree and Mary Ann West that the women join together and pay someone to take care of the worms. Aaron West, in attendance at the meeting, reminded the members that they had to take care of the worms to have silk for dresses, "we can't raise it as we can flax." Despite Bishop West's encouragement to put aside personal distaste and oversee care of the

121 Ogden Relief Society, 29 October 1874.

122 Ibid., 27 May 1876.

123 Ibid., 24 June 1875.

124 Ibid.
worms, it was unclear who eventually took them. Ultimately, Richards pushed her aversion to silk worms aside and two years later had close to a thousand living in her home.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 29 May 1877.}

On another occasion, Louise Harris expressed her surprise at how much space the worms required. She may have expressed the frustration of many when she said: "We hardly had rooms to sleep in and very little time for sleep as they had ravenous appetites, eating continuously for the whole six weeks of their existence. They were fed the last thing at night, which would be about 11 or 12 o’clock, and at daylight in the morning. The mulberry trees were almost stripped of leaves and small branches by the time they were ready to spin."\footnote{Hunter, \textit{Beneath Ben Lomand}, 335.}

Throughout the next two years, the Ogden society received frequent visits from the leaders in Salt Lake City. Early in 1877, Eliza R. Snow and Ogden leaders counseled the sisters to pay off quickly the debt for the straw store, as Snow wanted them to engage in another work. On March 13, 1877, she challenged the women to take upon themselves the silk business. She told the society that a woman's work extended beyond domestic affairs and it was important for the women to have a goal so that they would continue to be diligent and united in their efforts.\footnote{\textit{Ogden Relief Society, 13 March 1877.}}

On May 3, 1877, at the recommendation of Eliza Snow, Zina Young, and Jane Richards, Mary Harris was selected to give instructions on sericulture to the sisters. Richards indicated it was time for active involvement if there was to be any success with silk production that year.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 3 May 1877.}
At a meeting of all the relief societies in Weber County, held July 19, 1877, shortly before his death, Brigham Young gave his last sermon to the Ogden women. Young, as he began, asked the women if they would carry out his instructions. He declared that he wanted "the sisters to say to themselves, and then to their daughters, sisters and friends, 'We will wear that which we will make, or we will wear nothing." Young then addressed the women on the advantages of raising silk worms and the financial possibilities. He offered them free trees from his mulberry farm to get them started. He concluded by advising the women to let the "beauty of your adorning be the work of your own hands," and pled with his followers to stop wearing "worldly fashions."129

While Young's remarks may have stirred the women when he delivered them; they gained added importance with his death. Male leaders counseled the relief society members to re-read Young's words often and to heed them. In response, dozens of new mulberry trees were planted, and several women took worms into their homes.

These increased efforts influenced the subsequent organization of the Weber County Silk Association, on May 10, 1879. According to the historian Milton R. Hunter, "during the following several years, the women were more diligent than ever before in their efforts to raise silk." Some Mormon women participated in sericulture for several years. However, by the early 1890s, the silk culture in Ogden had begun to decline, victim to larger economic forces.130

---

129 James Taylor, "Discourse by President Brigham Young delivered in the Tabernacle, Ogden, at a Meeting of the Relief Societies of Weber County," Woman's Exponent 6 (November 1, 1877 - February 15, 1878): 85, 125, 133, 141.

130 Hunter, Beneath Ben Lomond, 334-35.
Not to be excluded from this initiative, Manti, Utah, joined with St. George and Ogden in the sericulture movement. During the 1870s, Manti embraced sericulture as one of its main home industries. Rebecca Wareham, secretary and future president in Manti, addressed a letter to Eliza Snow dated July 22, 1875, expressing her feelings on this budding industry. Wareham had "been accustomed to the business" from her early childhood in New England. She felt her experience might assist Snow and others starting out in sericulture. Wareham acknowledged that she had raised a few worms since 1872, but did not have enough to "make a business of it." Nonetheless, she concluded that if measures were immediately taken to "procure mulberry trees and put them where they will be most secure from frost and work with a will, it will yet be a source of untold wealth."  

In 1877, Wareham again felt inclined to lend her assistance in a letter sent to the Exponent. She wrote that the silk industry was a "healthy occupation for young or old," and encouraged the young married women to plant mulberry trees. "If you will do this," she counseled, "in a few years you will have something for your family to depend on." She assured her readers that sericulture could provide them with an element of financial independence.  

As a society, Manti began its efforts by donating money and cocoons to Salt Lake City. In 1875, the women sent $23.00 to Snow to help with the purchase of a silk machine. A year

---


132 "Correspondence," Woman's Exponent 6 (15 June 1877): 15.

133 Sanpete Stake, Manti Female Relief Society Minutes, 9 November 1875, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
later, Rebecca Wareham and Marie Weibye each presented about two pounds of worms to the Salt Lake Silk Association. However, it was not until 1878, that the women set aside a lot, donated by J. E. A. Weibye, for the purpose of cultivating mulberry trees. During a visit from the Salt Lake contingent, Zina Young "exhorted the sisters to increase their diligence in its [silk] manufacture, that they might make their apparel beautiful without any aid from Babylon" [meaning non-Mormon sources].

However, what progress, if any, the Manti sisters made in sericulture between 1878 and 1882 is unclear. Their society records contain no mention of silk until 1882 when the treasurer recorded the sale of the lot for $40.00. The women used the funds to purchase wheat.

1882 also saw the reorganization of the Manti relief society into Manti North and Manti South. Nevertheless, both continued to meet as one group until 1884. Rebecca Wareham, new president of the north ward, and Sister Higgs became sericulture's strongest supporters. They both spoke often about the importance of silk culture and the necessity of developing it within the Manti community.

Wareham advised the women that it would be better for them to make their own clothing "than to put the means into the hands of those who are against us." At the November meeting in 1883, Sister Higgs shared a dream she had in which the late Brigham Young encouraged home manufacture and the raising of silk. On June 5, 1884, Wareham recognized the "faithful service"

---

134Ibid., 2 November 1876.
135“Relief Society Reports,” Woman’s Exponent 7 (1 September 1878): 50.
136Sanpete Stake, Manti North Ward Relief Society Minutes, 5 October 1882 to June 5, 1884, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
of Sister Higgs on behalf of the society's silk industry. During a meeting of the north ward in 1885, Mary Weibye and Rebecca Wareham spoke of the good that could come from a successful silk culture. Wareham discussed the expense involved in sending away to a foreign country for material to make clothing. "We should be a self-sustaining people and the Lord will bless in our efforts." Manti members were trying to keep the silk industry viable in their community.

President Wareham continued to give occasional advice about sericulture during 1886. However, other concerns, such as unity among the members of the society, took precedence. In May, Wareham asked the sisters to renew their efforts and reminded them that "where there is union, there is strength." She counseled the women to "stimulate one another. Learn our duties, then perform them." She concluded by urging the sisters to do what they could with silk culture.

In August 1886, Wareham again felt the need to remind the sisters of their duties to the relief society.

We were living in a time where we needed all the help we could get. We have a work to do and we should not let our household duties prevent us from coming to meeting and striving to learn. . . .As women [let us] step forth and not bury talents in earth. We have much to overcome, let us humble ourselves before the Lord. . . .cultivate the good spirit and know that what we gain here will go with us hereafter.

---

137 Ibid., 5 June 1884.
138 Ibid., 5 November 1885 and 2 July 1885.
139 Ibid., 6 May 1886.
140 Ibid., 5 August 1886.
By April 7, 1887, Wareham was once again advocating sericulture, and member Weibye wished that the sisters would "cultivate the mulberry tree."\textsuperscript{141} In May, Wareham tried to impress upon the society the importance of heeding Brigham Young's counsel to raise and wear home produced silk. Sister Squire supported the president, and firmly believed that sericulture "would sooner or later be one of the principal industries in Utah."\textsuperscript{142}

A year later, in August 1888, Wareham spoke of a "new move" in sericulture. The women had experienced difficulties in the past, but she believed Utah was destined to become one of the largest silk producers in the world.\textsuperscript{143} Unbeknownst to Wareham, she was fighting a losing battle. Although Utah sericulture had been fairly healthy in the early 1880s, it began a decline in 1886. By 1889 it was almost at a standstill. According to the historian Chris Arrington, the next significant revival of the silk industry did not occur until 1896.\textsuperscript{144}

Rebecca Wareham was the force that kept Manti sericulture alive. Her diligence and faith spanned decades, although her relief society did not always support her. A few loyal supporters, particularly Higgs, and Weibye, kept the work going until its eventual demise at the turn of the century.

Mormon interest in sericulture continued into the early 1900s with various degrees of success. At times, Zina Young struggled to keep Utah women involved in the industry. She saw a decline in 1885, then a renewed interest in 1893, when the Mormon women prepared an exhibit

\textsuperscript{141}Ibid., 7 April 1887.

\textsuperscript{142}Ibid., 5 May 1886.

\textsuperscript{143}Ibid., 2 August 1888.

\textsuperscript{144}Chris Arrington, "Finest of Fabrics," 392.
for The World's Columbian Exposition. However, by 1901, interest again dropped off and by 1906 the industry ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{145}

Several factors contributed to the death of sericulture. First were those associated directly with the industry. Raising worms required adequate space, proper temperature control, and an abundance of feed.\textsuperscript{146} Due to the instability of the market, unskilled workers, and lack of machinery, the silk industry was essentially a financial failure.\textsuperscript{147}

The other factors, were the arrival of the railroad to the Great Basin in 1869, the end of many cooperative enterprises in 1890, and the granting of Utah statehood in 1896.\textsuperscript{148} The railroad not only brought imported goods practically to Mormon doorsteps, but decreased the cost of these products dramatically. This in turn created a highly competitive market between home and factory produced goods. It was only a matter of time before Mormon cooperative endeavors could no longer compete with eastern markets. Eventually community-run cooperatives closed their doors. Finally, statehood brought the Mormons back into the Union, and nullified Brigham Young's vision of a separate and self-sustaining people.

Despite many of the drawbacks, relief society members from Ogden, Manti, and St. George maintained firm belief that sericulture would be "the" industry in Utah that would make

\textsuperscript{145}Potter, "History of Sericulture," 50 and 59.

\textsuperscript{146}Chris Arrington, 380-81.

\textsuperscript{147}Ibid., 377. It is interesting to note that in 1878 Zina D. Young reported that she was often asked if there was money in sericulture. She emphatically answered yes, stating that opened the way for hundreds to find employment. She felt that the biggest challenge faced by silk raisers was the lack of machinery to prepare the silk for the home market." \textit{Woman's Exponent}, 6 (1 January 1878): 117.

\textsuperscript{148}Chris Arrington, 396.
the Mormons financially independent. Not all women within these regions supported sericulture, but they still engaged in other types of home industry. The Ogden society, due to its size, enjoyed the luxury of developing several successful industries: straw, silk, and flax.149 This enabled several women to find their business "niche."

Manti and St. George, however, found themselves limited in human and natural resources. In the case of St. George, climate posed a threat to the success of many endeavors. It was too hot to successfully raise both silk worms and grain. Nevertheless, the women in these communities attempted to comply with Brigham Young's wishes, and as societies, they took every measure available to involve themselves in sericulture. In Manti, many of the women supported wheat storage in lieu of silk, although their reasons for doing so remain shrouded.

GRAIN STORAGE

As part of his program for self-sufficiency, Brigham Young developed a plan to store grain for use in times of famine. The harsh winters and poor harvests during the first few years of Mormon settlement in the Great Basin supported the belief that without a storage program, future survival of Mormon communities could be in jeopardy. Consequently, as harvests improved, Young advised the men to set aside a portion of grain for storage. The men failed to respond, and Young eventually grew weary of calling upon them. So, following the October

---

149 In 1876, the Ogden society boasted a membership almost five hundred women with their average meeting attendance near seventy. St. George First ward reported in 1878, and enrollment of 73, and attendance of ten to thirteen members. Given these figures as an average, the membership within the St. George Stake would have been around 250 with and attendance of approximately 40. In 1883, the Manti combined ward reported a membership of 180, and average attendance of forty women. Ogden Relief Society, 27 May 1876; "Relief Society Report," Woman's Exponent, 6 (1 April 1878): 167; Manti North, 1 November 1883.
general conference in 1876, Young requested that Emmeline B. Wells, editor of the Woman's Exponent, write an editorial "urging the sisters to begin laying up grain against the time of need."\textsuperscript{150}

Young told Wells that he had "called upon and urged the brethren to lay up grain...and they do not follow my advice; they excuse themselves by saying their wives and daughters want the proceeds of the grain to buy hats and bonnets." As a result of this non-compliance, Young took the responsibility out of the men's hands and gave the charge to the women. He knew that if he asked the women "to save grain they would not sell it."\textsuperscript{151}

Wells initially felt "timid about giving this important advice." But after discussion with her friend Eliza Snow and her husband, Daniel H. Wells, she "wrote the article and submitted it to Young for approval. He was satisfied with it, but dictated another paragraph, which contained advice to men to assist the women in their new enterprise."\textsuperscript{152}

The article appeared in the Exponent October 15, 1876. Wells' editorial advised the members of the relief societies to use some of their funds to store and preserve grain. She told the women that Young had every confidence in their abilities and now they had the opportunity to prove their adeptness in "financiering."\textsuperscript{153} Shortly thereafter some of the societies reported on their grain-saving efforts.

\textsuperscript{151}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153}"Sisters Be In Earnest," Woman's Exponent 5 (15 October 1876): 76.
A month following the publication of this article, general relief society leaders met to form a Central Grain Committee. Emmeline B. Wells was appointed chairman to organize and direct the grain storage project. According to the historian Jessie L. Embry, "Wells, though overwhelmed by the size of the grain storage project, saw herself as a 'modern Joseph' in Egypt." She recommended that each ward relief society organize a grain committee of its own. By unanimous vote, the women decided that the central committee would also purchase grain, but that it would not hinder the efforts of the ward committees. All the women received advice to "solicit help from their husbands and the brethren" to obtain the necessary funds for grain purchases. Wells then proposed that the central and ward committees work closely together so proper storage places could be found and an exact accounting of the grain maintained. Women were encouraged to report their successes and direct their questions to Emmeline Wells in care of the Exponent.

Although Mormon women expressed their enthusiasm for this new project, some men opposed female involvement. Wells reported that some men argued that historically women were inferior and in a servile state. They faulted Brigham Young's belief that his appointment of the women to this cause would stop their requests for finery from their fathers and husbands. Her rebuttal:

Do not the scriptures [Bible] certify women to have been not only queen and prophetess, but Judge in Israel... in our opinion, men themselves in a general

---


way, dispose of as much means for tobacco, and such products as tend to
degeneration and degradation, as women do for vanity.\textsuperscript{156}

Although the call to store grain came late in 1876, Manti responded immediately. By the
end of that year, the account book showed that the women had already gleaned 14 bushels of
wheat. In addition to this, the women purchased several bushels. In November 1876, at a
combined meeting of the central grain committee and several ward committees, Emmeline Wells
told each member that it was important to "secure and store away every bushel of wheat that it is
possible for her to obtain. . . In Manti, they have put up 60 or 70 bushels, and we can't be too
prompt in this matter."\textsuperscript{157}

By 1877, the Manti relief society reported 115 bushels on hand. In February 1878, the
women reported that it was their intention to build a granary during the present year.\textsuperscript{158} During
1882, the society was divided in two, although Manti women continued to meet as one group
until 1884. Prior to the division, the members sold their mulberry tree lot and with the proceeds
purchased $10.00 in wheat. They used the remainder to pay off a debt owed James Wareham for
borrowed wheat.

Perhaps the women felt the grain storage should take precedence over sericulture. For
some women, the words the \textit{Exponent} published November 1, 1876, may have had special
meaning. Wells wrote that the women distinctly remembered their exit from Nauvoo, when the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{156}“Be Wise and Hearken to Counsel,” \textit{Woman’s Exponent} 5 (1 November 1876): 84.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{157}“General Meeting of Central and Ward Committees, On the Grain Movement,” \textit{Woman’s
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{158}“Relief Society Report,” \textit{Woman’s Exponent}, 6 (15 March 1878): 159.
\end{flushleft}
"thoughts of the people were concentrated upon food for sustenance, and they were glad to dispose of such things as... carpets, silk dress, gold watches." Maybe the society liquidated some of its assets in anticipation of the reorganization. It is impossible to determine exactly why the women pursued this course of action. However, it can be ascertained that wheat storage was very important to the women of Manti.

During the fall of 1882, Rebecca Wareham, president of the Manti North Ward, reminded members of their duty to store grain. During the following year, the women devoted their meetings to other interests until the fall, when female leaders again advocated grain storage. Relief society meetings continued in this vein for the next several years, with fall gatherings devoted primarily to the topic of grain storage.

In September 1884, Wareham reminded the women of a sermon by Joseph Smith. He had predicted a famine in the land. She suggested that grain be stored immediately, before it was too late. President Elizabeth Casto of the South ward, advised the members to "pay attention to it [grain storage] after such abundant harvest."

The following year, Alvina Cox spoke of the hard labor performed by farmers to grow wheat, yet it was so cheap. This may explain why the men were often reluctant to part with their grain. Farmers desired a profit from their efforts, and donations to the relief society did not increase their income.

159 Manti North Ward, 5 October 1882, and 4 December 1882.

160 Ibid., October 1883.

161 Ibid., 6 November 1884.

162 Ibid., 2 July 1885.
Some discord erupted in 1886, between members of the two wards considering ownership of the grain. In March 1, 1886, at a combined meeting of both wards, President Maiben advised the relief society presidencies to be "in full accord with the bishops." He directed the members to rally together and "be in perfect union with the sisters of Salt Lake."\(^{163}\) Rebecca Wareham and Elizabeth Casto then explained to the women the mutual ownership of the granary. The women decided to store grain together "until the bin was full." Maiben advised the relief societies to accept the new situation and listen to their bishops so all would progress smoothly. They could separate their grain later.\(^{164}\)

Throughout the next decade, Presidents Wareham and Casto, along with other members of the societies, continued to counsel Manti women to remain diligent in their efforts to store wheat. The Manti women remained true to this directive as demonstrated by the following excerpt taken from a pamphlet prepared by Emmeline Wells for the 1893 World's Fair. "This county [Sanpete] has been very energetic in storing up wheat and much has been gleaned by women and children. There is in the granaries now on hand 8,536 bushels."\(^{165}\)

While Manti took the lead in the grain storage program, other societies soon followed. In November 1876, Franklin D. Richards of Ogden met with Eliza Snow and stated that immediate action was necessary if any grain was to be stored before Christmas. He reported that many of the brethren "have spoken kindly and favorably to the sisters, and given the movement their

---

\(^{163}\)Ibid., 1 March 1886.

\(^{164}\)Ibid.

hearty endorsement. . . . Not all the laces and silks in the world could compare with bread stuff in time of scarcity." Emmeline Wells published his words in the *Exponent* so every relief society in the territory could benefit from them.  

In March 1877, Eliza Snow visited Ogden to call members to engage in sericulture and store up grain. She remarked that one woman in Salt Lake had complained that the woman's sphere was too narrow. "Since she has been called to tend to the receiving of grain and to the silk business, she feels [the] woman's sphere is large enough." Although aware that the Mormon women faced new challenges, Snow believed in their capabilities. She stated, "I know something of the situation of the sisters here in Ogden. We shall want a place for storing more wheat before another harvest."  

By this time, the Ogden society had the distinction of being one of the largest societies in the territory boasting a membership of close to 500 women.  

Following the advice of Emmeline Wells in the *Exponent* to form "parties of ladies . . . for the especial purposes of gleaning," Jane Richards, during September, organized gleaning days for the society. Not all the women were able to attend the gleaning, so Richards encouraged them to make wheat donations instead. Richards felt it was a shame to see any kernel of wheat left on the ground and suggested that groups of children assist the women. Ann Browning, Sister Ellis,  

167 *Ogden Relief Society*, 27 March 1876.  
168 Ibid., 27 May 1876. Although Ogden claimed such a large membership, average attendance at meetings was only 60 to 70, unless Eliza Snow came to speak, then it would be greater. However, this is quite a contrast to St. George, were the societies averaged a meeting attendance of 10 to 15 women. (This number would have been greater for the general monthly meeting held in the tabernacle.)  
169 Ibid., 6 September 1877.
and Sister Etherrington told the president that since they were unable to glean they would send their children instead. It is interesting to note, that Sister Woodmause and Rose Canfield told the society that they would "rather go gleaning than talk" in meetings. Nevertheless, "they knew they had a duty to perform."\(^{170}\) This suggests that many Mormon women desired to participate in all the relief society's endeavors, even if it meant engaging in activities they would rather avoid.

Throughout the harvest, women not only gleaned the fields but solicited donations from ward and family members. On October 4, 1877, Sister Henrietta Lamont stood up in meeting a told how her son Willie earned a \(\frac{1}{2}\) bushel of wheat. When asked what he planned to do with it, he replied, "Give it to the relief society."\(^{171}\)

On October 11, 1877, Salt Lake leaders again visited Ogden. During the meeting Sister Hadden spoke and told how the women in Sanpete County (Manti) "had gleaned and stored up between five and six hundred bushels of wheat." She explained how to store the grain to avoid rodent infestations.\(^{172}\) The mention of Manti's success seems to have spurred Richards on. At the society's meeting, a week later, she proposed that a report be sent to Salt Lake "giving the number of bushels and the way it was being preserved."\(^{173}\)

At a meeting held on October 31, 1877, President Franklin D. Richards reported that during the past year, the Weber county relief societies had received \$9,935.63, and had stored

\(^{170}\)Ibid., 20 September 1877.

\(^{171}\)Ibid., 4 October 1877.

\(^{172}\)Grain storage became a serious issue and Emmeline Wells provided information on the construction of granaries in the Exponent.

\(^{173}\)Ogden Relief Society, 18 October 1877.
478 bushels of wheat. Sister M. I. Horne, visiting from Salt Lake, said she was pleased with the reports as they showed what the women of Ogden could do. The society should be valued since "it gives the sisters a chance to do something" outside of the home. Emmeline B. Wells also addressed the group. "We have been called upon to store grain. This is new work for women to engage in but is an important one." She said the world did not believe the Mormon women capable of saving their grain for famine. She had met a Japanese gentleman who had seen a great deal of "want and destitution. He said if we [the women] only did a little it would be a good thing. I didn't tell him the brethren sent the wheat away and sold it. I don't think their wives [asked] them to sell it for five dresses. If so, I do not think they belong to the relief society."175

The selling of relief society wheat by the brethren became a problem for some societies. According to Jessie Embry, "sometimes the Relief Society grain was not separated, and the granary's owner sold it without permission." Later, when societies built their own granaries, the men asked for loans to distribute to the poor or give to farmers for seed.176 For Jane Richards this became a serious concern.

On December 6, 1877, Richards told the women that she did not have the right to take even one kernel of relief society wheat, "neither had any one else. She did not believe Brother Herrick or Brother Perry or any other brother had any right whatever to take it." She felt bad to

---

174Ibid., 31 October 1877.

175Ibid.

hear people talk about taking the society's wheat. Grain storage was a "sacred thing. It was a commandment from President Young." She felt it important to give to the poor, but expected other donations to be made in lieu of the stored wheat.\(^{177}\) This meant that money donated for wheat could only be used to buy grain for storage.\(^{178}\)

In August of 1878, the grain on hand remained unchanged from the previous year. The women did little as a reorganization of the society was forthcoming. At the end of the year, the Ogden City Relief Society was disbanded, and new societies were created in the four city wards.\(^{179}\)

On January 9, 1898, a quarterly conference was held for all Weber Stake relief societies. Bishop Green Taylor told the women that he would help them build a granary. It was reported, that wheat saved in the county had "swelled" to 1,400 bushels. The men expressed their pleasure in the women’s efforts.\(^{180}\) By May 9th, President D. H. Perry felt it necessary to entreat the men to assist the women in building granaries throughout the county. He found fault with the men for not saving more wheat, and said "he had more confidence in the integrity of the women than men."\(^{181}\)

At the December quarterly meeting, D. M. Stewart addressed the women and commended them for their wheat-saving efforts. He realized that they depended on the brethren to raise the

---

\(^{177}\) Ogden Relief Society, 6 December 1877.

\(^{178}\) Ibid., 27 December 1877.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., December 1878.

\(^{180}\) Weber Stake Relief Society Minutes, 9 January 1879, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

\(^{181}\) Ibid., 9 May 1879.
grain before they could store it. He exhorted the men to aid the women, and lend a hand with the building of granaries. In March 1880, Franklin D. Richards counseled the men and women of Ogden to work harmoniously together, there being "no room for discord." He stated that most of the presidents and bishops "have learned to properly appreciate" the assistance of the relief society in their government. Those that had not were "afflicting themselves with unfounded apprehensions, spending their strength unnecessarily, and are behind the times in the spirit of their work." 183

Between 1880 and 1892, the women's wheat storage rose and fell from a high of 3,284 bushels in 1884 to 2,584 bushels in 1892. This occurred despite good harvests and counsel from Emmeline Wells and Jane Richards not to sell it. Apparently, during this time some male leaders expected to borrow wheat, and some women were selling their stores "the first time there was a theater or circus." Others were involved in speculation, sold the grain because it was considered too old, or because they needed cash. In an effort to combat these problems, male and female leaders reminded the women of their stewardship over the grain program. They advised them to renew their wheat by completely replacing old stores with new, and to avoid

182 Ibid., 18 December 1879.
183 Ibid., 18 March 1880.
185 Weber Stake, 9 March 1881.
186 Ibid., 15 March, 1888 and 12 September 1889.
speculation.187 In December 1888 Emmeline Wells counseled that "there was no danger of our storing away too much."188 The months following her remarks saw a slight increase in the number of wheat bushels on hand, but this was simply a temporary measure since grain stores remained around 2,500 for the next few years. However, by March 8, 1893, the women had renewed their diligence and Weber Stake had on hand 4,610 bushels.189

The women in Ogden and Manti made significant strides in storing wheat. However, the efforts of St. George women were less impressive. Although anxious to be united with their northern sisters, the women of Dixie faced the dilemma of living in an area unsuitable for grain production. "We cannot raise enough to eat," wrote one sister, "and much time and strength is consumed by our brethren in going north for our supplies." Afraid that the St. George women would be considered "drones in the great beehive," she hastened to add that the sisters in the south were very industrious people.190

In February 1878, Anna L. Ivins reported on her visit to the city Salt Lake City. She told how "spirited" the women were in "silk culture and saving grain." She "almost regretted our living in this country that we could not save grain, [but] hoped we should yet be able to do something." Lucy B. Young suggested that the women of St. George exchange their grapes and dried fruit with their northern women for grain, and "have it stored where it would keep."191

187Ibid., 15 March 1888.
188Ibid., 13 December 1888.
190"Correspondence," Woman's Exponent, 6 (1 January 1878): 119.
191St. George Stake, 7 February 1878.
By April, the members, despite living in "poor grain country," had stored a "little more than two hundred lbs. of wheat."192 They recognized their efforts as a small beginning, but hoped to secure more during the year. The sisters of the first ward were the sole contributors to the grain storage program, and throughout the ensuing years continued to contribute what they could. Nevertheless, the majority of women in St. George found it difficult to comply with this mandate, and chose to pursue other endeavors.

For many relief society women, grain storage was the most important program advocated by Brigham Young. It represented life itself. For the women of Manti, it became their primary cooperative concern. The Ogden and St. George societies found compliance much more difficult. Ogden women were swayed by promises of profit through the sale of wheat, and St. George sisters found climatic conditions insurmountable. Nevertheless, there were always those who remained diligent and faithful despite the odds. This seems typical of most relief societies as evident from the following remark by Emmeline B. Wells:

In the industries established in Utah has it not been the few who have exerted themselves, using their time, means, and influence, while the majority have stood still, remained indifferent or sought their own individual interests and welfare... If the sisters would unite together, more of them... they could almost do anything they wish to do.193

Over the years, as efforts to store grain increased, Mormon women faced the problem of maintaining control over the program. On special occasions, such as the Jubilee of 1880, the women responded to the call of President John Taylor to loan out wheat to be used as seed or

192 "Relief Society Reports," Woman's Exponent, 6 (1 April 1878): 167.

193 "The Woman's Grain Movement in Utah," Woman's Exponent, 6 (1 September 1877): 52.
given to the poor. He told the bishops to give the women receipts so that the grain could be
returned, and indicated the men were not to borrow grain again. The men ignored this
directive and continued to expect the relief societies to loan out grain. Finally, at the request of
local relief society presidents, general church leaders wrote the bishops and reminded them that
the women were sole custodians of the wheat and it was not ward property. No bishop,
therefore, had the authority to "take possession of the grain." Many bishops ignored these
warnings and requests for wheat continued.

Nevertheless, the relief society maintained control of the wheat until the advent of World
War I. A world-wide grain storage program resulted in more vigorous attempts to increase the
society's holdings. Grain was moved from commercial elevators to church-owned facilities to
insure the women's stewardship of the grain. However, in May 1918, in response to the United
States' request to purchase the wheat from the Mormon church, Bishop Charles Nibley of the
presiding bishopric, under the direction of President Joseph F. Smith, sold the wheat. The
historian Jessie Embry indicated that "in his haste to fulfill the government's request, Bishop
Nibley neglected to notify Sister Wells of the change in policy; she did not learn of the sale until
a week later." 

The sale of 205,518 bushels of wheat marked the end of the relief society grain storage
program as envisioned and administered by Emmeline B. Wells. In the nation's House of

196 Embry, "Grain Storage," 63.
Representatives on June 7, 1918, Congressman Milton H. Welling, of Utah, praised the women of his state for their generous donation. He declared, "This 12,331,080 pounds of wheat so tendered to the cause of human liberty will not win the war, but it will save the lives of thousands who suffer for lack of bread to eat."\(^{197}\) Although Wells ultimately supported the decision to sell the wheat, she was upset that the men had not consulted her prior to the sale. The wheat had been the women's responsibility, and while advice from the men was often welcome and necessary, the women should have made the final decision. By June of 1918, the grain storage program was no longer in the hands of Mormon women. As a result, it came to a halt, and was not reinstated until the 1940s when it became part of the LDS Church's Welfare Plan.\(^{198}\)

**CONCLUSION**

The latter half of the 19th century saw significant changes in the fabric of American life. Westward expansion, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and industrialization pushed at the boundaries of the growing nation. The face of America dramatically changed both geographically and socially. In the midst of these monumental changes, the role of women found new definition.

While women in the East were part of the drive towards industrialization, women in the West were actively engaged in creating territories and towns, and building homes on the frontier. In a variety of venues, women came forward to meet the challenges of national growth and

---


\(^{198}\) Embry, "Grain Storage," 63-64.
transformation. Recent migrants to the Great Basin participated in this national change within the context of their frontier lives. In fact, the Great Basin proved fertile ground for the seeds of self-determination to take root.

Male leaders of the LDS church considered women to be a valuable asset in the pursuit of territorial self-sufficiency. Susa Young Gates, daughter of Brigham Young, claimed that her father "trusted the women of his people to adjust the relations of home with public activity, so that the home should suffer not at all." To achieve this balance, she indicates "that in the beginning most of the pioneer industrial activity was undertaken by mature women who possessed grown or growing girls at home able to carry the domestic burdens while their mother participated in semi-public affairs."199 As a consequence, Utah women acquired a number of new opportunities to participate in economic endeavors.

Out of these circumstances arose the cooperative movement, an economic initiative to encourage local industry. Although Brigham Young is recognized as the main force behind the cooperative movement, several prominent women held leadership roles as general administrators. For example, Eliza Snow was described as "a woman of vision, understanding, industry and spirituality," while Young was viewed as a "divinely guided entrepreneur with expansive dreams and kingdom-centered ambitions."200 This general leadership combined with the presidencies of local relief societies, enabled the influence of women to so thoroughly permeate Mormon cooperative life.

---


200 Derr, Women of Covenant, 93.
It can be ascertained from this paper and other similar studies that Mormon women had a significant impact on local and state economies. The division of women into local groups or relief societies enabled the church leadership to administer cooperative endeavors, statewide. The cooperative movement provided leadership experience and new vocations for women. Although participation varied from ward to ward, as did the choice of cooperative pursuits, the contributions of relief society women were vital to the economic success of their communities and the territory. By following the dictates of their leaders and accepting the responsibilities placed upon their shoulders, Mormon women demonstrated that they were an integral part of the cooperative movement.

In the hands of Mormon women, cooperative stores, the silk industry, and the grain storage program reached a level of success that would have been impossible to achieve without their leadership, participation, and perseverance. They faced significant challenges as they embraced these new economic opportunities. Often, they pressed forward without the support of their communities and local male leadership. Nevertheless, the women of each society desired to comply with church mandates, no matter the difficulty. They firmly believe that "union was strength," and endeavored to join together to create the "Zion" they had so often heard about. In so doing, they provided an economic foundation, that for a time, made a success of the cooperative movement. But beyond that, and perhaps unintentionally, the individual women were changed by the experience.

As they went about organizing and managing their various business endeavors, Mormon women obtained fiscal management experience. They expanded upon their knowledge of household accounts, and became responsible for the monetary successes of much larger
organizations. At the same time, they learned how to make the best use of the human resources available to them. Each woman in the ward was encouraged to choose her own role in the cooperative enterprises, and a support network evolved to provide encouragement and assistance whenever possible. To be sure, many of these female administrators and leaders were self-taught or the recipients of minimal training. However, the support system that developed among the women of the relief societies enabled them to build upon previous domestic experience. They were encouraged to share their knowledge and skills with others and understood the importance of never giving up.

In addition to the development of business skills, the cooperative movement enabled Mormon women to collectively and individually build their self-esteem. As responsibilities increased, so did the level of self-confidence. Relief society women discovered that they were capable of carrying out initiatives never before offered to women. They performed tasks that expanded their role within the community and led them into non-traditional arenas.

This expansion of responsibilities was not without its negative aspects. As leaders of a growing organization, many relief society presidencies faced the challenge of dealing with male leaders who did not support the women's efforts or credit them with success. At times, the desires of the local male leaders were in direct opposition to those envisioned by the women. Not only did the female leadership strive to maintain a harmonious relationship with the men, it struggled to keep the societies united. Societies dealt with competition between wards, discord among the women over cooperative interests, and poor attendance. In the end, they also experienced discouragement at the demise of all their economic endeavors: a result of larger economic forces that replaced the cooperative system.
Despite these drawbacks, Utah women developed an overarching value of personal and collective accomplishment. Their successes have added to the vision of women who were involved in building a social, political, and economic community in the West. These experiences have paved the way for future generations of Mormon women to face the myriad of challenges placed before them and to willingly embrace future tasks and responsibilities. For in spite of all the failures and disappointments, the relief society women of the 19th century demonstrated, beyond a doubt, that “in union is strength” and together they could accomplish great things.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Deseret Weekly News (Salt Lake City, Utah): 1860-1880.


Manti Ladies Cooperative Institution, Ledger Book, 1876-1897. Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Sanpete Stake, Manti North Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1883-1900. LDS Archive, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Sanpete Stake, Manti South Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1882-1900. LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Sanpete Stake, Manti Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1871-1882. LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.


St. George Stake Relief Society Minutes, 1877-1900. LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

St. George Stake, St. George Female Relief Society Minutes, 1868-1877. LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

St. George Stake, St. George First Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1877-1900. LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

St. George Stake, St. George Second Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1877-1900. LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
Watt, G. D. "Remarks by President Brigham Young." Salt Lake Daily Telegraph, 6 January 1867.

Weber Stake Relief Society Minutes, 1879-1900. LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Weber Stake, Ogden City Female Relief Society, 1867-1879, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.


SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS


ARTICLES


DISSERTATIONS AND THESIS

