SINNERS IN THE CITY OF SAINTS: FLAPPERS IN SALT LAKE CITY

by

Bree Ann Romero

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

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

Approved:

Colleen O’Neill, PhD
Major Professor

Keri Holt, PhD
Committee Member

Tammy Proctor, PhD
Committee Member

Mark McLellan, PhD
Vice President for Research and
Dean of the School of Graduate
Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2014
ABSTRACT

Sinners in the City of Saints: Flappers in Salt Lake City

by

Bree Ann Romero, Master of Arts
Utah State University, 2014

Major Professor: Dr. Colleen O’Neill
Program: History

Historians have largely overlooked young women in Salt Lake City, Utah, especially throughout the nineteen twenties. This thesis examines girls in Utah’s capital in relation to the iconic New Woman of the Roaring Twenties: the flapper. To understand how young women adopted and adapted characteristics of the flapper, this work studies the behavioral prescriptions assigned to adolescent girls and social fears related to female behavior. Those insights frame an examination of the lived experiences of Salt Lake City girls that illuminates the ways in which young women amalgamated regional ideals and individual desires to create a unique version of the American flapper.

(137)
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Sinners in the City of Saints: Flappers in Salt Lake City

by

Bree Ann Romero

Social commentators typically recognized the flapper as a break from tradition in the nineteen twenties. Scholars have since tended to do the same. Those characterizations, however, generally ignore the flappers outside of the Caucasian, urban, middle-class set. This thesis aims to contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of the flapper through a study of young women in Salt Lake City, Utah,
for
Mon and Dad
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to all of those who helped make this possible. First, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Keri Holt and Dr. Tammy Proctor, for their time, insights, and assessments. I would also like to thank my Major Professor, Dr. Colleen O’Neill, for sharing her knowledge with me. Without her guidance, support, and endless patience, I am sure this project would remain incomplete. I benefited greatly from working with each of these women, and I will forever appreciate the opportunity I had to learn from them.

I would also like to thank my friends and family for supporting me throughout this project. For their compassion, confidence, and humor, I will be eternally indebted to Shelby Lyman, Nick Romero, and my parents. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Andrew Simek, whose support has sustained me.

Bree Ann Romero
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INTRODUCTION

The Flapper awoke from her lethargy of subdeb-ism, bobbed her hair, put on her choicest pair of earrings and a great deal of audacity and rouge and went into the battle. She flirted because it was fun to flirt and wore a one-piece bathing suit because she had a good figure, she covered her face with powder and paint because she didn’t need it and she refused to be bored chiefly because she wasn’t boring. She was conscious that the things she did were the things she had always wanted to do.

Zelda Fitzgerald
“Eulogy on the Flapper”

By the summer of 1922, the flapper was nothing more than a memory to Zelda Fitzgerald—wife and muse of novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald. A uniquely independent icon of youth and modern femininity, the stereotypical American flapper pushed the boundaries of socially acceptable female behavior and opposed traditional gendered roles. She wore scant clothing, styled her hair short in waves, and applied cosmetics liberally. The flapper was an assertive, active, and enthusiastic member of society. She earned advance degrees and sought fulfilling careers in the public realm. Her ambition allowed her economic independence and, subsequently, greater social influence. She pursued pleasure and indulged her sexual desires. The flapper rejected long-standing taboos. She smoked in public, drank alongside men, drove fast, danced all night, and petted in plain sight. Not only was she a rebel, the flapper was the image of modernity—she was the New Woman of the nineteen twenties.

To Zelda, however, the flapper represented imitation to the point of standardization. Consequently, Zelda proclaimed that emulation dulled the flapper’s
character, and in the end, murdered her spirit.\textsuperscript{1} But Zelda was wrong. Not only did the flapper live and thrive throughout the decade, she did so uniquely according to location. Just as public perceptions of the flapper varied from place to place, so too did the manner in which young women asserted themselves as flappers. To better understand the regional character of the quintessential New Woman of the Roaring Twenties, this thesis examines the distinct and dynamic flapper where few have acknowledged her existence—Salt Lake City, Utah.

Social commentators recognized the flapper as a break from tradition in the nineteen twenties. Scholars tended to do the same. In 1931, noted American social historian Frederick Lewis Allen, observed the flapper in his book \textit{Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s}. Allen’s text, which has endured as one of the most vivid and precise accounts of American life in the twenties, attributed the flapper to what he referred to as an inter-war “Revolution in Manners and Morals.” That revolution, he claimed, was the inevitable result of converging forces. Together, public sentiment following the Great War, the changing status of American women, Freudianism, Prohibition, the automobile, confession and sex magazines, and the movies combined and collaborated to change the traditional moral code.\textsuperscript{2} The flapper, Allen believed, embodied those changes.

Cultural historian Joshua Zeitz agreed; the stereotypical flapper was a “product of compelling social and political forces that converged in the years between the two world

wars.”³ Zeitz supplemented existing scholarship on the flapper in several important ways. Whereas most historians incorporated the flapper into broader studies of the twenties, youth culture, or women’s history, he devoted an entire book to the female figure. The resulting survey, entitled Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern, is the most complete analysis of the American flapper to date. Additionally, Zeitz diverged from the established narrative by acknowledging the flapper outside of urban centers. “Clearly,” he noted, “the flapper was every bit as much a small-town as a big-city phenomenon.”⁴ Furthermore, Zeitz recognized that the “flapper craze extended well past the white, middle-class neighborhoods where [flapperdom] began.” Unlike many scholars, he acknowledged that by 1920, young black, Mexican, and Asian women aspired to become flappers “no less than their white peers.”⁵

Apart from Zeitz, few historians have identified the flapper outside of the Caucasian, urban, middle-class set. Two scholars that diverged from that norm, however, deserve note. In her book Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America, Vicki L. Ruiz analyzed the impact of region and tradition on Mexican-American, or Chicana flappers. More specifically, Ruiz examined the culturally engrained practice of chaperonage in relation to young women’s behavior and discovered that Chicana flappers largely abandoned their Hispanic heritage, including the tradition of

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⁴ Zeitz, Flapper, 79.
⁵ Zeitz, Flapper, 265.
chaperonage, in favor of practices that allowed them to assimilate into the broader American culture of the nineteen twenties.⁶

Similarly, Judy Yung studied Chinese flappers to explore the relationship between the behavior of young women and ethnic expectations, traditions, and practices. In her book, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco*, Yung concluded that the society in which they lived required young Chinese women to renounce, not adapt, their cultural traditions for the public to accept them as flappers.⁷ Both Ruiz’s and Yung’s works serve as important examples of non-traditional and regional investigations of the flapper. This thesis adds to that limited body of work by considering the flapper in Salt Lake, where scholars have largely failed to acknowledge and examine young women in any regard.

Salt Lake City was a thoroughly modern city by 1920. Fleeing persecution, Mormon settlers established the community in 1847 as a religious utopia. For several years, the city “was very much the kind of society its founders intended,” according to Utah historian John S. McCormick. Continuing, McCormick claimed, “religion infused almost every impulse, making it difficult to draw a line between religious and secular activities. A counterculture that differed in fundamental ways from its contemporary American society, it was close-knit, cohesive, and unified.”⁸ Westward expansion, particularly the joining of the transcontinental railroad at Promontory Point, Utah, in

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1869, ended the region’s isolation. As Salt Lake City grew, the populace diversified and tensions divided the citizenry according to faith. Local politics mirrored the social split as Mormons supported the People’s party and non-Mormons backed the anti-Mormon Liberal party. At the height of the conflict, the city resembled a battleground. Neighborhoods segregated along religious lines and a private, non-Mormon school system operated apart from the public, Mormon school district.¹⁹

Rigidities between Latter-day Saints and Gentiles subsided as the turn of the century neared. McCormick explained that because of “intense pressure from the federal government . . . Mormon leaders decided to begin a process of accommodation to the larger society and endeavor to conform to national economic, political, and social norms.”¹⁰ Consequently, the LDS Church denounced polygamy in 1890, disbanded the People’s party in 1891, and extended business relations beyond Church owned and Mormon operated enterprises. In spite of those measures, assimilation was gradual. The outbreak of the Great War provided the greatest opportunity for Utahans to “put to rest the old canard that they were disloyal,” wrote historian Thomas G. Alexander.¹¹

Although Utahans moved further into the American mainstream because of their support of the war effort, historians dispute the degree to which they assimilated. While

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¹⁹ For more information on public schools in Salt Lake City, see Frederick S. Buchanan, *Culture Clash and Accommodation: Public Schooling in Salt Lake City, 1890-1994* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1996).

¹⁰ McCormick, “Salt Lake City.”

¹¹ Thomas G. Alexander, “From War to War,” *Utah History To Go*, accessed April 9, 2014, http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/from_war_to_war/worldwar1andutah.html. According to Allen Kent Powell, “Approximately 21,000 Utahns saw military service; of these, 665 died and 864 were wounded. Of the 665 deaths, 219 were killed on the battlefield or died from wounds received in action; 32 died of accidental causes; the remaining 414 died from disease and illness” (Allen Kent Powell, “World War I and Utah,” *Utah History To Go*, accessed April 9, 2014, http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/from_war_to_war/worldwar1andutah.html).
the state urbanized and industrialized at the same rate as the nation as a whole, according to McCormick, many Utahans recognized that most Americans continued to distinguish themselves as outsiders. The *Utah Daily Chronicle*, a publication of the student body at the University of Utah, discussed the issue on January 25, 1927. “For reasons more petty than obvious, we as a group have been withheld from ordinary society as something slightly contagious. Even now, the statement that one is from Utah brings an incredulous ‘Really?’ from certain quarters.” Fortunately, that view had changed by the late nineteen twenties and the “stupid isolation which people of other states have inflicted upon Utah” eased. This thesis argues that young women who aspired to flapperdom stimulated that social and cultural assimilation, and subsequently, ushered Salt Lake City further into the American mainstream than ever before.

Fleeting allusions to the flapper in Utah’s capital generally revolve around John Held, Jr. Held was born in 1889 in Salt Lake and made a name for himself as an artist from a young age. At the age of fourteen, he sold a drawing to *Life*—shortly thereafter, he began illustrating for East High School’s paper, *The Red and The Black*, and the *Utonian* yearbook of the University of Utah. By sixteen, he had dropped out of school to work as a sports cartoonist for the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Held and fellow *Tribune* staffer—Herold Ross, a fellow high school dropout and later the founding editor of the *New Yorker*—supplemented their formal education by wandering the city’s red light district. The boy’s experiences afforded both young men an “education in some of the shadier aspects of Salt Lake City society.”

12 Shelly Armitage, *John Held Jr.: Illustrator of the Jazz Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 4. John Held, Jr. recalled his experiences in Salt Lake City’s red-light district: “Within the street were
popularized his image of the rebellious, modern, immodest, and sexually liberated flapper. Within several years, his cartoons appeared in widely circulated magazines such as *Life, Judge, and College Humor.*

A 1927 issue of *Life* featured one of Held’s most iconic illustrations. The image captured the passing of two women. One pushed a stroller—the other walked her dog. The first woman was a wholesome looking mother in a polka-dotted, lace-trimmed, long-sleeved dress buttoned up to her chin. She covered her curly brown hair with a wide-brimmed hat, decorated with flowers and a red ribbon. Together with child, she was the perfect image of a young mother . . . or she would have been, if not for the horrified expression on her otherwise lovely face. Serving as the source of shock was a second woman—tall, slender, and scantily clad—passing in the opposite direction. In one hand, the thin lady held her dog’s leash, in the other a cigarette. Compared to her sensible counterpart, the childless woman dressed immodestly in a white cap-sleeved, V-neck dress hemmed above her knees. She completed her flapper look with high heels, red lipstick, thick eyeliner, decorative jewelry, and short black hair. Unlike the modest mother, many found Held’s flapper charming.

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That image depicted the flapper as a break from the past. Preceding Held’s flapper, the Gibson girl embodied the ideals of traditional femininity in the 1890s and 1900s—namely modesty, fertility, submission, and purity. Created by Charles Dana Gibson, the icon wore a tightly laced corset to draw in her waist and create an hourglass shape. Exaggerating her curves in contrast to her slim middle, the Gibson girl padded her waist and bosom to create the illusion of wide hips and a full bust—each of which indicated her ability to bear children. While the shape into which she molded her body was sexual, she dressed modestly. The Gibson girl wore floor-length skirts, long-sleeved shirts that covered her arms down to her wrists, and she buttoned up her collar around her neck. She generally exposed very little skin. The Gibson girl also proudly displayed long locks to distinguish herself as proper, because only “bohemian and intellectual” women wore their hair short.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, she preserved her reputation by refusing cosmetics, which society largely associated with women of questionable morals.

\textsuperscript{14} Zeitz, \textit{Flapper}, 136.
Through her restrictive and elaborate dress, the Gibson girl communicated contemporary ideals of womanhood and maintained her position atop the pedestal of Victorian society.

In the words of historian Kenneth A. Yellis, “the Gibson girl was contradicted in every particular by the flapper.”\(^{15}\) Held captured those contradictions with his female characters. In contrast to the Gibson girl, Held’s flappers were immodest, urban sophisticates who pursued pleasure and expressed their sexuality freely. For his work, scholars have recognized Held as the “Illustrator of the Jazz Age,” the “Graphic Hero” of his time, and the visual commentator of the “Roaring Twenties.”\(^{16}\) Contemporary humorist Corey Ford praised Held for his ability to document the decade. “His angular and scantily clad flapper was accepted by elders as the prototype of modern youth, the symbol of our moral revolution.” Ford also credited the style and manners of the era to Held. “Perhaps no comic artist ever had a more immediate impact on a generation.”\(^{17}\) The features of his flapper, however, seemed to contradict the traits of his hometown, which begs the question, what was the relationship between Held’s life in Salt Lake and his portrayal of the flapper? According to Shelly Armitage, “Held saw a similarity in the free-wheeling life of the West and the expansive life of the city. The fact that he could look back on his experiences in Salt Lake City and identify the same types he could in, say, Bohemian New York, suggests much about this similarity.”\(^{18}\)

Armitage argued that Held modeled the flapper after characters from his younger days in Salt Lake City. His illustrations alone, however, do not offer a full understanding


\(^{16}\) Armitage, *John Held Jr.*, xi.


of the flapper in Utah’s capital because they do not detail the regional expectations society placed on the actions of young women. Neither can the images suggest how Salt Lake City girls reconciled prescriptions for their behavior with their individual desires to be like the flapper. Moving beyond Held’s characters, this thesis will demonstrate that the flapper in Salt Lake was unlike flappers elsewhere because unique forces—primarily the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—shaped the meaning of ideal womanhood in Utah’s capital.

The first chapter examines advice literature that outlined the broad social expectations against which young women in Salt Lake City defined themselves. The Young Woman’s Journal delineated the tenets of ideal Mormon womanhood and appropriate female behavior. Underlying the Journal’s message was the belief that youth warped the judgment of young women. Helpless, emotional, and vulnerable, adolescent girls required guidance. The Church advocated strict parental control and close community supervision. When correctly directed, a young woman could cultivate faith, prepare her mind and body for marriage and motherhood, experience joy, safeguard morality, and uplift society all while remaining obedient. The Journal, in essence, authorized pleasurable pursuits so long as morality founded every decision.

“The Heartitorium” and “Come to Heart’s Haven,” advice columns published in the Salt Lake Telegram, reflected a wider, secular map of female social expectations. Kathleen Kaye and Betty Blair expressed greater faith in female facilities. Consequently, the columnists held young women accountable for their behavior, feelings, and position in life. With responsibility came power. The Telegram writers thus encouraged Salt
Lake girls to set their own course, assert their individual desires, and achieve success on their terms. Considered together, the Journal and Telegram columns offered a glimpse into the social expectations placed on young women’s behavior.

The second chapter examines three fictional stories to understand the social anxieties surrounding girl’s behavior in Salt Lake City. First, the “Danger Age” cautioned young women and their families against parental ignorance and adolescent disobedience with a story of a deadly joyride. Next, “Reciprocation” reflected public concern for unsupervised recreation, women’s dress, smoking, drinking, and promiscuity. Finally, the “Norton Twins” chastised coeds and single women for their selfish pursuits of education and misplaced prioritizations of individual accomplishment. These stories revealed the often-exaggerated social perceptions of bad behavior to demonstrate that young women behaved neither as badly as critics claimed, nor did girls wholly follow the guidelines of ideal womanhood. Instead, Salt Lake City flappers functioned somewhere in between.

Finally, the third chapter examines the lived behavior of the Salt Lake City flapper with the stereotypical characteristics of the American icon. Comparatively, flappers in Salt Lake pursued education as fervently as the idolized figure, participated in athletics, recreated, and shared in the national beauty culture as the New Woman did. By accepting those aspects of the flapper way of life, the young women in Utah’s capital recognized their abilities, asserted their desires, gained independence, pushed the limits of gendered boundaries, and made known their disapproval of social expectations for girl’s behavior. Flappers in Salt Lake City, however, hedged on other aspects of the
characteristic personality. For instance, some women smoked, drank, and expressed their sexual desires without restraint, but many more abstained from such practices.

The importance of this thesis is wide-ranging. Broadly, my work expands flapper studies, and subsequently, American cultural and nineteen twenties history, into an overlooked region. Further, this thesis incorporates Utah women further into the discourse of American women’s studies. Conversely, my study of the flapper inserts a new aspect of women’s and cultural history into Utah studies. Those aims function to alleviate a problem recognized by Estelle B. Freedman, a historian specializing in women and feminism. Freeman identified an issue of overgeneralization in nineteen twenties women’s studies citing a historical “tendency to write about the American woman, when race, class, religion, and ethnicity have significantly divided women in twentieth-century America.”¹⁹ Those oversights preserve false notions that promote a uniform social experience among women, a mistake that marginalizes most females, overlooking their ability to interpret and adapt rather than instinctively follow cultural trends.

With this work, I intend to focus on the lives of young women in Salt Lake City throughout the twenties so that they no longer fade into the overgeneralized mass of rebellious youth. By drawing attention to a distinct set of flappers, I hope to give voice to the experience of the New Woman in Salt Lake City.

CHAPTER II

THE FINEST FIBER IN THE SOUL

The storms are coming, I warn you of it; they rage out there; and soon shall be beating against our gates—we must hold up these standards and keep back the corrupting suggestive things of the world, let them not come in; destroy them, stifle them if they enter, and maintain this standard of Zion.

Melvin J. Ballard, of the Council of the Twelve
“We Stand for a Pure Life Through Clean Thought and Action”

Elder Melvin J. Ballard condemned the moral standards of modern society when he spoke at the annual conference of the Mutual Improvement Association on June 11, 1922 in Salt Lake City, Utah. During his address, the senior member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shared a fear of his with the young Mormon women in attendance—vulgarity and sin were overwhelming virtue. Ballard believed that the girls to whom he spoke must cultivate and maintain pure hearts, minds, and actions to reverse that disturbing social development. If they upheld the high standards prescribed by the Church, the youth might endure the impending storm, Ballard maintained.

The New Woman of the nineteen twenties viewed society differently than Ballard. Representing the quintessential modern female, the flapper challenged traditional ideals such as those espoused by the Church. She rebelled against social pressures and power institutions by questioning the merits of modesty, defying sexual conventions, and testing

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20 Mormoms address male missionaries and leaders of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, Seventies, and Area Presidencies (auxiliary branches of the LDS Church) as “Elder.” Elder Ballard served on the Quorum (or Council) of the Twelve, the penultimate governing body of the Church, from 1919 until his death on July 30, 1939 (General Authority Pages, “Melvin J. (Joseph) Ballard,” http://www.gapages.com/ballamj1.htm [accessed June 10, 2014]).
21 Melvin J. Ballard, “‘We Stand for a Pure Life Through Clean Thought and Action,’ An Address Given at the M.I.A. Conference, June 11, 1922,” Young Woman’s Journal 33, no. 8 (August 1922): 415–420.
the limits of appropriate female behavior. The flapper pushed the boundaries—
boundaries established by the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City. To allow a fuller
understanding of the New Woman in Utah’s capital, I have examined advice literature
that outlined the broad social expectations against which girls defined their behavior.
The *Young Woman’s Journal*, a monthly publication of the Young Ladies Mutual
Improvement Association, offers a revealing portrait of the traditionalist position
articulated by Church officials. Conversely, “The Heartitorium” and “Come to Heart’s
Haven” reflected a secular map of progressive expectations in the *Salt Lake Telegram.*
Studying this literature helps to define the prescriptions attached by society to the
behavior of young women in Salt Lake City. Further, investigating the regionally
specific restrictions society placed on girls will contribute to a more comprehensive
understanding of the New Woman and the flapper in the nineteen twenties.\(^22\)

The *Journal* dated back to the Relief Society, which became the first organization
for Mormon women in 1842. In 1869, concern for those girls too young to join the
women’s group prompted Brigham Young to organize the Young Ladies Department of
the Cooperative Retrenchment Association, later renamed the Young Ladies’ Mutual
Improvement Association (YLMIA).\(^23\) The society promoted order, thrift, industry,
charity, and moderation. Above all, Young proclaimed when he announced the
formation of the organization to his family, girl members should learn to “retrench from
their extravagance in dress, in eating, and even in speech.” He believed a time had

\(^{22}\) I henceforth refer to the *Young Woman’s Journal* as the *Journal*, the *Salt Lake Telegram* as the *Telegram*,
“The Heartitorium” as the “Heartitorium,” and “Come to the Heart’s Haven” as “Heart’s Haven.”
\(^{23}\) Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association of the Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints: From November 1869 to June 1910* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1911), 2.
“come when the sisters must agree to give up their follies of dress and cultivate a modest apparel, a meek deportment, and to set an example before the people of the world worthy of imitation.” From the beginning, the YLMIA endeavored to shape and control the behavior of young women; the Journal functioned to affect that aim.

According to founding Journal editor Susa Young Gates, the publication originated as “an outlet for the literary gifts of the girl members” while “representing the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Originally published in 1889, the Journal steadfastly promoted nine tenets of ideal womanhood: Faith, Knowledge, Work, Truth, Joy, Service, Honor, Heath, and Beauty. Although a large portion of Salt Lake residents identified as Mormon, the YLMIA publication reached outside of the mainstream when editors called on readers to “put the Young Woman’s Journal into every home.” Thus, the Journal advocated temperance among all girls, not only Latter-day Saints.

Adolescence was simultaneously magnificent and ruinous according to the Mormon publication. Frequent Journal contributor and women’s suffragist, Ruth May Fox, compared youth to the spring: “The exquisite coloring of the tree and shrub, the varying shades of the mountain and valley have their prototypes in glowing youth. And how like youth is the tiny brooklet, meandering along, knowing not, caring not, so that it may laugh and dance to its own music. But like the spring, youth is growing toward

24 Gates, History of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association, 8.
maturity." As Fox described it, youth was a blissful phase of romance and adventure that cultivated self-awareness and responsibility in young women.

Elsewhere in the Journal, the narrator of a story entitled “A Modern Spinster” defined youth as “a disease from which I will recover.” The most injurious malady of adolescence was puberty, which inordinately affected young women. A lesson on “The Beauty of Adolescence,” featured in September 1925, explained:

Puberty for a girl is floating down a broadening river into the open sea. Landmarks recede, the water deepens and changes in its nature; there are new and strange forms of life; the currents are more complex; and the phenomena of tides make new conditions and new dangers. The hark is frail, liable to be tossed by storms of feeling, at the mercy of wind and wave, and if without chart and compass, and simple rules of navigation, aimless drifting in the darkness of ignorance, amidst both rocks and shoals, may make of the weak or unadvised, wrecks or castaways.

Instead of an innocent mountain stream, the Church viewed youth as a tumultuous ocean. The tempest that was puberty pulled mentally undeveloped and emotionally unstable girls from calm seas to dangerous waters. Powerless, helpless, and drifting, the fate of each young woman rested in the sound consciousness and stern control of her parents. That grim analysis of adolescence firmly underlined the Church expectation that puberty diminished female ability. In that scenario, girls must submit to and obey authority.

The Journal reflected broader concerns related to the problem of youth in the twenties. Social and cultural historian Paula S. Fass examined predominant American responses to youth, which she categorized as “traditionalist” and “progressive.” In her book, The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s, Fass expounded on

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each position. In the wake of the Great War, traditionalists “viewed the present from the perspective of what they believed was a formerly stable society which had been shattered.” Within that broken system, youth “represented the fruit of social disorder, cultural disintegration, and a personal loss of coherence.” 29 In his speech, Ballard prayed “for the speedy recovery of the world’s moral standards,” which the destructive and deadly overseas conflict had “materially lowered.” 30 Generally, Journal articles and Church rhetoric mirrored traditionalist sentiments concerning society.

Mormons views diverged regarding youth, however, because the Church believed that Latter-day Saint girls were unlike other American girls. A lesson on Mormon ideals explained:

The chief difference between the Latter-day Saint girl and other girls is that she has more blessings. She has all that other girls have, and in addition, other great privileges and gifts. Latter-day Saint girls have been born under a sacred covenant, which gives them great spiritual advantages if they choose to take them. . . They are given through the gospel a set of standards of life that we feel are superior to those given to any other people. 31

Faith privileged Mormon women. Nevertheless, girls could not rely entirely on those advantages to remain afloat in the unsettled sea of youth. Instead, parents and Church authorities had to teach young Latter-day Saint women to capitalize on their blessings. When Mormon girls obeyed and learned, they had the ability to act positively and elevate society; but when they refused to submit to authority, they fell along with the immoral youth of America and contributed to the social disorder of modern society.

30 Ballard, “‘We Stand for a Pure Life Through Clean Thought and Action,’” Young Woman’s Journal 33, no. 8 (August 1922): 415.
Progressives perceived youth differently. No less aware of the effects of the Great War, Fass explained, progressives “set their sights on a new order and a new coherence which beckoned somewhere in the future toward which the youth were already oriented.”

The self-proclaimed “Independent Newspaper” of Salt Lake City, the Telegram, expressed progressive views in relation to the Journal. The publication circulated widely among area residents and featured Kathleen Kaye’s daily advice column, the “Heartitorium.” In 1925, eight years after Kaye’s column debuted, Betty Blair inherited her mantel with markedly less tenderness in the “Heart’s Haven.” Typically responding to letters from young women, the Telegram columns portrayed youth as a positive force and outlined expectations that girls shape their lives and participate as active members of society.

Figure 2. Left, Accompanied by a tearful woman, the heading of Kathleen Kaye’s daily column offered “Advice to women and men who are troubled.” Subsequent iterations of the title replaced the forlorn female with the words “faith,” “hope,” “charity,” and “love.” (Kaye, The Heartitorium by Kathleen Kaye, Salt Lake Telegram [1923].) Right, The headline for Betty Blair’s editorial featured three women dressed modestly in the Victorian style. While the simple illustrations likely functioned as a source identifier for readers, the headings also suggested to women that the content might be of particular interest.

32 Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful, 15.
33 The Salt Lake Telegram began as The Evening Telegram in January 1902. In 1918, The Evening Telegram and the Herald Republican combined and the Salt Lake Telegram Publishing Co. began publishing them as a single paper. The Salt Lake Telegram was a moderate voice of public opinion throughout its run, which ended in 1952.
interest to them. (Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, *Salt Lake Telegram*, [1926].)

The *Telegram* columnists held girls and boys equally accountable for their youthful behavior. A letter published on June 3, 1923 read, “I have plenty of chances to go out with real nice fellows, but somehow I cannot have a good time . . . I never want to go any place in particular, and nothing sounds like fun anymore. But if I stay home, I get lonesome and blue, and want to cry and I don’t know why.” Responding, Kaye asked, “Disillusioned so soon? What have you done, poor child? Have you played the game of life too hard—struck down deep and found it empty?” Kaye advised the “poor little twentieth century whirlwind” to examine her clouded conscious. Did artificial stimulation obstruct the otherwise beautiful opportunities provided by youth? Had physical neglect occasioned the emptiness? Whatever the reason, Kaye held the young woman accountable for her sorrow.

More often than assigning blame, the *Telegram* columnists encouraged young women to take responsibility for their behavior and act to dictate their futures. Consider, for instance, Blair’s reply to a high school sophomore. An admitted participant “in the lighter forms of necking,” the student expressed concern over liberties taken by her male petting partners. Blair responded by instructing the young woman to “teach the boys chivalry by demanding it of them.”

34 The *Telegram* writers also repeatedly emphasized the importance of freedom. While Blair conceded that no girl was entirely free from

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34 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, *Salt Lake Telegram*, October 9, 1928.
parental supervision and social obligations, she encouraged young women to assert their independence and make their desires known.\textsuperscript{35}

Within the framework of each construction of youth, the YLMIA publication and Telegram columnists outlined appropriate female behavior. The \textit{Journal} claimed that ideal womanhood began with faith. As Americans embraced modernity in the Roaring Twenties, most remained deeply committed to various forms of Christianity. Utahns were the same. According to the \textit{Census of Religious Bodies} taken in 1926, more than half of Salt Lake City residents belonged to a religious organization.\textsuperscript{36} Of the religiously affiliated, eighty-three percent were Mormon, making the LDS faith the predominant denomination in the city—totaling close to forty-six percent of the entire population. To put those figures into perspective, consider that few cities reported majority denominations topping twenty-five percent of the overall population: thirty percent of Boston’s population identified as Roman Catholic, as did twenty percent of New York City’s, and eighteen percent of Chicago’s.\textsuperscript{37} By a large margin, the Mormon conglomerate in Utah’s capital comprised a greater portion of the population than majority denominations elsewhere. Faith infused life in Salt Lake City.

\textsuperscript{35} Blair, \textit{Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair}, \textit{Salt Lake Telegram}, September 23, 1928.
\textsuperscript{36} U.S Bureau of the Census, \textit{Census of Religious Bodies 1926: Latter-Day Saints Statistics, Denominational History Doctrine, and Organization}, prepared by the United States Department of Commerce (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1929), 3. The Census defined membership as “The members of a local church organization, and thus of the denomination to which the church belongs, are those persons who are recognized as constituent parts of the organization. The exact definition of membership depends upon the constitution and practice of the church or denomination under consideration. Each church was instructed to report the number of its members according to the definition of member used in that particular church or organization.”
The *Journal* unabashedly promoted the value of the LDS faith. Salt Lake County judge and prominent Mormon, Nephi Jensen, reinforced the significance of religion when he characterized it as a “means of the highest culture.” Judge Jenson maintained that faith “chastens the heart and puts the finest fiber in the soul. It more than anything else develops that ‘humanity.’”\(^{38}\) Beyond Jenson, the Church believed that women must engage and attend to their faith to be fulfilled. The *Journal* directed young readers to study the Bible, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Additionally, the YLMIA publication contributed to the faith development of Latter-day Saint girls with features such as “Gospel Teachings,” “The Divinity of Jesus,” and “Prophecy of the Book of Mormon.” Those lessons instructed young women to submit to their parents, secular authorities, and Counsels of the Church.\(^{39}\)

Ruth May Fox expanded on the idea of adolescent obedience in “Youth and its Responsibilities.” In Fox’s opinion, the younger generation was eternally indebted.

For whatever youth may think of the older generation the world exists as it does today because their elders have lived in it. And what a wonderful world it is! Deserts have been redeemed, mountains leveled, distances almost annihilated, instantaneous communication between man and man in almost every part of the earth made possible, and civilization brought to its present luxurious condition by the hands and the brains of the older generations for the benefit and convenience of the youth.\(^{40}\)

According to Fox, young women should demonstrate their faithfulness by dressing and behaving modestly. That sentiment echoed the *Journal’s* belief that girls should practice


\(^{40}\) Fox, “Youth and Its Responsibilities,” 708.
obedient behavior and self-restraint to restore the traditional social order and preserve morality.

Although Kaye and Blair emphasized morality in their responses, religion rarely appeared as a topic of discussion in either Telegram column. Perhaps the writers omitted subjects related to faith to conform to the “independent” spirit of the paper. Maybe they evaded religious matters as part of an effort to carve out a secular corner in a pious society. Regardless of reason, the columnists adopted a modern, progressive position relative to the Journal. Kaye and Blair considered morality over religious doctrine, statistics above beliefs founded in faith, and science over theology in their answers. Despite the secular tone of the columns, both Telegram writers advised readers to let truth, honor, and integrity shape their decisions and guide their behavior.

Writers frequently appealed to Kaye and Blair for advice when disagreements within a family arose over the appropriate attitudes and actions of young women. The Telegram columnists often acted as neutral mediators, expounding on the merits of disparate positions. Although Blair hoped each girl had the opportunity to forge her own fate, she recognized that individual desires usually diverged from parental plans and that obedience commonly conflicted with freedom. In spite of her support for independent development, a position Kaye similarly expressed, Blair valued lasting family bonds and harmonious households over the adolescent autonomy of young women.41

While the Telegram writers adopted a less fervent defense of faith compared to the Journal and rebuffed requirements of absolute female submission, each columnist generally promoted obedience and moral integrity. To varying degrees, parallel values

41 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, Salt Lake Telegram, September 23, 1928.
founded the expectations that each publication placed on female behavior. Thus, when we consider literature—such as the *Telegram* and *Journal*—as a cultural mirror, we can reasonably conclude that the Salt Lake citizenry adopted the same ideals as a foundation for a broader social evaluation of young women’s behavior.

Beyond faith and obedience, the *Journal* encouraged young women to “Seek Knowledge” in their pursuit of ideal womanhood. The inter-war period in America offered educational opportunities previously unavailable to girls. As a result, high school graduation became customary and higher education developed into an acceptable path for young women by 1920. According to historian Lynn Peril, “college attendance jumped threefold in the years between 1900 and 1930, with the 1920s seeing the most rapid rise.”42 Educational expectations in Utah surpassed national advances, due in large part to a compulsory attendance law passed in 1919, which mandated that minors attend a minimum of one hundred and forty-four hours per year.43 Consequently, the *U.S. Census* indicates that total attendance among Utah students, ages five to twenty, increased from 1920 to 1930. Student catalogues from the University of Utah similarly illustrate that higher education in Salt Lake City also exceeded national averages, specifically in the area of women’s enrollment.

The *Journal* supported women’s pursuit of knowledge by endorsing certain phases of education. High school graduation was mandatory according to the YLMIA publication. Inconsistent messages, however, revealed internal conflict on the value of

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higher education. While some columns offered advice to college-bound women, other Journal articles denounced coeds as selfishly abandoning family, faith, and morality for scholarship. Fictional narratives often ended when a female protagonist abruptly acknowledged and accepted a repressed desire for traditional female roles and abandoned her education for marriage.

In “From a College Woman’s Journal,” Ph.D. candidate Margaret Cunningham discovered that “a woman’s chief object in life should be to marry well, for in a happy marriage lies all the best life has to offer.” Cunningham also concluded that “home making is the most interesting work in the world; to have a baby is life’s sweetest experience; marriage is a career.” Although the Journal presented contradicting messages, the publication generally promoted a traditional assessment of female education that historian Linda Kerber termed “Republican Motherhood.” The concept “charged a mother with the civic duty of instilling values in her children.” That duty, Kerber claimed, “required a commitment to her own education.” The Journal espoused that view, supporting women’s education as a means of instilling knowledge in girls who, in turn, became mothers. Those mothers were then capable of raising intelligent children and faithful citizens.

The secular press advocated a more comprehensive form of women’s education, albeit unconventionally at times. Telegram writers, for instance, censured girls for expressing interest in movie careers over continued schooling. A writer asked, “What

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45 Fonnesbeck, “From a College Woman’s Journal,” 32 (emphasis in original).
46 Peril, College Girls, 19.
should I do?” She dreamed of being a film star and failed to see how an education might benefit her. Kaye replied, “Sunshine, dear, it matters not what your interests now are . . . there’s but one foundation upon which real success may be laid, and that is a thorough general education. Not pleasing to your fancy, perhaps, but facts are stubborn, and this one rings true.” Other readers complained of schoolroom boredom, to which Kaye issued stern instructions to stay the course because “high school, university or college credentials are the best weapons” with which a girl could arm herself.

On the subject of education, the otherwise sharp-tonged Blair compassionately accommodated requests for information and advice. She often went so far as to invite readers to her office or schedule phone calls for personal consultations on educational matters. In general, the Telegram columnists promoted education as an essential component of modern life that insured the independence of young women. When unhappy wives, for instance, asked how they might support themselves in the event of divorce, education was always the first suggestion of each columnist. Contrary to the Journal’s position, education served the individual needs and interests of women, according to Kaye and Blair.

The third tenet of Mormon womanhood, “Know Work,” exposed greater distinctions between LDS and secular expectations for young women. Many middle-class American women filled the occupational void created when the United States entered the Great War. Although a vast number of women worked prior to the war, women occupied positions formerly dominated by men as soldiers deployed overseas.

47 Kathleen Kaye, The Heartitorium by Kathleen Kaye, Salt Lake Telegram, August 21, 1921.
New duties and unfamiliar experiences allowed women to taste “the possibility of life beyond homemaking,” in the words of *Smithsonian Magazine* contributor, Emily Spivack.49 But as men returned in the wake of the war, women surrendered their interim positions, often reluctantly.

A post-war economic boom created positions for relegated women. Unfortunately, as Zeitz emphasized, most women toiled tediously in monotonous, insipid professions. Of the women employed in 1920, “nearly a third [worked] as domestic servants, the rest as clerical workers, factory workers, store clerks, and farmers.”50 Women in Utah faced similar scenarios. Although the war stimulated a period of unprecedented prosperity in the state, the inter-war positions available to Salt Lake women came with limited opportunities for advancement, a fact Miriam B. Murphy highlighted in her study of employment in Utah from 1896–1950. Despite the bleak prospects and poor pay, a greater percentage of Utah women worked in 1930 than 1920. Interestingly, however, the rate of employment among girls ages 10–17 decreased by twenty percent over the decade.51

While work furthered each component of ideal womanhood—faith, worship, and knowledge—it also occupied women’s time and energy. Former Brigham Young University President, George H. Brimhall, echoed that sentiment in a statement on the

50 Zeitz, *Flapper*, 92.
importance of work. “In the hours of greatest freedom we are . . . unmade.”52 In his estimation, work occupied time that women might otherwise devote to immoral thoughts or delinquent activities. Brimhall’s words reflected a broader traditionalist view, and the position of the Church, that evil sprung from idle hands. Beyond diverting attention, the act of working instilled positive ethics and characteristics. Brimhall advised *Journal* readers that doing “only what we like is the way of the weakling. We should seek to acquire the habit of doing things which ought to be done, but which we do not like to do.”53 With that, Brimhall implied that women built character through work.

Kaye and Blair supported women’s work for other reasons. In the modern world, one in which the *Telegram* writers advised women against complete dependence of any kind—neither to a husband, parent, child, nor friend—work ensured financial security and self-possession. “Despite deep and abiding discrimination in wages and employment,” Zeitz wrote, “working women often found that real money could buy real freedom.”54 For the New Woman of the nineteen twenties, work presented an opportunity to grab hold of the purse strings and control their destinies. As an icon of contemporary femininity and modern womanhood, the working flapper embodied the spirit of work and the individualist objectives espoused by the *Telegram* columnists.

Comparatively, the *Journal* and *Telegram* valued separate aspects of work. Whereas the Mormon publication emphasized work’s ability to advance knowledge, spirituality, and character, the *Telegram’s* advice columnists encouraged work as a means

54 Zeitz, *Flapper*, 29.
of female independence. In spite of diverging opinions, each source believed that work benefited young women. Interestingly, as previously mentioned, the rate of employment decreased among girls ages 10–17 during the nineteen twenties. Perhaps the decrease indicated a female prioritization of education over employment. On the other hand, maybe the decade’s general prosperity forced fewer young women to procure paid positions. While it is difficult to know why fewer young women in Utah worked during the twenties, it is clear that in choosing not to work, girls disregarded both Mormon and secular instructions.

The Journal’s next tenet of true womanhood, “Feel Joy,” revealed gendered expectations founded in the Church’s distinct understanding that adolescence diminished female ability. The hallmark of American youth in the nineteen twenties was their pursuit of joy. From dancing to drinking, smoking to sex, and every pleasurable pursuit in between, the inter-war generation’s quest for joy shocked Victorian sensibilities. The same was true in Salt Lake City. Utah’s capital presented endless opportunities for recreation and joyful diversions including summer resorts, movie theatres, and department stores. Unsupervised quests for pleasure—such as joyriding, unchaperoned dances or parties, and dating—similarly captured the youth’s attention and provoked social concern.
Figure 3. Left. Advertised as the “Greatest Amusement Value in the World,” Saltair provided endless opportunities for entertainment. (Shipler Commercial Photographers, “Oldsmobile at Saltair” [1927], Utah State Historical Society.) Right, The Orpheum (now Capital Theatre) was one of the largest and most popular movie theatres in Salt Lake City during the nineteen twenties. (Shipler Commercial Photographers, “Orpheum Theatre” [1927], Utah State Historical Society.)

The Journal fixated on the topic of joy. Considered a necessary component of complete womanhood, the Mormon ideal of joy revolved around four inextricably linked beacons of happiness: the home, marriage, motherhood, and the family. Before conceiving a family of her own, the young woman relied on her family to foster spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth in the stable, loving, and supportive environment of her home. At the proper age—in the later years of high school—the Mormon girl entered a period of courtship. The YLMIA publication outlined the finer points of appropriate behavior for each phase of courting. Ideally, a couple assessed their “fitness for marriage” while dating by evaluating corresponding ambitions, morals, personalities, religious beliefs, and familial compatibility. Well-matched pairs devoted themselves to
each other and, over time, established a “complete love” comprised of mutual spiritual, mental, and physical attraction.55

Vigilant chaperones ensured that young men and women controlled their “strong emotions” and sexual impulses “to caress and express affection” throughout all phases of courtship.56 Ideally, committed couples married at the appropriate ages of 22–26 for men and 18–24 for women. The Journal considered marriage, which bound husband and wife for eternity, the “real beginning” of life’s journey. By marrying, a groom agreed to provide and his bride vowed to “love, honor, and cherish” her husband in the “sunny, happy atmosphere” of their home.57 As soon as God deemed fit, the model wife became a mother and experienced pure joy as she reciprocated the love and care she received from her mother as a child.

The family of a righteous woman grew, as divinity dictated, and she delivered “noble sons and daughters who may be great in the kingdom of God.” The Journal and Church tasked mothers with the duty of teaching her children to recognize and capitalize on the blessings bestowed to Latter-day Saints. A mother’s guidance, discipline, care, and faith shaped blessed Mormon children into men and women who “render[ed] her homage as a true woman and . . . bless[ed] her name forever.”58 Well-raised children built upon their mother’s legacy, elevating society as they fostered families of their own. Essentially, the greatest contributions women made were as devoted wives, caring

mothers, and attentive matriarchs who shared their LDS ideals, and in the Church’s estimation, positively influenced humanity.

Outside of the home, marriage, motherhood, and family, the Journal acknowledged the importance of socializing in the lives of young women. Such pleasures, however, required self-control to prevent overindulgence, immorality, and delinquency. The Journal mandated association with “people of good repute” in a “proper environment” that was free of excesses, never on the Sabbath, and respectful in manner to ensure that young women pursued appropriate social outlets.59 Socializing within those parameters was valuable. Through inter-personal interactions, girls developed communication and social skills, refined their manners, and advanced their understanding of culture.

Secular columnists Kaye and Blair similarly urged young women to participate in appropriate activities and pursue healthy relationships—but, only when the time was right.

Too much diversion of time, attention, and thought makes for a slumping in every direction, and there is too much importance to be done during the years of girlhood, to have the forces weakened, by things intended naturally for other years. And besides all that, if there were not the other interests to be taken care of, a girl would make a serious mistake to attempt to borrow from womanhood something not for girlhood, and therefore lost—lost both to the girl and the woman.60

The “Heartitorium” told young women to enjoy and embrace each stage of life. Because Kaye and Blair that believed youth should be the most “delightful and carefree time” of a girl’s life, the columnists counseled young women to savor every minute of their

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60 Kaye, The Heartitorium by Kathleen Kaye, Salt Lake Telegram, August 1, 1920.
adolescence. Girls should indulge in the carelessness of girlhood. Young women should embrace the excitement of adolescence. Wives should revel in the ecstasy of marriage and women should celebrate the joys of motherhood. Like social commentators elsewhere, the Telegram columnists defined proper conduct for their readers.

Compared to the Journal, the Telegram columnists advocated a lengthy period of courtship, during which girls should circulate freely. “Until you are engaged,” Kaye advised, “it is not within the bounds of good form to allow any young man to monopolize you.” The writers, however, emphasized that uninhibited socializing never justified immoral behavior, namely sexual promiscuity. In line with the YLMIA publication, Kaye and Blair supported chaperoned events and wholesome forms of entertainment. They also categorically discouraged petting and kissing as well as women marrying before the age of 20 or 21, preferably later. Although the advice writers for the Telegram expressed liberal and progressive views on religious, educational, and occupational matters, Kaye and Blair conveyed relatively conservative beliefs about appropriate associations between young men and women.

Recreation was another aspect of joy discussed at length by each Telegram columnist. So long as decency possessed all delights, Kaye and Blair encouraged readers to indulge in the joys of youth. Further, the advice writers urged young women to participate in social and recreational activities that allowed them to express their thoughts freely and build character. “Realize your needs” Blair instructed, “then in the most

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61 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, Salt Lake Telegram, April 30, 1925.
63 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, Salt Lake Telegram, May 27, 1926.
positive manner go about getting what you want without an apology.” Even negative or uncomfortable situations provided opportunities for girls to assert themselves, and either support the merits of their opinions or reevaluation their positions. In most cases, the *Telegram* writers believed that young women benefited from socializing and recreating.

The *Journal* and *Telegram* maintained similar stances on matters related to joy. Each publication broadly advocated morally guided behavior, relationships, and activities. Still, distinctions surfaced. The *Journal* fundamentally relied on the family, Church, and Mormon ideals to lead young women from girlhood, through courtship, to marriage, and motherhood. Conversely, the *Telegram* columnists placed greater faith in the abilities of young women to forge individual paths. Whereas Kaye and Blair believed that women could and should act, the *Journal* implied that girls were too vulnerable and impressionable to make correct decisions independent of wiser authorities. The fundamental skepticism expressed by the YLMIA publication of female ability drove LDS policies that fueled efforts to control the behavior of young women in Salt Lake, a subject this thesis covers in the proceeding chapter.

Another crucial component of ideal womanhood was “Honor.” In the Mormon context, honor generally referred to chastity. Although LDS leaders acknowledged that the “sex urge” exerted “tremendous influence” on adolescents, Mormon authorities insisted that young women remain chaste until marriage. To emphasize the importance of modesty in the defense of chastity and underscore the role of young women in the preservation of honor, the *Journal* featured a letter from an anonymous 25-year-old man.

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64 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, *Salt Lake Telegram*, July 27, 1927.
65 Dr. E. E. Erickson, “The Place of Social Activities in the Development of Moral Personality,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 36, no.1 (January 1925): 32
Mentally, I am unclean. Why? Because the women I know will not let me be clean . . . Wherever [men] go we find [women], clad in their waists of net or gauze like silk that show bare arms, bare shoulders, and lingerie . . . What is a fellow going to do? We don’t go around looking for these things, but we cannot help seeing them. No matter how much one may respect a girl, it is an effort to keep his thoughts from straying when she exposes too much of her body in the way she does.66

The letter’s author implied that he had no control over himself. By publishing the letter, the Journal suggested that women were responsible for men’s thoughts of women. Because young women provoked immoral ideas, young women must also provide the cure. The Journal, then, tacitly tasked young women with elevating the thoughts of men by dressing modestly. Through their actions, the YLMIA publication implied that girls could influence men and actively promote and protect the honor of all young women.

Instead of chastity, discussions of honor by the Telegram columnists referred to self-respect. On several occasions, both Kaye and Blair censured young women for criticizing themselves or apologizing for matters beyond their control. Offering “just a word of advice,” Blair instructed a female writer to abandon the “habit of depreciating either your knowledge of things or your ability.” Continuing, Blair categorized self-devaluation as a “negative attitude which will do more harm than good.”67 Overall, the Telegram columnists adopted a progressive stance by urging all women to avoid excessive doubt and develop confidence.

Young women in Salt Lake City received seemingly disparate messages on the matter of honor. From the Journal, girls learned that honor mandated sexual purity. In

66 “Protest Against Women’s Dress,” Young Woman’s Journal 32, no. 12 (December 1921), 690.
the *Telegram* advice columns, young women read that honor amounted to self-respect. On the surface, the Mormon and secular perceptions of honor appear unrelated. The Church, however, considered self-respect and chastity in tandem. Reflecting on the work as a whole, the *Journal* implied that chastity required self-respect, and conversely, self-respect preceded chastity.

The *Journal*’s interpretation of honor stemmed from traditional gendered expectations, more specifically, the LDS anticipation that girls would one day become mothers. According to Church dictates, chastity permitted motherhood because chastity was a component of pure living. Pure living facilitated health and healthy women delivered healthy children. Thus, in that oversimplified vein of thought, chastity lead to motherhood. In contrast, the *Telegram* writers failed to make similar connections in their discussions of honor. Perhaps the columnist’s understanding of self-respect mirrored broader, more prevalent social expectations of female independence and self-sufficiency in the nineteen twenties. Maybe Kaye and Blair felt un compelled to discuss the relationship between self-respect and honor because society assumed a link between the ideas. In any case, there are many unanswered questions related to public perceptions of female sexuality in Salt Lake City that may be fruitful lines of inquiry for the future researchers.
In addition to honor, health was a key tenet of ideal womanhood. Despite the well-known fact that illicit alcohol often contained poisonous ingredients—most commonly methanol, which caused blindness or death in some cases, and Jamaica ginger extract, which lead to paralysis—unregulated liquor flowed among the youth throughout Prohibition.

So, too, did cigarettes. Although the full array of carcinogenic effects remained unknown, most Americans recognized tobacco products as unhealthful. Nevertheless, more women smoked and women smoked more in the nineteen twenties than in the past. When economist Larry Tye quantified the increase, he discovered that “the share of cigarettes consumed by women more than doubled between 1923 and

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Tori Avey, “The Great Gatsby, Prohibition, and Fitzgerald,” *The History Kitchen*, accessed February 14, 2014 [http://www.pbs.org/food/the-history-kitchen/great-gatsby-prohibition-fitzgerald/](http://www.pbs.org/food/the-history-kitchen/great-gatsby-prohibition-fitzgerald/). While Prohibition did temper drinking among Americans overall, the youth did not conform to that trend. Paula Fass studied the issue: “Drinking for youth in the twenties was unlike sex, smoking, or dancing, because the youth labored under a specific legal ordinance forbidding alcoholic indulgence of any kind. Prohibition was an anomaly in an age of increasing freedoms. Students had been permitted to drink at least off-campus before the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act, and beer drinking has been a regular form of celebration and socializing among male students. Prohibition cut off a former freedom.” In the end, Fass concluded, drinking among young men and women increased throughout the nineteen twenties, as did “affecting drunkenness and bragging about their drinking sprees (Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 310 and 315).”
1929.”\(^{69}\) Further, the pursuit of beauty solutions motivated dangerous chemical experimentations and abuse of approved products. American youth clearly overlooked harmful consequences in search of joy, attention, and pleasure.

To outline the Church’s limitations on the body, the *Journal* directed readers to the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C), a text distinct to the Mormon faith that defined regulations for life in the “kingdom of God on the earth.”\(^{70}\) Within the D&C, the Word of Wisdom delineated divine instructions concerning physical health, most notably, the prohibition of “wine, strong drinks, tobacco, and hot drinks.”\(^{71}\) If scripture failed to discourage smoking, the *Journal* also appealed to women’s practicality, sensitivity, and intellect. Based on the findings of Dr. Frederick Pack, a 1921 article declared that nearly two million acres of “our choicest lands are devoted to raising tobacco.” The anti-tobacco commentary also explained that the amount spent on cigarettes annually could fund the construction of one church every 15 minutes or build and maintain homes for 200,000 widows.\(^{72}\) The article asked women to consider the broader environmental, economic, and social evils of tobacco production and smoking in their rejection of cigarettes.

Compared to the issue of smoking, the *Journal* focused less on alcohol related subjects like Prohibition, drinking, or the social ills that accompanied drunkenness.

When YLMIA articles did mentioned alcohol, it was most often in relation to discussions

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\(^{70}\) “The Doctrine and Covenants Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith Jr., the Prophet, with an Introduction and Historical and Exegetical Notes by Hyrum M. Smith, of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and Janne M. Sjodahl” (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1923).

\(^{71}\) “The Doctrine and Covenants.”

\(^{72}\) Dr. Frederick Pack, “We Stand for the Non-Use and Non-Sale of Tobacco,” *Young Woman's Journal* 32, no. 1 (January 1921): 2.
of juvenile delinquency. One lesson described alcohol as a substance that “weakens inhibition powers, dulls the conscious, and excites anger and lust.” The tone of such articles, however, generally implied that men struggled with alcoholism and committed delinquent acts because of drinking more regularly than women succumbed to the harms of liquor. Typically, the Journal coached young women on efficacious methods of discouraging young men from drinking rather than encouraging the female readers to resist temptations to imbibe. Irrespective of the gendered assumptions related to alcohol, the Journal condemned drinking as a transgression against the State, the Church, and God.

Apart from opposing destructive habits, the Journal instructed young women to promote personal health by exercising, drinking plenty of water, eating well, resting often, and dressing properly. According to Mrs. Rachel Grant, mother of Church President Heber Grant, girls required fresh air and sunshine to prevent disease. Mrs. Grant also explained that water, taken in regularly, possessed greater healing properties than many modern medicines. Likewise, simple and wholesome diets allowed young women to maintain healthy bodies. With regular exercise, girls could strengthen their hearts and build muscle. The ability to exercise, however, required loose clothing. Mrs. Grant also claimed that young women required nine hours of sleep each night to remain balanced. The Journal seemed to go to great lengths to promote the positive effects of healthful practices rather than focus on the negative impacts of prohibited habits.

Health concerns also figured largely into the “Heartitorium” and “Heart’s Haven.”

When asked for her honest opinion on smoking, Blair condemned the practice and harshly criticized smokers:

You people who do it are foolish in the extreme . . . I think you are silly, misguided infants, trying to make people think that you are grown up, worldly wise and sophisticated, when by your very acts you prove yourselves quite the contrary and make yourselves the laughing stock of people with more balance.\(^{75}\)

Although Blair strongly denounced smoking, writers often asked about it. For instance, one author pressed Kaye on the matter, asking if it was really “so terrible for a girl to smoke?”\(^{76}\) Kaye remained steadfast in condemning the habit. Nevertheless, the frequency with which she defended her position suggests that young women hedged on the matter.

Apart from drinking and smoking, the health concerns of women centered on weight and proper bodily proportions. While female preoccupations of the sort were hardly new, the characteristically thin figure of the idolized flapper surely prompted many young women to assess their size. According to Blair, girls asked for advice about “reduction” to the point of “ad nauseam.”\(^{77}\) In response to equally infinite inquiries regarding appropriate weight, the *Telegram* columnists published medical standards for young women according to age and height. The columnists promoted health above their reader’s obsessive concerns with corporal measurements by advising them to retain the information as variable over time and in relation to diet and activity.

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\(^{75}\) Blair, *Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair*, *Salt Lake Telegram*, September 12, 1926.


\(^{77}\) Blair, *Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair*, *Salt Lake Telegram*, July 24, 1928.
The final theme of ideal womanhood, “Understand Beauty,” highlighted aesthetic expectations. As Bruce Bliven explained in “Flapper Jane,” by 1925 beauty was the fashion. Fueled by the inter-war democratization of fashion, a shift from Victorian principles, and expanded forms of mass media, an American pursuit of beauty hallmarked the experience of many young women in the twenties. As Kathy Peiss concluded in her book, *Hope in A Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*, what society denounced as inappropriate or excessive before the war became “celebrated as glamour” throughout the nineteen twenties. The growth of the cosmetics industry reflected that shifting point of view. “Between 1909 and 1929,” Peiss commented, “the number of American perfume and cosmetics manufacturers nearly doubled, and the factory value of their products rose tenfold, from $14.2 million to nearly $141 million.” During that time, cosmetics and beauty services became “an affordable indulgence for American women across the socioeconomic spectrum,” thus, more American women participated in the expanding beauty culture.

Consistent with national trends, the beauty culture in Salt Lake City flourished throughout the nineteen twenties. Local newspaper advertisements promoted “exquisite beautifiers” such as Nadine Face Powder for a “charm and loveliness” that allegedly lingered in the memory. Appealing to the authority of film stars, cream and lotion advertisements guaranteed a complexion that would be “admired by all.” Additionally,

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81 “Rose-Petal Complexion,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, June 2, 1921.
82 “For Monday and Tuesday,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, April 3, 1921.
clothing manufacturers and department stores created demand for new styles each season with advertisements for “new” summer dresses, “the latest” winter hats, and “never-before-seen” spring coats. Such rhetoric undoubtedly captured public attention, especially from young women who advertisers targeted.

Figure 5. *Left to Right*, Advertisements focused on new trends each season to create demand for the latest products. Featuring a stylishly bobbed woman, the Keith O’Brien store advertised “Frocks for Mid-Summer Days.” The self-proclaimed “People’s Store,” Z.C.M.I., promoted “100 New Fall Hats of the better sort including the smartest models in the newest shades; appropriate for Street and Dress occasions.” Finally, The Paris Co. announced the arrival of “brand-new” and “never before seen” coats for spring. (*Salt Lake Telegram* [1926; 1923; 1927].)

According to the YLMIA publication, ideal beauty extended beyond the aesthetic. Physical traits were, in fact, only a small part of what the Church promoted as beautiful. In “What Men Admire in Women,” Dr. John Widtsoe deemed the “willing acceptance and use of the privilege and duty of motherhood” among the most crucial components of

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83 Advertisers in the nineteen twenties targeted women, working women in particular. As historian Bonnie English noted, “a new niche marketing approach appealed directly to working women, whose numbers had increased dramatically and who were enjoying their new financial independence (Bonnie English, *A Cultural History of Fashion in the 20th and 21st Centuries: From Catwalk to Sidewalk*, 2nd edition [Oxford: Berg, 2013], 33).
beauty. More than anything, Widtsoe considered fidelity—first to God, then family, community, and friends—the foremost feature of beauty. The Journal collectively emphasized a broad understanding of beauty, independent of physical preoccupations. Despite extensive efforts to elevate various aspects of beauty, the publication’s dialogue focused on corporeal issues.

An article entitled “Personal Beauty” asked Journal readers to “consider what infinite pains the Almighty was at to create an individual design for every human face?” The author, Mabel Fraser, beseeched young women to discover, appreciate, and enhance the beauty bestowed by God rather than turn to artificial means. Other Journal writers meticulously described methods to highlight innate qualities, such as hairstyles that complimented particular facial shapes and features. “Those with eyes a trifle too close together should not draw them closer together by wearing their hair close to the face.” The Journal also counseled readers on correct clothing choices in relation to eye and hair color and skin tone. Overall, the publication stressed organic, God-given forms of natural beauty.

Interestingly, the Journal granted young women permission to experiment with hairstyles, including the popular bob. In “This Hair Question,” contributor H.R. Merrill addressed the pervasive controversy over abbreviated cuts. Why, Merrill asked, should young women keep long hair when men had no similar burden? Moreover, why should

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85 Mabel Fraser, “Personal Beauty: Make the Most of It,” Young Women’s Journal 31, no. 1 (January 1920): 27.
86 Fraser, “Personal Beauty,” 29.
women deprive themselves of the convenience and relief of short hair? According to Merrill, no logical answers existed, thus, the bob was ubiquitous. “Today, no one thinks about thinking of bobbed hair at all.” Whether long or short, hair remained “a girl’s greatest charm.”

Not only did the YLMIA publication accept the bob, it embraced it. While the Church frowned on other types of flapper styles, hair was an arena that seemed to allow for a bit of playfulness and experimentation.

Figure 6. Left to Right, Illustrations of young women with bobbed hairstyles appeared throughout the Journal. The “Beehive Girl,” “Junior Girl,” and the “Senior Girl” modeled various bobbed styles in a 1926 issue of the Mormon publication. Interestingly, the illustrations of the young women appear to show the use of cosmetics. Despite the Church’s unwavering opposition to make-up, these girls seemed quite skilled in the art of cosmetic application. (Young Woman’s Journal [1926].)

The Journal was less forgiving on the issue of cosmetics. Mormon writer Mildred Hall recounted a visit with her friend, “a modern young girl.” Noticing an “army of so called ‘beautifiers’” on the young woman’s table, Mildred imagined how each product might lengthen and darken her eyelashes, color her lips, clear her skin, and brighten her eyes. Intrigued, Mildred asked for a demonstration. As she watched her

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87 H.R. Merrill, “This Hair Question,” Young Woman’s Journal 37, no. 6 (June 1926): 385–386.
friend’s practiced application, Mildred felt her face become “heavy and choked,” and the clogged pores of her skin suddenly screamed for relief. In that moment, she resolved, “that whenever I should have a desire to add a little artificial beauty to my appearance, like every human girl does at some time, that I would shun it as I would a poisonous snake, for it is artificial and when the deception is gone there is nothing left.”\(^8\) Mildred’s vow to enhance beauty naturally encapsulated the Journal’s position against cosmetics.

Apart from cosmetics, the Mormon publication advocated modest, simple, economical, well-kept, and preferably hand-made attire. However, during a “time when fashion decreed that the female figure should be so shamelessly exposed,” the Journal struggled to maintain traditional standards in dress among young women. Without providing specific measurements for details like skirt length, the publication encouraged “right,” loose-fitting attire that properly covered the body. When women observed the rules, they were in “harmony with great spiritual laws.” Disregard of dress guidelines, however, equaled “spiritual suicide.”\(^9\) The Journal clearly placed significant weight on the consequences of dress choice but allowed young women to “ follow the dictates of fashion only to the point of modesty and health.”\(^9\)

The advice of Kaye and Blair seldom deviated from the Journal in regards to beauty. One reader asked how she could be pretty and attractive. Kaye told the young woman “there is a beauty beside which mere facial or physical beauty pales to

insignificance, my dear, and fortunately it is a pulchritude which any person may
cultivate and acquire. It is spiritual beauty—the beauty of a fine soul.” Continuing, the
“Heartitorium” author identified “the bigness of a soul that radiates magnetism—a heart
full of love and kindness, a being effervescent with interest in all humanity, a mind that is
wholesome and free from envy, jealousy, vindictiveness and false pride [and] an
atmosphere permeated with happiness, good cheer and good fellowship” as components
of beauty. Kaye’s remarks reflected the general attitudes of both Telegram columnists
and mirrored the Journal’s comprehensive understanding of beauty.

Although they favored natural remedies over artificial beauty treatments, Kaye
and Blair still obliged their reader’s queries related to alternative means of beautification.
The columnists advocated a demanding daily routine. For clear skin girls had to exercise,
bathe, drink twelve glasses of water, consume a cake of compressed yeast before each
meal, maintain a diet rich in fresh fruits, vegetables, coarse breads, and cereals, and wash
their faces with an almond meal scrub daily. The Telegram writers prescribed nightly
ten-minute scalp massages followed by one hundred brush strokes, supplemented by
shampooing and hot oil treatments every ten days for thick, fast-growing hair. To grow
long eyelashes, young women needed to apply daily applications of glycerin, castor oil,
and rose water. In addition, they must faithfully brush their eyebrows for a manicured
look and right shape. For full, rosy cheeks, Kaye and Blair recommended nightly use of
a suction cup and three treatments of equal parts camphor ammonia and glycerin.
Considering the recommended regimens, it is easy to understand why many young
women gravitated toward the claims of instant beautifiers.

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91 Kaye, The Heartitorium by Kathleen Kaye, Salt Lake Telegram, August 21, 1921.
In spite of the columnist’s disapproval of cosmetic use, Blair acknowledged that many young women practiced artificial beautification. In the regrettable event of application, the “Heart’s Haven” author pleaded with her readers, asking girls not to “paste” cosmetics on as if they were going to be “photographed back of brilliant footlights.” Instead, she urged young women to “look at a healthy child and see both where and how much color Nature has used” as a guide for artificial coloration. Blair frequently reminded readers that cosmetics and beauty supplies were crutches, not cures, and that proper care eliminated the need for artificial aids. Comparatively, the YLMIA publication and Telegram columns expressed similar opinions on the topic of feminine beauty by outlining a broad aesthetic that encompassed mental, spiritual, and physical health.

All told, the Journal and Telegram defined what various sects of society anticipated of young women in Salt Lake City. As a mouthpiece of the LDS Church, the Journal promoted nine tenets of ideal womanhood to shape female behavior. Each standard had roots in a fundamental belief that puberty debilitated young women. Much like a frail ship on a stormy sea, a girl became “unstable” as she matured. Throughout puberty—between the ages of twelve and twenty-four—young women began to perceive men differently, their bodies developed to the point of menarche, and they felt their sexual impulses awaken. Adolescent girls weakened under the weight of such changes; but as a lighthouse safely leads a ship to the shore, parents directed their daughters to the sheltered harbor of the Church.

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92 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, Salt Lake Telegram, June 21, 1925.
Kaye and Blair expressed greater faith in female faculties and held young women accountable for all aspects of their lives. If a girl expressed unhappiness, for instance, the Telegram columnists asked her to examine what behavior brought that upon herself. On the other hand, the advice writers believed that the same young woman was capable of remedying her situation. For the progressive authors of the “Heartitorium” and “Heart’s Haven,” responsibility implied ability. Considering the longevity of the Telegram columns and the enthusiastic reader following, it is reasonable to believe that Kaye and Blair’s empowering messages resonated with many young women in Salt Lake City.

In spite of diverging opinions on the merits of faith, work, and education, the Journal and Telegram editors promoted similar instructions for health, beauty, and virtuous behavior. Those dominating principles of moral decency, however, were at odds with the characteristics of the New Woman, and even more opposed to the traits of the quintessential figure of femininity and youth—the flapper. In the “liberal-fundamentalist war” of the twenties, the iconic flapper situated herself on the modern side of the spectrum. According to popular depictions of the flapper, such as Held’s illustrations, she did not possess qualities like religious devotion, morality, or obedience. Instead, the flapper asserted her right to “live free of the strictures that governed her mother’s generation,” Zeitz wrote.93

Individuality stimulated the flapper phenomenon, often at the expense of compliance. In the context of ideal behavior, as advocated by the Journal and Telegram columnists, the characteristics of the flapper conflicted with the social expectations of Salt Lake society. Misbehavior—whether real or imagined—led to social anxiety.

93 Zeitz, Flapper, 8.
CHAPTER III

IN THE HOURS OF GREATEST FREEDOM WE ARE . . . UNMADE

A short while ago a very dear friend of mine sent me a beautiful half-blown rose—fresh, dainty, lovely, alluring! I had heard that one could prolong the life of a flower by sealing the end of the stem with heat so being a novice I foolishly pressed the stem on an over-heated stove, when lo, in two or three minutes the rose had expanded to its full capacity. Its color remained but the petals had lost their dewy loveliness, its sweet simplicity had vanished, its charm had fled. Instead it exhibited a bold, brazen air as much to say, “I am a rose full blown; how do I look?” Oh, I thought how like the girl who has failed to appreciate and preserve her innocent beauty, but, longing to be grown up, has blossomed before her time.94

Ruth May Fox
“The Flapper Rose”

Mrs. Ruth May Fox served on the General Board of the YLMIA for more than a decade. She became President of the association in 1929, shortly after the Journal published “The Flapper Rose.” Like the rose, Fox believed that the flapper bloomed before her time. Perhaps the heat used to seal the stem symbolized the new and intense emotions surging in pubescent girls. Or, possibly, the over-heated stove represented the modern era. In any case, the young woman flowered just like the rose opened—but as the petals of the bloom lost their loveliness to the heat, the girl who called herself a flapper succumbed to the lure of excited passions and spoiled her innocence. Young women, Fox implied, must resist the forces of youth lest they surrender their natural beauty and wilt. Like Fox, the Church and the Journal echoed the belief that adolescence was a precarious period in a girl’s life. That deleterious construction of puberty

reinforced the behavioral prescriptions and ideals regulating womanhood in Salt Lake City and underlined much of the social anxiety related to the behavior of young women.

Cautionary tales issued moral lessons when high-minded messages, such as those expressed by Fox, failed to inspire righteousness among Salt Lake girls. This chapter examines three stories published in the twenties to deter female readers from veering off the designated path. Appearing in the *Telegram*, a series entitled the “Danger Age” cautioned young women against adolescent disobedience and issued broad warnings about parental ignorance. Next, “Reciprocation” reflected public concern for unsupervised recreation, inappropriate dress among women, and taboo practices like smoking, drinking, and female sexual aggression. Finally, the “Norton Twins” chastised coeds and single women for their selfish pursuits of education and misplaced prioritization of individual accomplishment. These stories offer a glimpse into the often-exaggerated social perceptions of bad behavior as well as the fears that motivated social efforts to reform young women’s actions.

Many historians argue that rapid change in the inter-war years induced greater social anxiety than other periods in the nation’s history. Not unlike Americans elsewhere, the residents of Salt Lake City expressed fear over contemporary problems like urbanization, immigration, and most often, immorality. Modern issues sparked anxiety among citizens, irrespective of religion. An advertisement placed in the *Telegram* by the Bethel Baptist Church, for instance, broadcast some of the congregation’s fears. “The crime wave is a fact. Home brew, jazzy dances and juvenile delinquency are new problems. The world has lost the sense of sin. Hell fire is ahead.
Either the second coming of Christ is at hand or a great religious awakening must take place.” Elsewhere, apprehension centered on the youth, specifically young women. In 1919, the *Utah Westminster*—published monthly by the Presbyterian institution Westminster College—conveyed concern over the findings of a study conducted by the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). The investigation surveyed high school boys about “the things which helped pull them downward in life.” Alarmingly, “the conduct of girls” headed each list, according to the final report. Although the preceding section focused on Mormon concerns, it is important to remember that no single denomination monopolized anxiety.

Fear related to the misbehavior of young women manifested in all sections of the nation during the nineteen twenties. A great generational divide separated Americans that came of age before the Great War and their children or grandchildren, who matured throughout the roaring decade. Young members of the inter-war generation were the first Americans “raised on a steady diet of bright and glitzy department store windows, advertisements and amusements, consumer products, and magazine articles.” Those modern influences, Zeitz claimed, urged the youth “to let go, enjoy life, and seek out personal happiness.” The older generations of the inter-war period, however, were unable to absorb the contemporary stimuli in the same way as the youth. Parents often struggled to understand the distinct perceptions of their children and, consequently, a generational disconnect fueled social anxiety. The same divide separated the citizens of Salt Lake City.

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Figure 7. This chart compared “the Jargon of Juveniles” to the language used by a “Grandmother” and a “Mother.” Such a translator of sorts illustrates the generational disconnect between generations and public efforts to understand the youth of Salt Lake City. (“Evolution of Slang,” Salt Lake Telegram [1925].)

The fears of the older generation in Utah’s capital were evident in reader responses to a writing contest organized by the Telegram. On January 8, 1923, the paper posed the question: “Should Reins be Drawn Tighter on Youth?” Ludwig Johnson answered “‘yes and no.’ There is quite too much freedom of a negative sort and quite too little of the positive, constructive sort.”98 Many of the respondents agreed. The flapper, J. Arthur Horne commented, benefited from expanded access to education. “Knowledge is power, and with her increased knowledge she is able to avoid many of the pitfalls.” But, when the flapper used her mind to “lure youth from the path of rectitude,” Horne

stated, she became a “dangerous enemy to society.” In the same vein, Mrs. Don W. Moss believed that many well-raised young men and women quietly matured into intelligent leaders. On the other hand, “unsophisticated,” unsupervised adolescents contributed to the moral decay of modern society. According to Mrs. Moss, flappers were “round shouldered, flat chested and hollow eyed” youngsters that lacked the “brain power for deep, straight thinking, and are in no way fitted to cope with life as it is today.” Cumulatively, the respondents expressed concern for the behavior of unguided boys and girls, especially flappers.

To expand our understanding of the social anxieties related to the flapper in particular and young women generally, I have examined three fictional stories that issued moral lessons. The study of fiction, Jane Tompkins claimed, offers a glimpse into the particular time and place that produced the work. In the introduction to her book, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790–1860, Tompkins elaborates on the value of literary investigation. Fictional scenarios “do not attempt to transcribe in detail a parabola of events as they ‘actually happen’ in society; rather, they provide a basis for remaking the social and political order in which the events take place.” When we analyze literary texts as examples of cultural perceptions, we can begin to understand the social consciousness of a historical moment. Tompkins’ approach to fictional analysis shapes the following examinations.

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100 Mrs. Don W. Moss, “Consider the Youth of Old,” Salt Lake Telegram, January 14, 1923.
In 1923, the *Telegram* published the first installment of an eighteen part series entitled the “Danger Age.” Although the origin and author of the story remain unknown, it is evident that *Telegram* editors selected the “Danger Age” to warn a local audience about the hazards of adolescent disobedience and parental ignorance. The central character, Ellen Louise Peterson, was eager to get “a little fun out of life,” so she joined friends for a Friday afternoon joyride. Before climbing into the backseat of a new Cadillac, Ellen classified herself as neither a flapper nor a “mid-Victorian.” Instead, she drifted between ideals, flirting with modern rebellion but, more often, submitting to the authority of her mother and father. After several tense weeks of fighting with her parents—John and Mary—Ellen rebelled. Along with her girlfriends Gladys and Olive, Ellen met Bob, “Slim,” and Olive’s beau, Bill, for a southbound cruise.

Figure 8. Published in the *Utonian*, this photograph reflected social anxieties related to automobiles and the youth of Salt Lake. Painted-on phrases like “Pray as You Enter” and “Shakes, Rattles, and Rolls” exposed the immoral activities of the well-dressed man and his stylish date in the vehicle. The writing was on the wall, or in this case, the side of the Model-T Ford. (*Utonian* [1929].)

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Conscious of her “killjoy” reputation, Ellen pushed all considerations of consequence from her mind and relished the rare occasion of adolescent carelessness. In telling that story, the “Danger Age” highlighted the cost of disobedience. Sitting side-by-side, Slim offered Ellen a cigarette and asked “where you been keepin’ yourself little one?” Ellen giggled and coyly replied “maybe you-all nevah moved in mah set till recently.”⁹³⁰⁴ Seemingly impressed by her nonchalant retort, Slim lit Ellen’s cigarette—her first. The smoke burned her virgin lungs as she inhaled and she began to cough uncontrollably. Ellen’s reaction triggered roaring laughter from the other passengers, all of whom had grown accustomed to the same burn long ago. Finally catching his breath, Slim teased that Ellen was a “9 o’clock girlie in a 12 o’clock town,” but assured his date that he liked her just the same.⁹⁴

Before the car crossed the southern limits of Salt Lake City, the joyride turned into a petting party. Although Ellen initially enjoyed Slim’s attention, she quickly became agitated and worried. Her thoughts drifted home as time passed. She wondered how anxious her mother was. How angry had her father become? Were her parents looking for her? How would they punish her? Worst of all, would her family forgive her? By nine o’clock—hours after her mother expected her home from school—the pleasure of the experience gave way to panic and Ellen refused to go on. Bill, Olive’s date, happily left Ellen on the side of the road. Slim, however, felt too guilty to abandon his young date in an unfamiliar town, so he followed her. As he ran to catch up, he realized that Ellen was angry with him for his indecent advances in the backseat.

¹⁰³ Salt Lake Telegram, “The Danger Age,” 8.
¹⁰⁴ Salt Lake Telegram, “The Danger Age,” 8.
Ellen refused Slim’s help at first, then, she realized that she had no money or way home. Once reality set in, she accepted Slim’s apology and allowed him to pay for a cab to her Aunt Katie’s house. Meanwhile, Bill sped back to the scintillating city. Emboldened by booze and buoyed by cheers, the driver tested the limits of his car—forty, then fifty, then sixty miles per hour. In the distance a train cut across the landscape, bound to the rails that intersected the road ahead. Bill accelerated to clear the railroad crossing before the train arrived, but he miscalculated and the train broadsided the vehicle. The accident immediately killed Bill and Gladys and threw Olive and Bob onto the pavement, where they lay covered in blood, clinging to life.

A week later, Ellen and Slim sat on the front porch of the Peterson home discussing “that night.” Hand in hand under her father’s watchful eye, Ellen asked Slim if he remembered the last thing Gladys said. “She said they’d all go home with me if I wanted them too. She said she didn’t know I’d felt like that,” referring to Ellen’s displeasure at the group’s behavior. Slim, who asked Ellen to call him by his first name, Richard, replied, “I’m glad you do feel like that. I’d always said the girl I’d—well, the girl I’d care for would feel like that.” John interrupted the conversation. “The mother in there’s got a sweet tooth. She wondered if you young folks wouldn’t come in and make some candy.” Ellen and Richard obligingly filed into the kitchen and Ellen slipped on a new pink and white apron. She knew she looked “pretty well—and Richard knew she did too. His approving eyes told her so.”

The “Danger Age” ended as older Telegram subscribers might have expected. Ellen acted on her conscience when she stepped out of the ill-fated vehicle, but the action

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was not entirely her own. The story credited her retreat to the vigilant parenting of John and Mary. As a reward for raising their daughter well, Ellen returned safely, abandoned her rebellious desires, and submitted to her parent’s rules. In the end, her parents regained control and Ellen learned a valuable lesson. Ellen also realized that she preferred chaperoned visits with Richard to the indecency of petting parties. Furthermore, she traded in her stylish pants and sporting shirt for a modest dress and feminine apron and concluded that Richard’s approving smile thrilled her more than any joyride. Although she flirted with modern manners, Ellen returned to the traditional behavior promoted by John and Mary Peterson.

The story ended differently for Gladys Buxton’s parents. Standing over her daughter’s lifeless body, Mrs. Buxton cried, “I didn’t take care of it. If I had, I’d have KNOWN WHERE MY GIRL WAS. SHE WOULDN’T HAVE BEEN WITH A BUNCH OF CARELESS BOYS AND GIRLS JUST AS YOUNG AND AS FOOLISH AS SHE . . . I didn’t guard my treasure.”

Gladys’ death issued a moral message against youthful disobedience as well as inattentive parenting. The Buxtons allowed their daughter to come and go as she pleased, consequently, Gladys was well acquainted with nighttime frivolities. The “Danger Age” warned that the Buxtons lax supervision led to their daughter’s misbehavior, and ultimately, premature death. Realizing her mistake, Mrs. Buxton tearfully accepted the accident as her “punishment.”

The story reflected widespread American anxieties, so too did a survey of high school students in Muncie, Indiana. The report “revealed that the five most frequent

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106 Salt Lake Telegram, “The Danger Age,” 11 (emphasis in original).
107 Salt Lake Telegram, “The Danger Age,” 11.
sources of disagreement between teenagers and their parents were, in order: (1) ‘the number of times you go out on school nights during the week;’ (2) ‘the hours you get in at night;’ (3) ‘grades at school;’ (4) ‘your spending money;’ (5) ‘use of the automobile.’” 108 The “Danger Age” touched on each of those concerns. Clearly, national anxieties resonated among the residents of Salt Lake, as did public concern with the manner in which mothers and fathers disciplined their children.

The “Danger Age” illustrated an extreme case of parental failure through adolescent appeasement. Joseph Burbidge, the Salt Lake Chief of Police from 1920–1933, spoke on that issue to emphasize the importance of attentive and firm parenting. In an article entitled “Youth of City Running Wild, Says Burbidge,” the Chief claimed that too often, mothers ignored the “night life of the city” and the delinquent behaviors of their daughters. Consequently, officers apprehended young women at “all hours of the night.” 109 Further along the line of legal intervention, Judge Shelby—an early proponent of the juvenile court system—similarly criticized mothers for failing to acknowledge the conditions of modern life and the related dangers for girls. 110 Overall, the public largely attributed the problem of delinquency among young women in Salt Lake City to maternal ignorance.

In addition to parenting, another key component of the “Danger Age” was the threat of unsupervised recreation, in particular, automobiles and joyrides. 111 On August

108 Zeitz, Flapper, 34–35.
111 By the end of the Great War, increased car ownership was a fact. In 1920, there was roughly one car per fifteen Americans and over 8 million registered drivers. By 1930, automobile ownership rose to one car
2, 1925, the *Telegram* published an article by Charles G. Reinhart titled “What Our Lack of Self-Discipline Costs Us.” In his piece, the author drew attention to the dangers associated with motor vehicles. Toward his point, Reinhart declared that more than fifty Americans died each day from automobile accidents. Unfortunately, no “violent reaction of public opinion against the slaughter of human life” occurred because Americans valued mobility over safety.

Dr. Arthur L. Beeley, professor at the University of Utah and prominent member of the LDS Church, further condemned the automobile in his report on juvenile delinquency. The study, “Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City,” proclaimed that minors indulged in questionable enterprises during joyrides, specifically “illicit sex relations.” In spite of that fact, Beeley believed that parents placed too few restrictions on their children’s use of family vehicles. As the “Danger Age” illustrated, automobiles threatened the physical and moral safety of young passengers. As both Reinhart and Beeley suggested, too few citizens, namely parents, seemed concerned enough by those dangers to incite change.

While social concern for unsupervised forms of recreation rose, public anxiety increased over female behavior that was taboo in the past. The number of young women who smoked, drank, and asserted their sexual desires grew during the twenties. A story per five Americans, and registration soared to over 23 million (“The Age of the Automobile, U.S. History: Pre-Columbian to the New Millennium,” accessed September 7, 2012, http://www.ushistory.org/us/46a.asp; and “Economy in the 1920s,” accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.shmoop.com/1920s/economy.html). Comparatively, automobile ownership in Utah stood at eleven people per vehicle in 1920; by 1929, there were 4.5 Utahans per car. Following American trends, Utah infrastructure expanded throughout the decade, beginning with a $4 million bond for road construction in 1919 (Haymond, Geyser, and Benzon, *The Utah State Legislature*, 10).

by a student at the University of Utah illustrated the depth of such perceived deprivities in Salt Lake City. Earning first place in the *Telegram’s* annual short story contest, “Reciprocation” by Wallace E. Stegner, charted a crisis in the life of John Aiken.\(^\text{113}\)

Following college graduation, John found work with a Salt Lake credit company and proposed to Virginia, his agreeable but insipid girlfriend. One weekend, while Virginia was away with her family, John accompanied his friends Byron and Fred to an open house party at Peggy Woodard’s home, the seventeen-year-old daughter of John’s father’s business partner. Over the course of a night fueled by strongly spiked punch and John’s “suppressed desire,” the older protagonist fell madly in love with Peggy. For days after the party, John thought only of Peggy. He dreamed of her slim figure, sparkling blue eyes, radiant lips, and most of all, the passion with which she kissed him.

John overheard rumors that Peggy had been out with and *been* with other men in the weeks that followed their encounter. Consumed with jealousy, John returned to the Woodard home and confronted her, asking the object of his affections “how many fellows have you kissed since you met me? Tell, me, honestly . . . I’d just like to know.” Peggy replied, “Since I met you I haven’t kissed any, John. Before that I may have kissed quite a few. I supposed I haven’t been as strict as girls are supposed to be, but sometimes I just can’t help letting go. People would even call me bad at times, I guess. Do you hate me for that, John?” More relieved than angry, John assured Peggy that he

\(^{113}\) Wallace E. Stegner lived in Salt Lake from 1921 to 1937. Moving to the city at the age of thirteen, Stegner spent much of his youth and young adult life in the valley. Over the course of nine years, the Stegner’s lived in at least eleven different locations across the city. Stegner attended and graduated from East High School in 1926 and the University of Utah in 1930 where he studied English. He went on to publish extensively and teach at the University of Utah (Robert C. Steensma, *Wallace Stegner’s Salt Lake* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007).
held no ill will toward her or her behavior before they met. Forgetting his fiancé, he confessed his love for Peggy.

Days later, Byron warned John that Peggy was not “the sort of girl a guy ought to get serious with.” Byron continued, telling his friend that Peggy ran “with a pretty fast crowd, wild parties; you know . . . the old saying that there are two kinds of girls—decent ones and others. She’s one of the others.” John furiously demanded proof. Matching John’s anger, Byron yelled, “ask Fred where he was Thursday night, and whom he was with. . . Do you know what he’ll say? That he was with Peggy Woodard, and that they were both soused, and that he didn’t come home all night.” As he walked away, Byron told John that if he set aside his passions and used his imagination, he could easily guess what happened. Overcome with jealousy once again, John sped to Peggy’s home. There, she confirmed Byron’s accusation.

Without allowing Peggy to explain, John left and drove to Virginia’s house. The betrothed couple sat in silence on her porch for some time. Finally, John looked into his fiancé’s eyes and said, “you know, Virginia, there’s one thing I like about you. You never say much, but you say what you mean. I mean you’re sincere in everything you do, aren’t you?” For the second time in several days, John professed his love, this time for the predictable yet faithful woman he had grown to appreciate.114 Stegner’s “Reciprocation” ultimately elevated John’s stable, monotonous relationship with Virginia over his excited lust for Peggy. The author’s conclusion correspondingly promoted the merits of docile predictability and modesty above passionate pleasure seeking as desirable female qualities.

Dress, in particular, figured into the character of suitable young women. According to John, the girls at Peggy’s party—mostly high school students—donned dresses that “even in an age of abbreviated skirts, were rather noticeably short.” The young men in attendance involuntarily awed at the display of “undeniably dainty knees.” Overcome with desire, they lust after the exposed flesh. John followed suit. Mesmerized by the “beautiful butterfly” that set his blood on fire, he lost himself in Peggy’s presence. “Reciprocation” thus reflected the Journal’s claim that young men failed to control immoral thoughts in the presence of scantily clad girls. Ultimately, Stegner’s story reinforced the Church’s demand that young women dress appropriately to temper the behavior of young men and elevate the moral tone of society.

In the same way that fiction outlined issues related to female behavior, social commentators voiced concern for women’s dress. In response to the Telegram’s writing contest, Horne remarked on changes in style. “A few years ago we were scarcely conscious of [the flapper’s] legs; today we are acutely aware of them.” Horne’s observations were, in fact, generally accurate. By and large, young women revealed more of their bodies in the nineteen twenties. “In 1884,” Zeitz noted, “a typical dress required over six yards of forty-eight-inch fabric. By 1924, with hemlines creeping up and necklines drifting down, a standard outfit demanded just under three yards of fifty-four-inch wool.” According to Horne, that “increased display of feminine” attraction drew the youth away from the correct path.

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115 Salt Lake Telegram, “Reciprocation.”
116 Zeitz, Flapper, 164.
Chief Burbidge also remarked on women’s dress, proclaiming that too many girls appeared “in public places with painted faces . . . that are a disgrace to womanhood.”¹¹⁷ Once more, there was merit to his observation. By the late 1920s, Zeitz noted, “industry analysts claimed that 90 percent of adult women used face powder, 83 percent used talcum, 73 percent applied perfume, and 55 percent used rouge.”¹¹⁸ In the view of Lucy Van Cott, Dean of Women at the University of Utah, the coed’s use of make-up warranted intervention. In October 1922 the Utah Daily Chronicle reported on a “drastic scheme [that] will undoubtedly wreck the hopes of many a flapper.” According to the report, Van Cott enlisted senior girls to help “change the general campus atmosphere” by calling “attention to the excess use of powder and paint” and asking the younger coeds to “use LESS.”¹¹⁹ Stegner’s story mirrored those anxious sentiments related to girl’s dress.

Along with appearance, concerns about women and alcohol surfaced in “Reciprocation.” The tale detailed a party at which attendees drank themselves “well past the stage of walking a straight line.” Although he admitted to making too many trips to the punch bowl, John opposed Peggy’s behavior and promised himself that “if he had the handling of her,” she would not drink spiked punch so liberally.¹²⁰ What was fine for John was not acceptable behavior for Peggy. Many Americans of the older generation viewed the issue similarly. Before Prohibition, Fass noted, “drinking was a male-centered problem that secondarily involved women . . . Respectable women were

¹¹⁸ Zeitz, Flapper, 205.
¹¹⁹ “Slack Manners Are Opposed by Miss Van Cott,” Utah Daily Chronicle, October 27, 1922 (emphasis in original).
¹²⁰ Salt Lake Telegram, “Reciprocation.”
effectively barred from indulgence by tradition.\textsuperscript{121} Passage of the Eighteenth Amendment cut off the legal flow of alcohol and a new drinking code emerged, one that punished men and women equally. In the vacuum of traditional guidelines, more young women joined men in illicit consumption. Although it is impossible to know exactly how many women imbibed regularly throughout Prohibition, social anxiety related to women and alcohol rose in the inter-war period and the older generation remained convinced that drinking was unfeminine.

A strong local Temperance movement brought statewide Prohibition to Utah in 1917, preempting the national Amendment by two years. In spite of regulations, Utahns circumvented the law. For the first years enforcement agents struggled to stop the flow of alcohol from Wyoming, which remained wet until national Prohibition took effect. When the America went dry, Utah authorities shifted their attention to local stills and bootleggers. Despite widespread efforts, Beeley noted in 1929 that alcohol remained readily available.\textsuperscript{122} In 1923, the Attorney General of Utah declared the drinking problem in Salt Lake City was “just as bad as before Prohibition.” Regardless of the authority’s approach, alcohol related troubles persisted. In total, “from 1925 to 1932 federal agents in Utah seized over four hundred distilleries, 25,000 gallons of spirits, 8,000 gallons of malt liquors, 13,000 gallons of wine, and 332,000 gallons of mash.”\textsuperscript{123}

Apart from drinking, John also opposed Peggy’s smoking habit, once more, in spite of the fact that he did so regularly. As he watched Peggy inhale, John thought to

\textsuperscript{121} Fass, \textit{The Damned and the Beautiful}, 310.
\textsuperscript{122} Beeley, “Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City,” 26.
himself, “too bad she smoked.” He deliberated further. “Oh, it was probably alright, but he couldn’t seem to get accustomed to it. He had noticed that most of the younger set, both boys and girls, smoked. Maybe he was Victorian, but the sight of a girl, especially a fine, beautiful girl like Peggy, smoking a cigarette always carried an insidious doubt of ‘fastness.’”

Again, Steger’s sentiments reflected widespread public opinions. In the context of nineteen twenties American society, Fass wrote, smoking “was sexually suggestive and associated with disreputable women or with bohemian types who self-consciously rejected traditional standards of propriety and morality.” As “Reciprocation” demonstrated, the same feelings prevailed in Salt Lake City.

Figure 9. Cigarette advertisements marketed smoking to women in the nineteen twenties. Right, Marlboro promoted their product, which was “Mild as May,” as distinctively feminine. Middle, Camel advertised cigarettes as “A Boon for a Breathless Age,” and a reprieve form the whirlwind of youth. Left, Lucky Strike appealed to women’s vanity, promising that if a lady reached for a “Lucky and not for a sweet,” she could maintain her slim figure. (Advertisements published in various magazines throughout the nineteen twenties.)

124 Salt Lake Telegram, “Reciprocation.”
125 Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful, 293.
Similar to the Temperance movement, the Anti-Tobacco campaign was initially successful in Utah, but ultimately failed. According to John Smith’s study of the cigarette ban, the Mormon Church enthusiastically supported the crusade to eliminate the cigarette, which “suffered not only from its reputation as a habit of creatures of low morals and bringer of disease but also because it constituted a specific violation of the Word of Wisdom, the [Church’s] health code.”\textsuperscript{126} Social pressure led the Utah State Legislature to pass an anti-cigarette bill in 1921, banning the use, sale, and advertisement of cigarettes throughout the state. However, overburdened with the enforcement of Prohibition, police officers did not implement the restrictions until 1923 when the first cigarette-related arrests landed four prominent businessmen in jail. Soon after the highly publicized apprehensions, Legislators nullified the cigarette ban, permitted advertising in newspapers, and certified sales by licensed dealers.\textsuperscript{127} Although smoking was legal when Stegner wrote “Reciprocation” in 1929, the practice remained taboo for women.

Finally, “Reciprocation” illuminated social concerns related to sexual promiscuity and sexual assertiveness among women. In the story, Peggy’s experience surprised John. When he leaned in for a kiss, “she met his caress so passionately that a ray of surprise filtered through the fog that dimmed his brain. Her lips clung, and burned against his mouth. Her arms went around his neck, pulling his body against hers. For a long minute they held the kiss.” John questioned Peggy’s character when he reflected on that moment. “She had kissed him. he thought, “a total stranger . . . the first time she had

\textsuperscript{127} Smith, “Cigarette Prohibition in Utah, 1921–23,” 159.
ever seen him, kissed him passionately and with a strange animal gleam in her eyes.”

Not only was Peggy experienced in the art of petting, she was aggressive in her practice—the reality of those truths simultaneously frightened and stimulated John. The same facts stuck fear in many others.

Changes in sexual behavior and attitudes, alarmed the older generation of the inter-war period. Freeing themselves from conventional constraints, Fass claimed that the youth culture of the twenties established “group support for experimentation and expression. It was this sudden group interest in and consciousness of sexual subjects that seemed so threatening to contemporaries.” In that atmosphere of anxiety, many Americans associated youth with sex, and rightly so Fass believed. Undoubtedly, a great number of Salt Lake City residents came to the same connection. An article in the *Utah Daily Chronicle* illustrated that point by defining several words as a commentary on female prudence. Romanticism, the piece noted, was “the belief that a girl kisses only you; Realism—The knowledge that a girl is not so discerning.” John’s expectations and Peggy’s actions in “Reciprocation” echoed those cynical ideas verbatim.

Although few social commentators explicitly confronted the issue of female sexuality in Salt Lake City, many skirted the topic by remarking on factors that contributed to the problem. For various reasons, parents and community leaders worried that the film industry promoted female promiscuity. Contemporary historian Frederick Lewis Allen felt certain that motion pictures stimulated the youth’s libido. Movies, Allen criticized in 1931, played incessantly upon “lucrative” themes. “The producers of one

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128 Salt Lake Telegram, “Reciprocation.”
picture advertised ‘brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp.’” Another film advertisement guaranteed “neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses, pleasure-mad daughters, [and] sensation-craving mothers.”131 Like Allen, such scandalous promotions appalled many Americans. In spite of widespread outrage, millions filed into local theatres across the nation every week.132

Films debuted in Salt Lake City shortly after the turn of the century. By the summer of 1928, eighteen theatres with a total capacity of more than 16,000 seats offered daily showings.133 In the opinion of Beeley, movies portrayed vivid scenes of “sex indulgence,” which he believed contributed to sexual promiscuity.134 Movie advertisements published in the Telegram lent credence to Beeley’s fear. An advertisement, for instance, promoting the 1924 film “How to Educate a Wife” featured a bobbed woman with her hand poised to slip the strap of her dress off her shoulder. The woman’s provocative “come-hither” stare suggests that she may have been preparing for an intimate encounter.

Regrettably, Beeley asserted in 1929, the community failed to demand higher standards for the motion pictures shown in Salt Lake City. To remedy the deplorable situation and elevate the viewing experience in Utah’s capital, Beeley proposed a four-pronged plan. First, he believed that “representative community groups” must cooperate with theatres to coordinate appropriate film selections. Next, he recommended “the pre-

131 Allen, Only Yesterday, 88.
view and rating of pictures in terms of their suitability for children.” That component of the plan could only be effective if media sources distributed the film ratings to the public. Finally, he promoted the “education of parents to an intelligent use” of ratings.\footnote{Beeley, “Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City,” 27.}

Despite Beeley’s plan, no organized form of local censorship came to fruition. Films remained unregulated until the Association of Motion Picture Producers and the Board of Directors of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors adopted the Motion Picture Production Code in 1930. The agreement, more commonly referred to as the Hays Code, served as a guide to maintain morality in the production of films.\footnote{Geoffrey Shurlock, “The Motion Picture Production Code,” \textit{Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science} 254, The Motion Picture Industry (November 1947): 141.}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Movie advertisements blatantly promoted sex, scandal, and style. \textit{Left}, Elinor Glyn’s “How to Educate a Wife” suggested a scandalous plot. (\textit{Salt Lake Telegram} [1924].) \textit{Right}, Promoting the 1925 film, “The Breath of Scandal,” the film’s advertisement asked, “What happens to a girl when her ideals go crashing down? What comes to take their place?” (\textit{Salt Lake Telegram} [1925].)}
\end{figure}
In addition to movies, social observers often attributed the escalating problem of sexual promiscuity among young women to unsupervised forms of recreation and commercialized amusements. Discussions of that nature typically centered on Saltair and Lagoon, two popular summers resorts in Salt Lake City. According to historian Kathy Peiss, author of *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*, resorts created uninhibited spaces where women could pursue heterosexual oriented leisure “directed towards meeting men, dating, romance, and fun.”\(^ {137}\) Zeitz added that when men and women enjoyed leisure together, “a new frankness about sex and romance” resulted.\(^ {138}\) Beyond entertainment and amusement, Saltair and Lagoon offered liberal environments, big city thrills, excitement in the fashion of coastal cosmopolitans, and a connection to the broader American culture of leisure.

Located on the shore of the Great Salt Lake, sixteen miles from the heart of the city, Saltair had a long history of entertaining pleasure-seekers. Long before the resort opened, people looked to recreate at the Great Salt Lake. Wagon parties trekked four hours on sunny days from the Salt Lake Valley to Black Rock—a popular site on the southern shore of the lake. Recreation at the Great Salt Lake became more accessible when the transcontinental railroad joined at Promontory Point, Utah in 1869 and the regional railway system expanded.\(^ {139}\) Investors quickly recognized opportunities for financial gain and plans to develop resorts along the shores of the lake came to fruition by

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1870. Eight resorts occupied the southern and eastern shores of the Great Salt Lake before the turn of the century and public concern increasingly surrounded the “exceedingly liberal patronage” attracted to the establishments. In response to social anxieties about immoral activities, the LDS Church opened Saltair in 1893 to “provide a wholesome place of recreation under church control for Mormons, particularly families and young people” who were otherwise vulnerable to the temptations of the Gentile “pleasure-resorts.” Saltair was a success from the start.

Lagoon was another popular attraction among Salt Lake City’s youth. Originally opened as “Lake Park” on July 15, 1886 on the shore of the Great Salt Lake, the resort relocated to Farmington in 1896 to expand and become the first amusement park west of the Mississippi. Transportation to and from Lagoon was inexpensive and fast. Patrons paid 35 cents to ride an electrified railway, known as the “Bamberger Electric,” from Salt Lake to the northern city of Ogden. The resort added attractions from year to year such as carnival rides, the artificial beach “Waikiki,” games, a man-made lake for rowing and swimming, and various dance pavilions. Similar to Saltair, Lagoon created a liberal environment where visitors could escape the rigid conventions of the city. Lagoon, however, also encouraged modern expressions of youth. For instance, the resort hosted a “Flapper Day” when “every bob-haired” girl entered free of charge. The day also included a “Bathing Flapper Contest” in the afternoon, a “Grand Promenade of Flappers

140 Lake Side (1870), Lake Point (1870), Black Rock (1876), Lake Shore (1879), Garfield Beach (1881), Lake Park (1886), Syracuse (1887), and Saltair (1893) (McCormick and McCormick, Saltair, 3).
141 McCormick and McCormick, Saltair, 20.
142 “Dance Lagoon,” Salt Lake Telegram, June 8, 1923.
at ‘Flapper Alley’” in the evening, and a $150 cash prize for the best-dressed girl.\textsuperscript{143} Lagoon was arguably an even freer environment than Saltair. Both resorts, however, created environments that concerned conservative and traditional observers.

By 1920, the Saltair and Lagoon attracted more than half a million visitors a year, many of whom came to dance.\textsuperscript{144} As Fass noted, dancing was “unquestionably the most popular social pastime” among the youth in the twenties.\textsuperscript{145} Consequently, dancing was a source of anxiety for Americans who worried that young women were becoming more sexually promiscuous in the inter-war era. In many cases, those fears were justified. Dances brought young men and women together. On the dance floor, Fass explained, “the dancers were close, the steps were fast, and the music was jazz. And because popular forms of dancing were intimate and contorting, and the music was rhythmic and throbbing, it called down upon itself all the venom of offended respectability.”\textsuperscript{146} And so it was in Salt Lake City.

Advertised as the “Coney Island of the West,” Saltair boasted “the largest dance floor in the world.” According to historians Nancy D. and John S. McCormick, authors of Saltair, the resort and its expansive dance floor “provided a temporary escape from everyday routine and convention, a distinctive environment that encouraged behavior not appropriate elsewhere.”\textsuperscript{147} Nightly events drew throngs of enthusiastic young men and women. During marathon dances, “two bands played, one at each end of the floor, one picking up when the other stopped so that dancing was continuous.” In the crowds,
dancers abandoned their concerns as they stepped to the beat. Every so often, a girl or boy ignored the house rules. Those caught dancing “cheek-to-cheek” or acting indecorously in view of resort officials were asked to leave.

Dances and dancing became so concerning to the residents of Salt Lake City that the Social Advisory Committee commissioned a study to understand the “dance problem” in 1920. Conducted by Beeley, a “Statistical Study of Social Dancing” surveyed sophomore, junior, and senior students at L.D.S. High School and freshman students at the University of Utah to investigate the girl’s interest in dance compared to other forms of recreation. Information gathered from more than three hundred girls indicated that young women overwhelmingly preferred dance above movies, reading, spoken drama, sports games, and vaudeville.148 When asked about the “reasons” they danced, female respondents most commonly identified association, meeting new people, music, develops grace, and rhythm in their answers. Of particular concern to Beeley, many young women pointed to the less decent aspects of dance that appealed to them such as excitement, a “chance to flirt,” a distraction, an opportunity to “let off steam,” and an excuse to dress up.149

In the end, Beeley explained that conventional dancing appealed to the “aesthetic and emotional natures of those participating.” Although “the aesthetic element is obviously wholesome,” he continued, “the emotional appeal becomes so intense as to stimulate those emotions which are fundamentally related to the sex-instinct. In

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148 Arthur L. Beeley, “A Statistical Study of Social Dancing” no. 6 (Salt Lake City: The Social Advisory Committee of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1920), 1–2. Beeley conducted the survey at the behest of the Social Advisory Committee of the LDS Church, on which he served as Executive Secretary at the time.
conclusion, the study determined that social dancing was immoral. To improve the situation, Beeley made several suggestions. First, he recommended that the LDS Church organize alternative, wholesome forms of entertainment in place of dances. When and where dancing must occur, he advocated “adequate supervision,” especially of adolescent girls. Finally, Beeley proposed that all factors which “over-stimulate the emotions be eliminated as far as possible.”

Once again, despite good intentions, Beeley discovered that the situation remained unchanged when he revisited the dancing issue in 1929. Writing frankly and assertively, he concluded that supervision was still generally nonexistent. In the absence of regulation, fifty to seventy-five percent of boys and sixty to eighty-five percent of girls “dated up” during dances. Commonly, those “paired-off” couples drove “off into some poorly-lighted part of town and indulge[d] themselves sexually.” Such was the case in “Reciprocation.” Although John and his friends went to Peggy’s party stag, each man danced, drank, and paired-up with a young woman by the end of the night.

In addition to dance, another concerning aspect was the conduct of young passengers riding the train from Salt Lake to Saltair and Lagoon. Wallace Stegner, the author of “Reciprocation” and longtime resident of the city, remembered the experience. He fondly recalled “riding in the open excursion cars, watching the approaching city lights and the mountains behind them, feeling the night wind and experiencing the salt flat smells [while] necking couples sat on the steps, eyed with disapproval by matrons in

charge of large families.”\textsuperscript{152} Like the matrons, many disapproved of such displays. In an effort to improve the behavior of young passengers, the Social Advisory Committee of the LDS Church lobbied for better lighting on the trains to protect the “moral and physical safety” of those aboard. The Committee’s efforts initially led to brighter illumination, but the movement lacked lasting effectiveness and dim lighting returned.\textsuperscript{153}

Joel Richards, the General Manager of Saltair, reacted to growing public concern over the lighting issue in 1921. Taking action against reports of “would be ‘spooners’” who allegedly turned out train lights, Richards assured anxious passengers that “this season anyone caught tampering with the lights, for whatever purpose, will be arrested and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.” He also vowed to place “deputies on every train to see that this regulation is enforced.”\textsuperscript{154} In spite of Richards’ remedial efforts, the lighting problems persisted throughout the decade. Beeley noted that fact in his study of juvenile delinquency in 1929. “The railroad facilities to and from Saltair are particularly open to criticism from the standpoint of lighting.”\textsuperscript{155} Not unlike the censorship of films and efforts to reform dancing, well-intentioned campaigns failed to halt the indecent behavior of passionate travelers in poorly lit train cars. Consequently, public concern about promiscuity among Salt Lake girls persisted.

\textsuperscript{152} McCormick and McCormick, Saltair, 37–38.
\textsuperscript{154} “R. Owen Sweeten Will Again Lead the Saltair Dance Band,” Salt Lake Telegram, April 3, 1921.
\textsuperscript{155} Beeley, “Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City,” 16.
Figure 11. Lagoon advertisers used sex and fashion to attract visitors to the park. The above featured marketing campaigns featured the flapper to sell leisure and phrases such as “Let’s Go!” and “Something Doing Every Minute!” became associated with the flapper. (*Salt Lake Telegram*)

Just as the “Danger Age” and “Reciprocation” illuminated certain aspects of social anxiety, the “Norton Twins” revealed fears related to the behavior of young women in Utah’s capital. Featured in the *Journal*, the final story I examine in this section chastised coeds and single women for selfish pursuits and misplaced prioritizations. The tale introduced the equally lovely, quick-witted, and enthusiastic sisters, Jean and Julia. At seventeen, Jean was “vaguely more appealing with her simple girlish winsomeness,” and faith while Julia, or “Jerry” as she preferred, was more brilliant, self-possessed, and anxious for “novelty, excitement, [and] romance.”\(^{156}\) Despite their differences, the two remained inseparable until the summer after their high school graduation when Jean married and Jerry left for college. At the age of eighteen, Jean devoted herself to

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tirelessly attending to her new husband and home. “Her days were so full of duties and pleasures that one merged into the next . . . She could try all sorts of new recipes; if a design for a centerpiece pleased her particularly, she could devote a week or two and embroider it; and best of all she found ample opportunity to work in the church organizations.” By years end, Jean was expecting her first child. As the years passed, Jean’s family and household responsibilities grew, so too did her happiness.

Meanwhile, Jerry selfishly abandoned her family in pursuit of needless knowledge, personal success, and excitement. In college, Jerry laid “waste [to] years which might be so bounteous.” After graduating, she met and fell in love with a man named David Shepard, whom she agreed to marry shortly thereafter. The engagement ended, however, when Jerry discovered that she and David shared dissimilar religious convictions. “Beside herself with grief and loneliness,” Jerry accepted a teaching position in Honduras for two years. While Jerry was away, her sister contracted a fatal disease that suddenly and tragically stole her away. Returning from Honduras in time to be with Jean as her last breath left, Jerry elected to stay home rather than return to teaching. There she remained, day after lonely and miserable day.

The “Norton Twins” presented two options: readers could find love and true happiness in marriage and motherhood or they could pursue independence and endure a life of loneliness. Although abbreviated, Jean’s life as a selflessly devoted wife and mother was blissful and fulfilling. Conversely, Jerry’s decisions lead her away from home where she pursued knowledge and became self-sufficient. She sacrificed her

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159 Edwards, “The Norton Twins,” 502
happiness, however, to do so. Although the Journal clearly elevated Jean’s experience over her twin sisters, many young women of the inter-war period undoubtedly shared Jerry’s ambition. Thus, the message issued by the “Norton Twin’s” certainly weighed heavy on the minds of many readers.

Between 1900 and 1930, high school enrollment in America increased 650 percent. University and College attendance tripled at the same time. Although school enrolment was generally high in Salt Lake City, the same upward trend applied. In 1910, sixty-five percent of Utahns ages 5–20 attended school; by 1930, that number rose to nearly seventy-seven percent.\(^{160}\) Perhaps the most notable gains among women in Salt Lake occurred in higher education. By 1920, high school graduates could attend one of eleven institutions in Salt Lake County including the Henager Business College, Latter-day Saint Business College, Latter-day Saint University, Salt Lake Business College, or Westminster College.\(^{161}\) Most students in the area, however, attended the University of Utah, located on the eastern bench of the city.

The first term at the University of Deseret commenced on November 11, 1850. Initially restricted to men, the University opened admission to women for the second term, but closed shortly thereafter due to insufficient funding. The institution reopened in 1892. Renamed by the newly formed State Legislature in the same year, registration at


the University of Utah exceeded four hundred students by the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{162} Following years of land acquisition and expansion, the \textit{University Catalogue} reported a total enrollment of 5,470 students in 1914. Annual enlistments continued to rise, and by 1929, six departments—Graduate, Arts and Sciences, Education, Mines and Engineering, Law, and Business—enrolled a student body comprised of fifty-nine percent male and forty-one percent female attendees.\textsuperscript{163}

Like Jerry Norton, women at the university often received criticism for decisions to further their education and pursue advanced degrees. Interestingly, young men were the most vocal opponents of female participation in higher education. To better understand the concerns of young men in Salt Lake City, I examine the \textit{Utonian} from 1920–1929, a period when most staff writers were male. That investigation revealed three distinct perceptions of coeds at the University of Utah throughout the twenties. First, the yearbook depicted college women as deceptive. Lacking intellect, coeds had to resort to trickery and emotional exploitation to achieve success. A short poem published in the \textit{Utonian} illustrated that point. It read: “Who strokes the Profs upon their nobs, and on their shoulders gently sobs, while some well mark from them she robs?” The culprit—none other than the idealized young woman of the twenties: the flapper.\textsuperscript{164}

When emotional manipulation failed, yearbook editors alleged that coeds typically resorted to sexual advances. As an illustration published in 1921 indicated,

\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Catalogue of the University of Utah: Announcements for 1921-1922 With Lists of Students During 1920-21} (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1922), 296; \textit{Catalogue of the University of Utah: Announcements for 1930-31 with Lists of Students During 1929-30} (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1931), 368.
\textsuperscript{164} 1923 \textit{Utonian} (Salt Lake City: Class of 1923, University of Utah, 1922), 348.
young women vying for a position on the *Utonian* staff displayed signs of affection to improve their odds.\(^{165}\) Without a man to manipulate or seduce, conversations between women deteriorated into conflicts, or so the *Utonian* editors imagined. In 1923, the yearbook published one writer’s observation of that phenomenon, “at first I thought that all the girls at this institution were just crazy about one another.” However, upon closer inspection, the staffer declared, “I've changed my mind. They are ‘crazy at’ each other.”\(^{166}\) A drawing entitled “Our Idea of an Intersorority Adjustment Committee” illustrated one such occasion when a meeting of sorority members deteriorated to a brawl.\(^{167}\)

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165 “I’ve Got No Chance with that Gang,” *1921 Utonian* (Salt Lake City: Class of 1921, University of Utah, 1920), 240.
166 *1923 Utonian* (Salt Lake City: Class of 1923 at the University of Utah, 1922), 299.
167 “Our Idea on an Itersorority Adjustment Committee,” *1921 Utonian* (Salt Lake: Class of 1921, University of Utah, 1920), 264.
In addition to charlatans, the *Utonian* portrayed college women as “Gold-diggers.” Based on the assumption that coeds pursued higher education for reasons other than knowledge, self-fulfillment, or ambition, critics presumed that women enrolled to exploit men. The poem “I Like ‘Em,” published in 1923, demonstrated that point by declaring that women relied on men to take them out, treat, and entertain them until the young men went “broke.”

According to some *Utonian* writers, sorority members were the most skilled women in the “art” of gold digging. In 1926, the yearbook claimed that the Alpha Chi girls “invented the art” of gold digging, consequently, the coeds became so practiced that they “could dig gold in a lead mine.” While university students surely found humor in such judgments, the jests fundamentally demeaned the intent of many female participants in systems of higher education and exposed anxiety among young men.

Finally, the yearbook portrayed female students as procrastinators, attending school simply because they hoped to extend youth, delay the responsibilities associated with adulthood, and prolong the enjoyment of carefree adolescent amusement. Within that set, the *Utonian* characterized coeds as smokers, drinkers, and nymphomaniacs who agonized over aesthetics. Once more, sorority members were the most egregious offenders. Often referred to as “booze-lappers,” yearbook writers alleged that coeds smoked to maintain thin profiles and lost sleep to troubled thoughts that their clothes might be outdated.

The *Utonian* editor’s most callous and constant criticism of young women, however, related to female sexuality. A short story, for instance, detailed a court

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168 “I Like Em,” 1923 *Utonian* (Salt Lake City: Class of 1923, University of Utah, 1922), 348.
169 1926 *Utonian* (Salt Lake City: Junior Class of the University of Utah, 1925), 347.
170 1923 *Utonian*, 335.
hearing in which a Judge asked the young woman appearing before him to state her “plea for promiscuity.” “Confession and avoidance?” he asked. “NO!” the girl replied, “accord and satisfaction, your honor.”

Extending their criticism in 1925, Utonian writers imagined a meeting at the Delta Epsilon sorority house. Resembling minutes, a passage alleged that sorority “pledges were given their weekly instruction on ‘how to retire in the wee-small hours of the morning without disturbing the family or neighbors’” of the men with whom the girls were with. Elsewhere, hidden between advertisements at the end of the 1927 edition of the yearbook, writers widened the scope of condemnation beyond coeds to include all promiscuous girls as well as ignorant parents. A short section read, “Sweet Little Girl: ‘What time is it?’ Joe College: ‘Half-past four; it won't be long till morning.’ Sweet Little Girl: ‘Goodness, mother'll be worried. I should have been in bed an hour ago.’” The same edition of the Utonian featured another indictment of wild daughters and oblivious mothers. It read, “Chaperone: ‘Just saw a young man on the back porch trying to kiss your daughter.’ Modern Mother: ‘Did he succeed?’ Chaperone: ‘No, he did not.’ Modern Mother: ‘Well, it wasn’t my daughter then.’” Although amusing, the Utonian’s attacks revealed anxiety among young men. When faced with the prospect of coexisting with intelligent and driven women, many of the yearbook editors resorted to belittling critiques to degrade the character of female students and debase the worthy goals of ambitious coeds.

171 1930 Utonian (Salt Lake City: Junior Class of the University of Utah, 1930), 363.
172 “Date on the Lawn,” 1925 Utonian (Salt Lake City: Junior Class of the University of Utah, 1924), 324.
173 “Sweet Little Girl,” 1927 Utonian (Salt Lake City: Junior Class of the University of Utah, 1926), 369.
174 “Chaperone,” 1927 Utonian (Salt Lake City: Junior Class of the University of Utah, 1926), 379.
Moving beyond censure, many individuals and organizations—motivated by fear—worked to temper the behavior of young women in Salt Lake City. The University of Utah, for instance, appointed Miss Lucy Van Cott to the position of Dean of Women in 1907. Tasked as a monitor and caretaker, Van Cott ensured the “favorable physical and social conditions” of university girls. She supplied “a plentiful amount of good food; comfortable, pleasant living quarters; good clothing; relaxation; and rest,” and more importantly, perhaps, the Dean supervised the social activities of the girls. One notable example of Van Cott’s control was the “Rules of Social Conduct” she established in 1923. To prevent inappropriate behavior, the regulations required advanced approval of all campus and university related functions from herself and the University President. Van Cott also restricted gatherings to Friday and Saturday nights and mandated that all events end by midnight. In addition, the Dean required that four pre-appointed chaperones attend every function and that each attendant submit a written report commenting on “the nature of the entertainment, the conduct toward chaperone, [and] the general conduct and dress” to her the following day.

The Social Advisory Committee of the LDS Church also strove to institute policies that moderated the behavior of young women. For instance, the Committee published a pamphlet in January 1921 as part of a campaign against tobacco. On the recommendation of the Committee, Church leaders met with the manager of Saltair to address the dance problem and encourage the abolition of midnight dancing at the

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175 1928 Utonian (Salt Lake City: Junior Class of the University of Utah, 1927), 35.
177 The Social Advisory Committee, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Case Against Tobacco” Pamphlet No. 8 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1921).
The Social Advisory Committee also appealed to non-Church organizations like the Salt Lake County Commission and officials such as the Chief of Police, City Attorney, County Attorney, and County Sheriff to stimulate measures of control. In 1920, the Committee successfully lobbied for an ordinance that required all public dance halls be “brightly illuminated.”\(^\text{179}\) The decree purportedly discouraged immoral behavior in such places and thus granted authorities some degree of behavioral regulation. However, historian Thomas G. Alexander noted, the organization’s efforts failed to effect lasting change or curb concerns related to young women.\(^\text{180}\)

Apart from the Committee’s efforts, most social attempts to control the behavior of Salt Lake City girls were unsuccessful. The tobacco ban in Utah spanned two years. Regardless, more women smoked during the inter war period than had in preceding decades. Statewide Prohibition survived from 1917 to 1933, when the Twenty First Amendment repelled the national ban on alcohol. In spite of Prohibition, however, many Americans and Utahns continued to imbibe throughout the nineteen twenties. Local efforts to curtail indecent dancing, immoral interaction between young men and women, and adolescent disobedience similarly stalled. In spite of such disappointing results, the efforts themselves reveal certain aspects of public anxiety in relation to contemporary female behavior. Similarly, fictional stories issued moral lessons to promote ideal comportment among modern girls.

\(^{179}\) The Board of County Commissioners of Salt Lake County, State of Utah, “An Ordinance Regulating the Illumination of, Conduct in, Resorters to, and Keepers of, Public Dance Halls” (Salt Lake City: State of Utah, 1920), 1.
Now that we understand the behavioral expectations attached to young women in Salt Lake City and recognize the fears associated with their behavior, we question the lived behavior of modern women in Utah’s capital. Did most girls follow the instructions of prescriptive literature? Or were more young women reckless like Gladys Buxton or Peggy Woodard? Perhaps the majority acted out like Ellen but reformed their behavior over time. Alternatively, some may have learned to prioritize marriage and motherhood above individual pursuits, possibly, like Jerry Norton, too late in life. In short, we are left to wonder if Salt Lake girls were as obedient and faithful as the Journal and Church encouraged. Or were they as deviant as writers for the Utonian believed? Did regional social expectations prevail or did individual desires to assume characteristics of the New Woman dominate? Were most girls flappers? Saints? Sinners? The final chapter studies the lives, perceptions, and actions of young women in Salt Lake City to identify the answers to those very questions.
CHAPTER IV

SHE REFUSED TO BE BORED CHIEFLY BECAUSE SHE WASN’T BORING

Figure 13. Members of the Lambda Phi Lambda social sorority captured the attention of onlookers during their act at the Song Fest competition in 1928. The Lambda’s performance combined two conflicting images: the modern flapper and the beehive, a symbol historically associated throughout the region with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (*Utonian* [1928].)

The *Utonian* described the Lambda Phi Lambda’s 1928 performance at the annual University of Utah Song Fest as “active, alive, [and] alert.”181 To commemorate the sorority’s first-place finish that year, the yearbook published a composite image of photographs from the act overlaid on a beehive. At the base of the hive, bobbed-headed

181 Beginning in 1919, the Associated Students of the University of Utah (A.S.U.U.) sponsored the campus-wide “music carnival” known as Song Fest to entertain, encourage extracurricular involvement, and promote friendly competition among students (“The Song Fest,” *Utah Daily Chronicle*, January 18, 1927).
coeds in sleeveless tops and thigh-high skirts posed as wriggling larvae and newly hatched, floppy-winged bumblebees. In the middle, developed members in fringed dresses and high heels danced around a queen bee. The most symbolic pictures topped the “Song Fest” image. Standing erect, a middle figure in the central photograph wore a non-descript, sleeveless dress hemmed just above her ankles. A crown rested on her head and waist-long hair cascaded over her right shoulder. She was noticeably tense and still in relation to the other women. Two sorority members in masculine clothes stood on either side of the stoic female—physically and metaphorically cocooning her. Winged Lambdas dressed as decorated butterflies bookended the row.

The beehive historically signified Mormon “unity and perseverance in the quest to establish an ideal society.” The Lambda Phi Lambda’s performance redefined that symbol. From the queen all things came and to her all members served. She was the life force and the authority; she was the New Woman. Instead of the industrious, frugal, and dignified honey bees that collaborated to strengthen the traditional Mormon colony, the social hive of the sorority gathered energetic and brazen women together to enjoy the sweet results of their efforts—their honey, pleasure. The crowning photographs of the image captured the flapper’s metamorphosis. From the immobility of patriarchal control,

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182 “Song Fest,” *1928 Utonian* (Salt Lake City: Junior Class of the University of Utah, 1927), 156.
the Victorian escaped from her cocoon—transformed. Similarly, the youth of the Roaring Twenties emerged into the inter-war era with wings and the flapper took flight.

The stereotypical American flapper was young and active. She rejected traditional gendered roles. Unlike the submissive Gibson Girl of the Victorian era, the flapper was an assertive and enthusiastic member of society. She pursued advance degrees and engaged in challenging work. The flapper was economically independent and sexually liberated. Her clothing was scant, hair was short, and cosmetics liberally applied. She smoked, drank, drove, danced, and petted. The flapper embodied what historian Frederick Lewis Allen defined as an inter-war revolution of manners and morals. She was the image of modernity—she represented the New Woman of the nineteen twenties.

Young women in every corner of the nation idealized the flapper. In Salt Lake City, girls adopted and adapted various aspects of the female icon. Compared to national averages, a larger percent of girls attended school in Utah’s capital. Education, however, did not generally translate to full-time employment for the same young women. Unburdened by unremitting work schedules, girls entertained themselves with physical activities, recreation, and leisure. Young women also embraced the taboo aspects of the flapper’s character such as smoking, drinking, and sexual experimentation. Most of all, Salt Lake girls expressed themselves as flappers through dress and participation in the American beauty culture. This chapter examines the lives of young women in Utah’s capital in relation to the characteristics of the stereotypical flapper to understand how localized patterns of behavior defined the regional flapper.
As previous chapters acknowledged, community members largely supported women’s education. As a result, girls in Salt Lake City pursued knowledge with passion. According to a survey of more than three thousand high school and junior high school girls conducted as part of Beeley’s “Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City,” nearly ninety-six percent of respondents expected to finish high school and fifty-one percent planned to attend college.\textsuperscript{184} The actual rates of high school graduation and college attendance among young women were, however, lower. By 1930, ninety-eight percent of girls in Salt Lake between the ages of 14–15 attended school. That figure decreased to eighty percent among young women 16–17 years old and fell to thirty-one percent of women ages 18–20. Despite the disparity between the girl’s anticipations and the real statistics, young women in the city attended school at markedly higher rates than national averages. During the same time, eighty-nine percent of American girls between the ages of 14–15; fifty-eight percent of young women 16–17; and twenty percent of women ages 18–20 attended school.\textsuperscript{185}

Female students in Utah’s capital took advantage of unmatched opportunities—in relation to previous generations—both inside and outside of the classroom. Beyond courses that emphasized typewriting, stenography, and comptometer skills, area high schools offered classes in Art, Biology, Chemistry, Commerce, Cooking, Design, Drama, English, French, German, History, Latin, Math, Mechanical Drawing, Physics,

\textsuperscript{184} Beeley, “Boys and Girls in Salt Lake City,” 191. The survey collected information from students at East, West, and L.D.S. High Schools, and South, West, Jackson, and Jordon Junior High Schools.

Psychology, Science, Sewing and Millinery, Spanish, Speech, and Social Science among other courses.\textsuperscript{186} Many girls also participated in extra-curricular activities such as Chemistry Club, Drama, Debate, Glee Club, Opera, Orchestra, Student Council, and Yearbook. Those varied opportunities empowered high school students to explore and develop ranging interests and to recognize their potential. Members of the Inner Circle Club, for instance, acknowledged the changing role of young women. “In every walk of life today, girls carry responsibilities that in previous years have been only attempted by men.” To meet those responsibilities, young women at East High School organized the Club in 1921 “to instill the qualities of leadership into the girls.”\textsuperscript{187} Clearly, young women in Salt Lake City understood the unique social position occupied by girls in the inter-war period. By seizing youth’s rewards and taking advantage of modern opportunities, girls in Utah’s capital adopted the ambitious nature of the American flapper.

Coeds also capitalized on chances for advancement. By 1929, women participated alongside men in more than twenty clubs and organizations such as the Art Guild, Biological Society, Commerce Club, Debate, International Relations Club, Orchestra, and Speech Arts Society. Female students also formed nearly thirty women-only groups like the Associated Women Students, Literary and Fine Arts Clubs, and Phi Delta Delta for law students.\textsuperscript{188} Just as high school girls asserted their ambitions by

\textsuperscript{186} Steensma, \textit{Wallace Stegner’s Salt Lake City}, 33.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Estonia} (Salt Lake City: East High School, 1923), 119.
\textsuperscript{188} To help us understand women’s increased participation in academic and non-academic organizations at the University of Utah, consider the following: in 1919, there were twenty-one clubs for men, eight for men and women, and seven for women; in 1929, there were thirty-nine clubs for men, twenty-one for men and women, and twenty-six for women. From 1919–1929 men’s clubs nearly doubled while organizations for men and women nearly tripled and women’s associations nearly quadrupled.
participating in extra-curricular activities, college women established associations to further their individual interests. For example, the Salt Lake Chapter of the National Business Woman’s Organization existed “to promote the cause of higher business education and training for all women, to foster high ideals for women in business careers and to encourage fraternity and cooperation among women preparing for such careers; to stimulate the spirit of sacrifice and unselfish devotion to the attainment of such ends.”

Apart from academic and career oriented organizations, many coeds at the University of Utah joined social sororities. Gamma Phi was the first sorority at the university, established in 1897. By 1920, more than one hundred women belonged to six associations. Social sororities became increasingly popular over the course of the decade, and women’s participation peaked in 1927 when eleven groups inducted nearly 370 women. Despite public concerns that sororities incubated immorality, the organizations promoted elevated standards. For instance, the Constitution of the Delta Theta sorority vowed to “promote fellowship among girls of high ideals and of high scholarship.” Accomplishment of such aims required that members maintain a “high scholastic standing” and develop “the qualities of refinement, culture, integrity, sincerity, loyalty, and purity of character which denote the highest type of woman.”

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189 Salt Lake Alumnae Chapter of Phi Chi Theta, *Phi Chi Theta scrapbooks, 1928–1937*, Records Management Archives, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

190 Sororities at the University of Utah from 1919–1929: Alpha Chi (1914), Alpha Delta Pi (1927), Alpha Sigma Delta (1929), Chi Omega (1914), Delta Epsilon (1911), Delta Theta Chi (1924), Delta Zeta (1928), Gamma Sigma (1921), Gamma Phi (1897), Kappa Chi (1926), Lambda Phi Lambda (1919), Pi Beta Phi (1919), Pi Epsilon Pi (1921), Zeta Tau (1925).

191 Delta Theta Sorority, “The Life of Delta Theta,” *Delta Theta Sorority scrapbook, 1926*, Box 1, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Other sororities declared similarly high standards and intentions. For example, the Constitution of Gleam-Epsilon Alumnae, Chapter of Chi Delta Phi read: “The purpose of this Sorority shall be . . . to hold together those congenial groups of women who, by their influence and literary interest, uphold the highest ideals of
Figure 14. As members of the Delta Theta social sorority, Marjorie Gillet Vincent, Margaret Elizabeth Henderson, and Lois Erickson represented the “highest type” of women at the University of Utah in 1926. (Delta Theta Sorority, “The Life of Delta Theta,” Delta Theta Sorority scrapbook, 1926 [1926].)

I examined the Delta Theta records further to understand the role of social sororities on campus and the characteristics of sorority members in relation to the coed flapper. Upon the recommendations of University President George Thomas and Dean of Women Lucy Van Cott, students at the University of Utah founded the Delta Theta sorority in February 1926. A scrapbook assembled in that year contained members’ photographs and biographical information. Fewer than half of the seventeen members came from Salt Lake City; several originated from rural communities in Utah and others traveled from California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, and New Jersey. Together, the Delta Thetas earned a median “B” average in academic majors ranging from Business to Home Economics, Physical Education to Chemistry, and History to French. Sixty-five percent of the members identified as Latter-day Saints while others labeled themselves liberal education; to provide means whereby its members may meet for the purposes of informal study and entertainment; and to have always at heart the interests, welfare, future, and good name of their Alma Mater” (Chi Delta Phi, Gleam Epsilon Chapter, “Constitution-Gleam-Epsilon Alumnae: Chapter of Chi Delta Phi,” Chi Delta Phi records, 1911–1968, Box 1a, Book 2, 31, Special Collections, Marriot Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah).
Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, Non-Sectarian, and Presbyterian.\textsuperscript{192} The group was obviously eclectic.

The sorority required member participation in at least two other university activities to promote the "welfare of the college spirit."\textsuperscript{193} Between the inaugural sorority members, the Delta Thetas belonged to nearly every campus organization available to coeds in 1926. They also joined groups that were unaffiliated with the college such as the Camp Fire Girls, Red Cross, and Young Women’s Christian Association. Moreover, the sorority hosted events to promote membership and foster good will among all university students. Delta Theta rules mandated, however, that "no sorority functions . . . interfere with school activities."\textsuperscript{194} Considering the communal nature of Delta Theta’s lofty standards and the success of its members, it seems that social sororities positively served the academic community and individual coeds in Salt Lake City.

While the first members embodied individual qualities and ambitions, subsequent pledges were equally motivated and diverse. Furthermore, although the objectives of the Delta Theta organization were specific to that sorority, most Greek societies for women at the University of Utah stated similar aims. All told, social sororities were valuable organizations that encouraged academic achievement, fostered success, and contributed

\textsuperscript{192} Delta Theta Sorority, “The Life of Delta Theta,” \textit{Delta Theta Sorority scrapbook, 1926}.
\textsuperscript{193} Delta Theta Sorority, “The Life of Delta Theta,” \textit{Delta Theta Sorority scrapbook, 1926}. Members of the Delta Theta sorority participated in Alpha Beta Theta (honorary literary society), Ballet, Beauty Pageant, Chemistry Club, Chi Delta Phi (literary society), Dance Committee, Entertainment Committee, Fine Arts, French Circle, German Club, Glee Club, Hiking Club, Hockey, Home Economics Club, Inter-Sorority Council, Nu Delta Sigma (home economics society), Opera, Phi Delta Pi (physical education sorority), Pilgrimage Committee, President’s Club, Prom Committee, Sigma Kappa (PanHellenic association), Song Fest, Spanish Club, Spurs (national organization for college women), Telegraphic Campus Race Committee, Tennis, Track, Trotters (horseback riding club), University Day Committee, Union Building Drive Committee, Women’s Athletic Association, Women’s Debate, and Women’s League.
\textsuperscript{194} Delta Theta Sorority, “The Life of Delta Theta,” \textit{Delta Theta Sorority scrapbook, 1926}. 
to constructive community growth. Female students belonging to social sororities in Salt Lake generally possessed high ideals, goals, and abilities. Harsh criticisms expressed by university men in the *Utonian* typically overlooked those facts. Regardless, sorority members contributed to the quality of the flapper’s character in Utah’s capital and reinforced the icon’s commitment to education.

Young women’s experiences in education and school related activities shaped their ambitions. The same survey conducted by Beeley of high school and junior high school girls asked the participants to indicate their future vocational plans. Five “kinds of work” topped the list: (1) Stenographic, (2) Teaching, (3) Secretarial, (4) Nursing, and (5) Business; fourteen percent of the respondents remained undecided. Occupations in Art, Aviation, Drafting, Law, Medicine, and Music also appeared on the list. The most surprising survey results indicated that only fourteen of the 3,038 students intended to marry after high school and less than one percent anticipated “House-Work” jobs. Such data suggests that young women dismissed the Journal’s recommendations that girls prioritize marriage, motherhood, and domesticity over education and careers.

Again, the girl’s anticipations diverged from reality. Through interviews of various employers at 250 establishments in Salt Lake, Beeley gathered occupational information for 3,326 young women under the age of twenty-five. The survey identified common “types of occupations,” the top five being: (1) Sales, (2) Telephone Operations, (3) Teaching, (4) Factory Work, and (5) Stenography. Despite the girl’s expressed desires, few young women occupied positions in medical fields, artistic trades, or business. Miriam B. Murphy, historian and author of “Gainfully Employed Women:

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1896–1950,” attributed the distribution of women’s work in Utah’s capital to urban growth and development throughout the twenties. “The heightened business and commercial activity of those years,” Murphy wrote, “reflected in the phenomenal growth” of factory, office, and domestic positions for women.196

Regardless of available work, Beeley discovered that nearly eighty percent of girls under the age of 18 were unemployed during the school year and more than sixty-five percent remained jobless throughout the summer.197 The stereotypical American flapper worked; the same characterization did not apply to the average girl in Salt Lake who sought employment less frequently. Beeley suggested that insufficient wages and poor working conditions deterred many young women from occupational pursuits. But if we consider the elevated rates of school attendance among Salt Lake girls, we could simply determine that few had time to work. We could also easily conclude that social support for women’s education led girls to value and prioritize academics over employment. Regardless of individual reasons, when young women chose not to work, they also chose to reject the Journal’s and secular columnist’s recommendations regarding employment; consequently, they rejected the gendered expectations on which those recommendations rested.

Young women’s general aversion to employment afforded more time for Salt Lake girls to embrace the pleasurable aspects of flapperdom such as physical activity. When the tightly laced corset fell out of style around the turn of the century, women rediscovered their ability to move freely. Historian Joshua Zeitz claimed that changes in

dress, which allowed unencumbered movement, coincided with “the rise of women’s colleges and coeducational universities.” That change, Zeitz claimed, ushered “in a new era of athleticism for American women.” The flapper epitomized that newfound meaning of female physicality. Whether on the playing field, gymnasium court, dance floor, or city street, the flapper was active and she was in motion. Many girls in Salt Lake City embodied that same flare for movement.

Figure 15. *Top*, The senior basketball team at East High School, 1926. *Right*, Girl’s Swim Team at East High School, 1926. (Photographs published in *The Estonia* [1926].)

The broader community supported women’s athletics as a wholesome form of leisure and a health-building outlet for adolescent energy. Cognizant of that general social acceptance, girls in Salt Lake enthusiastically embraced physical forms of recreation. Seventy percent of the young women graduating from East High School in 1926, for instance, participated in at least one athletic activity. Most girls took part in

198 Zeitz, *Flapper*, 143.
several. Female students could go out for the Baseball, Basketball, Catchball, Hockey, Massball, Swimming, Tennis, and Track teams or they could join the Dancing or Hiking Clubs. The University of Utah offered the same, with the addition of Archery, Golf, and Paddle-Tennis. The formation of “Women’s Athletic Clubs” and related non-athletic events—team parties and bi-annual “getting-to-know-you” dances—suggests that many young women participated in physical activities to extend opportunities for socializing rather than to promote their health through exercise.

Dance was a particularly popular activity among the American flapper and young women in Salt Lake alike. In addition to school-sanctioned organizations, girls studied and practiced various forms of the art in crowded studios throughout the valley. But, not all women participated in such proper modes of dance. In the words of historian Paula Fass, “the dances the youth enjoyed most were the ones most criticized by adults. The shimmy and the toddle, which had become popular during the war, started the decade and the young on their dancing way.” As the decade wore on, “they were followed by the collegiate, the Charleston, the black bottom, the tango. The dances brought the bodies and faces of the partners too dangerously close for the comfort of the older folks.”

In spite of boisterous opposition discussed in the preceding chapter, it seemed that for every occasion there was a corresponding dance. Each Sunday the Telegram’s “Society” section announced a Promenade marking an anniversary, a Ball for charity, and a Dance celebrating an honored guest. Student associations were particularly fond of commemorating any and every event with a dance. For instance, the senior and junior girls at East High School hosted a “Kids’ Party” dance to welcome the incoming class.

The event sounded harmless, “all come forth in the glad-rags of their childhood days. These were the dainty silk and lace dresses, a big hair bow, and china dolls . . . lollipops and teddy bears; patched overalls and khaki shirts.”

Judging from a photograph of a group attending the party in 1929, the occasion was hardly an innocent meeting of mature upper-class women and naïve girls. Although some young women wore ruffled skirts and androgynous frocks reminiscent of the “happy-go-lucky” days for their girlhood, most dressed more provocatively. In spite of the “kids” theme, many of the students posed in short-sleeved or sleeveless dresses that rose above their knees. Some girls rolled their socks down to expose their legs from thigh to ankle. Each young woman sported short hair and several clearly wore lipstick. Most of the pictured students seemed to use the dance as an opportunity to distinguish themselves as women instead of girls—to sexualize their innocence, rebel against Victorian standards of behavior, and embody the modern aesthetic. In doing so, they joined young women across the nation in classifying themselves as flappers.

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200 “Kids for Sure,” Estonia (Salt Lake City, East High School, 1929), 167.
If one found herself without a planned event to attend, another dance was never hard to find. By 1928, there were five large public dance halls in Salt Lake and many smaller sites throughout the area. Before the first decade of the new century ended, unruly crowds controlled many of the City’s clubs. Consequently, society generally viewed the long-standing establishments as nothing more than dens of immorality where drunks gambled and indulged their sexually deviant desires. Concerted efforts—in the form of police raids and government crackdowns—restored some measure of decency to the remaining dance halls but the public’s perceptions remained largely unchanged.

In spite of strong social criticism, the dance craze of the Roaring Twenties possessed Salt Lake’s youth. Every night of the week couples moved in step to fast paced Jazz in various venues across the valley such as the Municipal Dance Hall, the Hotel Utah, the Odeon, and downtown clubs. Beyond the city limits, Fass noted that young men and women perceived dance as “an expression and an outlet for the new

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tempo of American culture, its heterogeneous sources, and its more open sexuality.”

Through dance, Salt Lake girls shared in the broader experience of youth in the twenties. For those young women, then, dancing was a means of cultural assimilation. Dance was also a means of self-identification—by dressing and dancing certain ways, girls in Utah’s capital represented themselves as flappers.

If she was not dancing, illustrators like John Held Jr. often depicted the flapper with a cigarette in her hand or a bottle on her lips. Young women in Salt Lake City approached those characteristics of the female icon with caution. Betty Blair—columnist for the *Telegram*—received a letter signed by “Arguer” about “Smoking Problems.” Arguer asked, “What constitutes the act of inhaling—when one sort of swallows and sends the smoke out through the nose or when one holds smoke in the mouth and sucks it in with another breath? Which is the most injurious?” Clearly, Arguer wrote with a purpose in mind. Could she discover a loophole that simultaneously allowed her to “smoke” without smoking? Could she find a way to partake without technically violating any rule or moral opposition to the habit? If that was her intent, Blair’s dry medical definition of inhaling must have disappointed. Regardless of the reply, Arguer’s letter illustrated an internal conflict on the matter of smoking. Other young women in Salt Lake undoubtedly struggled to reconcile the same issue. If the quintessential New Woman lit up, so must they. Smoking, however, was still taboo for women in the city. Many girls wanted to be like the flapper, but grappled with the choices that allowed them to be so.

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203 *Salt Lake Telegram*, “Heart’s Haven,” October 11, 1929.
But not all girls wavered on the issue of smoking. Another letter to Blair asked the columnist if it was really “so terrible for a girl to smoke?” Clearly searching for affirmation of her position rather than Blair’s opinion of the matter, the author wrote:

I think there are a good many more harmful things a girl can do. . . I go with a very respectable crowd of young people. We do not drink or have wild “necking” parties, and the only thing my folks can find wrong with us is that both girls and boys smoke. . . I merely mentioned smoking to my parents the other night and they told me I was going to the bad; that no respectable girl would do such a thing and what would Aunt Anne and all our relations think? I don’t care what they think, it’s my life and I suppose they did things that made their folks think the same of them. I believe if a girl wants to smoke, she will smoke whether she does it at home or not. They say a man can call a house a home only when he can sit comfortably with his paper and his PIPE. Why can’t a girl call the house her home?

The writer attempted to justify smoking by comparing it to “more harmful things.” She also analyzed the issue in relation to gender equality—if men smoked, women should too. That perspective mirrored efforts by the tobacco industry in the twenties to reverse the negative social stigma of female smokers. Working to persuade more women to smoke, advertisers promoted the cigarette as a symbol of sexual empowerment in the modern, post-suffrage era. A cigarette in the hand of the New Woman became a “torch of freedom.”

Precisely how many young women in Salt Lake City smoked is unknown. We do know that while some women shunned the practice other girls debated the decision—weighing the moral price of smoking versus the potential social gains. Still, some young women boldly and unapologetically supported smoking along with other habits society considered offensive. Three sorority members, “Frank, Ernest, and Brother,” informed

204 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, *Salt Lake Telegram*, September 23, 1928.
205 Peril, *College Girls*, 266.
Miss Blair that they thoroughly and freely enjoyed smoking and drinking. “We smoke and drink in our homes and our parents do not object so we do not have to hide our actions from them. Because a girl smokes and drinks does not mean she is not as much of a lady as one who does not.” The self-proclaimed “good sports” declared that neither smoking nor drinking harmed their images. They were, in fact, “as popular with the right type of boys and girls as any girls could possibly be.” Like Frank, Ernest, and Brother, young women who smoked in Salt Lake City did so in spite of clearly defined social objections to the practice. As the evidence reveals, Salt Lake girls did not behave entirely in accordance with public expectations—instead, individual impulses to embody certain characteristics of the flapper, such as her fondness of cigarettes, often prevailed over communal concerns.

Figure 17. Right, “The Sweet Girl Graduate,” depicts a flapper lighting a cigarette with her diploma. Clearly, the woman has little regard for that symbol of her education compared to the pleasure of smoking. (Illustration by John Held Jr., “The Sweet Girl Graduate,” Life [1926].) Left, The drawing shows a coed smoking; the sight horrifies dinners in the background. (Illustration by Lyman W. Powers, Utonian [1921].)

206 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, Salt Lake Telegram, October 9, 1928.
If smoking among women was taboo, drinking was unthinkable—consequently, consumption of alcohol became “a particularly potent badge of youthful insubordination” historian Lynn Peril wrote.\textsuperscript{207} A study published in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* and later presented to Congress during the 1930 “Hearings on the Prohibition Amendment,” revealed that drinkers on college campuses outnumbered teetotalers nearly 2 to 1. Furthermore, the poll examined the extent to which college students partook; asking drinkers, “Do you ever get drunk?” Thirty percent did. The survey asked non-drinkers to identify the principle factor in their decision to refrain: seven percent selected “Legal Restriction;” nine percent indicated “Family;” and eighty-four percent attributed their abstinence to “Personal Taste.”\textsuperscript{208} The study was significant for two reasons. First, it verified what many Americans had known for years—Prohibition failed to impose temperance. More interestingly, the poll probed non-drinkers and found that a student’s personal taste most often motivated abstinence. Simply, social censure was less effective at deterring drinking than anyone could have imagined.

“The extent of the evil is unknown,” Beeley conceded on the matter of drinking among Salt Lake City’s youth.\textsuperscript{209} Court records, however, do lend some insight. From July 15, 1924 to July 1, 1925, the Salt Lake County Criminal Docket recorded female arrests. In less than a year, police detained fifty women for possession of liquor, six for “being drunk,” two for selling liquor, two for drinking in public, two for manufacturing

\textsuperscript{207} Peril, *College Girls*, 270.
\textsuperscript{208} “15,000 in 14 Colleges Drink to 8,569 Youths Who Don’t,” The Prohibition Amendment; Hearings Before the Committee on the Judiciary House of Representatives; Seventy-First Congress; Second Session on H.J. Res. 11, 38, 99, 114, 219, and 246; Serial 5; April 23 and 24, 1930; Part 3 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1930), 1457.
liquor, and one for transporting liquor.\textsuperscript{210} Although we cannot know how many female violators escaped the law, we can be sure that some women in Salt Lake disregarded the Eighteenth Amendment. According to Miss Blair’s coed correspondents, law-abiding women at the University of Utah were rare. “We go to college and can easily say that nine out of ten girls who go there indulge” in smoking and drinking, Frank, Ernest, and Brother declared.\textsuperscript{211} Quantifiable evidence can neither confirm nor deny that claim, but the truth of the matter was simple—young women in Salt Lake City shared the flapper’s taste for prohibited drinks and disobedience.

If the flapper’s penchant for dancing, smoking, and drinking failed to offend members of the older generation, her frankness about sex and romance certainly could. “Since the early twentieth century,” wrote Zeitz, “the sexual habits of American women had changed in profound ways.” A cultural shift from “courting” to “dating” lent itself to greater sexual experimentation. So too did greater access to birth control, which allowed women to determine “birth patterns and family plans” single-handedly. Such self-determination allowed women to “grasp a new measure of control over basic family order and aspire to having their needs more readily taken into consideration,” Fass claimed.\textsuperscript{212} Stated differently, reproductive autonomy liberated sex from pregnancy. Largely unencumbered by the anxiety linked to the lasting consequences of intercourse, women could focus more intently on individual gratification.

\textsuperscript{210} Salt Lake County Attorney, “1924 Docket,” \textit{County Attorney Criminal Docket, July 15, 1924–July 1, 1925}, Salt Lake County Archives, No. 7/87-8984 (Salt Lake: Arrow Press).
\textsuperscript{211} Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, \textit{Salt Lake Telegram}, October 9, 1928.
\textsuperscript{212} Fass, \textit{The Damned and the Beautiful}, 65.
That newfound level of freedom led to less guarded attitudes on sex, and subsequently, more sex among the youth. A study entitled *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, by biologist Alfred Kinsley, revealed that “whereas only fourteen percent of women born before 1900 engaged in premarital sex by the age of twenty-five, somewhere between thirty-six percent and thirty-nine percent of women who came of age in the 1910s and 1920s lost their virginity before marriage.”\(^{213}\) As the number of women engaging in sexual relations outside of wedlock rose, so too did the number of women engaging in pleasurable sexual experiences. According to Zeitz, sexually active women in the inter-war era were twice more likely to experience an orgasm before marriage than their mothers were.\(^ {214}\)

In a city permeated by the ideals of the LDS Church, there was no tolerance for female sexual promiscuity. Longing for the antiquated morality of days-gone-by, Mormon leader, Melvin J. Ballard addressed young church members. “We want the standards of our mothers and of this Church to be maintained [so] that next to murder is the crime of sexual impurity. For they told us that they would rather hear that we were dead than that we had lost our virtue. It is more important than life itself.”\(^ {215}\) Ballard’s words warrant repetition—sexual purity was more important than life itself in the evaluation of the LDS Church. But growing up in an age where the pursuit of pleasure defined the act of living, young women in Salt Lake City strained to understand the weighty issues of the day and their options within their society.

\(^{213}\) Zeitz, Flapper, 21.
\(^{214}\) Zeitz, Flapper, 21.
\(^{215}\) Ballard, “‘We Stand for a Pure Life Through Clean Thought and Action,’” 417.
Concerned girls often turned to the “Heart’s Haven” for advice. One writer explained her predicament. “I was out with a boy last night that tried to pet me up. Just because I refused to return his caresses, he called me a ‘little Egyptian mummy.’ . . . My question is about how to stop this petting business in a nice, polite manner. I don’t like to be considered old-fashioned, nor do I want to have ‘all take and no give’ as my motto.”

Plagued with anxiety, the girl struggled to understand how she could be both progressive and proper. “Surely there is a way to make the sheiks understand and preserve one’s self respect, isn’t there,” she asked.

Figure 18. Images illustrate public displays of affection, showing that some women freely displayed sexual expressions in Salt Lake City. (*Utonian* [1929; 1923; 1929].)

Not all young women in Utah’s capital shared the “little Egyptian mummy’s” judgments. Despite deep social objections to premarital physicality of any sort, some girls in Salt Lake indulged their sexual desires. Such was the case for several students at East High School. Next to the photographs of graduating members of the class of 1923, the *Estonia* yearbook listed each senior’s self-confessed “SIN.” Florence itemized her

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216 Blair, Come to the Heart’s Haven with Betty Blair, *Salt Lake Telegram*, April 30, 1925.
indiscretions, “First Ken, then Albert, now—.” Mildred simply admitted that she had a weakness for all boys and she fell for them too often. In addition, according to Zora, only Ray knew the secret of her offenses. 217 Those sexually suggestive confessions indicated both the young women’s behavior and the candor with which they discussed such matters. Beeley found both trends disturbing. Although the sexual sophistication of the “worldly wise” girls concerned him, he was utterly appalled by the manner in which the young ladies openly discussed their sexual transgressions. All told, Beeley could not comprehend the forces which drove “the general flippancy with which” Salt Lake girls treated sexual matters. 218

In spite of changing attitudes among young women on issues related to sex, concerned members of society took comfort in the fact that sexual behavior remained marriage-oriented in Salt Lake City. In 1920, sixty percent of urban women in Utah, ages fifteen and older, were married. By 1930, that percentage rose slightly to 60.4 percent. 219 Local papers publicized that stable reality by publishing smiling, bobb-headed brides in the “Society” sections. Endless lists featured enthusiastic announcements of one coed’s engagement and another sorority member’s marriage. In anticipation of things to come, advertisers showed stylish flappers embracing a new sort of joy—the joy of motherhood. Although more women walking down the aisle in the twenties may have had more sexual experience than their mothers did at the same point in life, they walked all the same—in

217 Estonia (Salt Lake: East High School, 1923), 28–47.
the end, the end did not change. On the matter of marriage, young women in Salt Lake City were largely unlike the stereotypically single American flapper.

Unlike sexual manners, dress was an identifiable characteristic of the flapper. As Bruce Bliven, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Held, Jr., and countless other social commentators recognized, the flapper was a beautiful girl. Her beauty, however, was not necessarily her own but rather manufactured to some degree or another. For instance, she used powder to create the illusion of skin as smooth as porcelain. She smudged kohl onto her eyelids and coated her lashes with mascara to define her eyes. And she rubbed red or orange rouge on her cheeks to replicate the natural coloring of a flushed face. In essence, the flapper purchased beauty; most women did. After the Great War, historian Kathy Peiss wrote, cosmetics flooded the market.

Between 1909 and 1929 the number of American perfume and cosmetics manufacturers nearly doubled, and the factory value of their products rose tenfold, from $14.2 million to nearly $141 million. In 1929, sociologist Robert Lynd estimated, Americans were spending $700 million annually for cosmetics and beauty services. In a very short time, cosmetics had become an affordable indulgence for American women across the socioeconomic spectrum.²²⁰

Through beauty—the pursuit, purchase, and practice of it—women navigated “the changing conditions of [the] modern social experience.”²²¹ But the flapper distinguished herself, in part, through her pleasing aesthetic. Her voracious consumption of products and services qualified the flapper as more than a casual participant in the beauty culture. In the twenties, the flapper defined the American beauty culture, and it defined her.

²²⁰ Peiss, Cheap Amusements, 97.
²²¹ Peiss, Cheap Amusements, 6.
To understand the flapper’s dress requires a consideration of time and space, according to sociologist Joanne Entwistle. Before the turn of the century, fashion reflected a feminine ideal of beauty that indicated sexual purity among upper and middle class women. As time passed, technological advancements, new modes of mass production, urbanization, social reforms, and global conflict transformed American society. Consequently, pillars of Victorian beauty—namely virtue and self-control—crumbled. By the twenties, the young flapper embodied a redefined ideal of democratized feminine beauty. The new icon bobbed her hair, lined her eyes, rouged her cheeks, painted her lips, and wore too little clothing on her skinny frame. Although the effect was “altogether artificial,” wrote Bruce Bliven, editor of *The New Republic*, it was pleasing nonetheless. Beyond visual appeal, the flapper’s dress reflected the social changes of her time.

Whereas time directed fashion, space inserted the rules of society. Entwistle explained in *The Fashioned Body* that space imposes the “moral order of the social world” upon the individual. The individual, then, internally analyzes the particular rules and norms to navigate the “ways of being in a space.” A dialogue between the flapper and the space she inhabited shaped her dress. While the flapper internalized the social norms of her space, she interpreted those directions according to her individual beliefs. At the same time, she personalized contemporary styles and thus, actively shaped the dress patterns of her space. As Entwistle explained, society sets the rules that the

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222 Based on the work of Joanne Entwistle, I define fashion as a specific system of clothing and adorning the body that changes over time.
223 Bliven, “Flapper Jane.”
individual then acted in accordance with or opposed. What distinguished the flapper was defiance. In other words, a young woman became a flapper because she rebelled against the rules outlined by society. To what extent a girl rebelled behaviorally is difficult to know. Rebellion through dress as represented by the flapper aesthetic, on the other hand, is easier to spot.

Not only was the flapper in Salt Lake City visible, she was indistinguishable from the idealized figure. In 1922 Agnes Bostonne, a Mormon contributor for the Journal, commented on the flapper’s appearance in “The Style of Women:”

We are all cast in the same mould [sic]. Our skirts all stop at our knees whether we are long-limbed . . . or built like an apple dumpling. Our faces are as thick with powder as those former dwellers on Regent Street, now forever vanished from Salt Lake City. Our ears are the most modest portion of our bodies. They are always secretly concealed by immoderately ratted, bobbed, or ‘lightened’ hair . . . blouses daily become more transparent, and sleeves shorter, until the feminine superstructure is nothing but a pneumonia trap. Earrings, strapped toes, high heels, and barbaric chains complete the senseless though pleasing picture . . . You find these characterless wax figures on our school campuses just as much as you do on East Temple Street. . . . College girls, married women, high school flappers, stenographers, and laundry girls all have forgotten that there are such things as individuality and suitability in dress. This is as true in New York as it is of Utah.

Although the picture was “pleasing,” Bostonne disapproved of the immodest style of women’s dress in Salt Lake City. But unlike many critical and exaggerated observations of girls in the twenties, the Journal writer’s reflection was accurate in the sense that flapper fashion was as prevalent in Utah’s capital as it was in larger American cities.

Bostonne’s recognition of that similarity in dress was not, however, original. National

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225 Regent Street, originally named Commercial Street, was a popular prostitute haunt in downtown Salt Lake City, as was East Temple Street. For more information on prostitution in the city, see Jeffery Nichols, *Prostitution, Polygamy, & Power: Salt Lake City, 1847–1918* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

publications such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Harper’s* observed that the modern clothing and “best fashion” on display in Salt Lake were “as urban” as any the authors had seen.  

Young women in Salt Lake City took their style queues from the highest authorities. Photographs from the *Estonia* offer a glimpse into the aesthetic replication of flapper style, namely abbreviated hairstyles. Actress Clara Bow, “The It Girl” as she was known, inspired aspiring flappers. On screen, Bow was innocent and playful; her tousled locks embodied the lively, uncomplicated personality that earned her such fanfare. Seniors at East High School imitated Bow’s bob—ear-length curls and bangs cropped above the brow.

Louise Brooks, star of *Pandora’s Box, Diary of A Lost Girl*, and other films throughout the twenties, popularized a different sort of bob referred to as the “Dutch Boy.” By her own admission, Brooks was a fast-living woman. Without compunction or apprehension, she declared, “I like to drink and fuck.” Like Brooks, her hair was sleek and blunt. Again, young women in Salt Lake replicated the iconic look with straight bangs and A-line cuts that came to a point on the cheek. Students modeled other variations of the bob like the brushed back, coconut, Egyptian, moana, orchid, shingled, Charleston cut, and Eton crop.

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228 Zeitz, *Flapper*, 245.
Those unwilling to or forbidden from bobbing their hair did the next best thing. Like Ellen in “The Danger Age,” some girls “ratted, snarled, tucked, and pinned . . . until it gave very much the appearance of unskillfully bobbed hair.” Most girls—with or without parental approval—bobbed anyway. Bobbed hair was ubiquitous in Salt Lake City by the mid-nineteen twenties. Of the one hundred and sixty young women graduating from East High School in 1926, only seven flaunted long hair. Contrary to

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229 Wayne, “The Danger Age.”
popular belief, bobbed styles required considerable attention. For instance, to maintain short cuts girls had to trim their hair frequently and visit the salon regularly to keep permanent waves. In her study of women’s work, Murphy illustrated the growing demand for hair services by identifying eighty-four hairdressers in Utah in 1920; ten years later, she counted 569. Murphy concluded, “Utah women in the twenties were obviously willing to pay hairdressers to arrange their locks in the latest styles.”

Beautification extended well beyond manicured bobs. Telegram columnists Kathleen Kaye and Betty Blair received endless inquiries from young female readers desperately searching for the newest foundations, powders, creams, and so on. In spite of the columnist’s persistent refusal to advise in that regard, Salt Lake girls located, applied, and in some cases over applied beauty products. Once more, young women at East High exhibited that trend. Elsie May Rich and several other students, for example, confessed that they used too much powder while a number of their peers admitted that looks consumed them. Such aesthetic concern among Salt Lake girls demonstrates a widespread desire to conform with the contemporary devotion to the characteristic flapper style.

The ability to display glamor publically, Peiss suggested, was an important aspect of young women’s participation in the twenties beauty culture. All dressed up, Salt Lake City girls had plenty of places to go. School, in and of itself, provided a platform for students to display their beauty. Dance halls, summer resorts, and extra-curricular activities afforded additional opportunities for women to present themselves in public.

230 Murphy, “Gainfully Employed Women,” 197.
231 Estonia 1923, 26.
Taking self-exhibition further, some women submitted themselves to judgment entirely based on their appearance. Beauty contests “evolved from modest May Day celebrations to the spectacle of the Miss America pageant in 1921, where physical proportions, facial beauty, and appealing personality delineated the feminine ideal,” Peiss wrote.\footnote{Peiss, Cheap Amusements, 191.}

If beauty contests defined the feminine ideal, as Peiss claimed, then the flapper aesthetic was the standard in Salt Lake City. Consider, for instance, the finalists selected for Lagoon’s 1925 “Bathing Revue.”\footnote{“Lagoon Ready for Big Bathing Revue Tuesday,” Salt Lake Telegram, July 19, 1925.} Each bobbed-headed contestant modeled contemporary bathing suits, high heels, and appeared heavily made up. One year later, Saltair hosted the Saltair-Atlantic City Beauty Contest where Doretta Carstensen became the first woman to hold the title of Miss Utah. In accordance with pageant requirements, Miss Carstensen met the outlined measurements of a thin woman—weight: 115 to 136 pounds (in bathing suit and slippers), height: 5 ft. 3 in to 5 ft. 7 in. (in “Cuban Heel” slippers), neck: 12 in. to 13.5 in., arm (upper right): 9 in. to 10 in., bust: 31 in. to 35 in., waist: 25 in. to 27 in., hips: 34.5 in. to 38.5 in., thigh (right): 19 in to 20.5 in, calf (right): 12.5 in. to 13.5 in., ankle (right): 7.5 in. to 8.5 in.\footnote{“Saltair-Atlantic City Contest Open,” Salt Lake Telegram, July 12, 1926.} Not unlike the Lagoon contestants, Miss Carstensen displayed short and perfectly waved hair.
Photographs of top contenders in the *Utonian* beauty contest offer more detailed insight into flapper fashion in Salt Lake City. Twice, students at the University of Utah declared Miss Vincent the “most femininely beautiful” woman on campus.  Miss Vincent’s close-up confirmed that judgment. She styled the waves of her burnished blonde hair so that curls rested on her lightly rouged cheeks. She lined her lips and eyes to define them against her light, smooth, powdered skin. Finally, she decorated her delicate neck with a strand of stringed pearls centered between exposed shoulders. A second photograph revealed added appeal. Standing for the full-length image, Miss Vincent posed casually; her right hand rested on her hip while the left emptily floated, as if calling for a drink or cigarette. She wore an intricately beaded, knee-length, shapeless silk chemise that exposed her thin limbs and petite figure. From head to high-heels, Miss Vincent exuded glamor and represented ideal feminine beauty in Salt Lake City and the nineteen twenties, as did many other aspiring flappers in the city.

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In their introduction to *Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?* Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher expressed their belief that, historically, “Utah women were both representative of national women and distinctive.”

236 As the title of the book suggests, women in the state have always been both a paradox and a paradigm. Not unlike their predecessors, Salt Lake girls had much in common with other young American women—in this case, the stereotypical flapper and would-be flappers throughout the nation. So too did Salt Lake City girls diverge from the characteristic figure to act distinctively. This chapter analyzed the degree to which young women in Salt Lake City observed the defining features of the twenties icon and found that, indeed, the regional iteration of the flapper was both a paradox and a paradigm.

Young women in Salt Lake City embraced the flapper’s fervent pursuit of education, involvement in extra-curricular and non-academic organizations, participation in athletics, pursuit of recreation, and immersion in the emergent beauty culture. By accepting those aspects of the flapper lifestyle, young women in Utah’s capital recognized their abilities, asserted their desires, gained independence, pushed the limits of gendered boundaries, and made known their disapproval of social expectations for girl’s behavior. Salt Lake City girls also hedged on other flapper characteristics such as smoking, drinking, and unrestrained sexual expressions. While some young women certainly adopted those taboo activities, it is safe to believe that the majority refrained. General abstinence in those arenas illustrates the moral undertone of the city. While society permitted some experimentation, a line still divided appropriate and intolerable

behavior. Some girls were simply unwilling to walk that line. Finally, young women in Salt Lake City largely avoided work, unlike the characteristic female figure. Inaction in this regard is difficult to interpret because it also went against social suggestions. Regardless of the underlying reasons that discouraged young women from working, we can see that they asserted themselves in opposition to public demands.

The flapper in Salt Lake City was, thus, a blend of the stereotypical American flapper and the regional expectations of young women’s behavior. In Utah’s capital, the flapper was stylish and educated but morally conscious. Salt Lake flappers were rebellious, but, only to a point. The City of Saints has always been unique. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that the young women in Salt Lake City were also unconventional. Perhaps the greater revelation is that they were also very much like American girls elsewhere throughout the nineteen twenties.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In Salt Lake City I fell in love for the first time and was rudely jilted for the first time and recovered for the first time. In Salt Lake I took my first drink and acquired a delightful familiarity with certain speakeasies that I could find now blindfolded if there were any necessity. I experimented with ether beer and peach brandy and bathtub gin and survived them all, as I survived the experience of driving an automobile at sixteen or seventeen, by hairbreadth but satisfactory margins.

Wallace E. Stegner
“At Home in the Fields of the Lord”

Western historian Wallace E. Stegner described Salt Lake City as “a complex idea.” To Latter-day Saints “it is more than a place; it is a way of life, a corner of the materially recognizable heaven; its soil held together by the roots of the family and the cornerstones of the temple.”237 To Stegner and other Gentiles, the city was eternally foreign. Notwithstanding, Salt Lake was the only place that Stegner—a self-proclaimed tumbleweed—ever called home. Despite his permanent status as an outsider, Stegner felt secure “in the darker and more ambiguous” corners of the city. So too did other sinners in the City of Saints, including rebellious women who identified with the iconic American flapper.

Utah historian Thomas G. Alexander categorized the nineteen twenties as a decade of oxymoronic contradictions—chief among which this thesis situated the flapper.

In the words of Joshua Zeitz, the flapper was a “complex figure.”238 Considering her in

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238 Zeitz, Flapper, 8.
Salt Lake City then, complex in its own right, is challenging. The lines between diametric opposites blurred. Normative behavior was not in conflict with rebellious actions because rebellion was the norm. Similarly, paradoxes were simultaneously paradigms. Young women in Salt Lake City observed social norms *and* rebelled. Like Stegner, girls aspiring to flapperdom found a place in the shadows. Simultaneously, they behaved as the older generation anticipated. In the end, the flapper in Utah’s capital both embraced cultural trends and complied with social expectations. She was a unique, regional iteration of the flapper. Regardless, the young woman in Salt Lake City was a flapper all the same.

The flapper’s ability to simultaneously embrace particular stereotypes and deny others in Salt Lake was not unique. Each day American girls reconciled their wants with their needs. Flappers in Utah’s capital were no different. Young women in Salt Lake City were intimately familiar with the female figure and wanted to emulate her behavior and style. Girls also understood that they had to fit in as members of society and in Salt Lake City that meant conforming to the standards of the LDS Church. “The Finest Fiber in the Soul” examined the prevailing behavioral prescriptions of the Church and secular expectations assigned to young women. All told, society demanded morally guided behavior from Salt Lake girls. Young women, however, often disregarded those anticipations. The second chapter examined the public anxiety that arose when girls misbehaved. Those sections outlined the behavioral expectations and the social fears that framed the experiences of young women that came of age in Salt Lake City in the inter-war period, which was the focus of the previous chapter.
What distinguished young women in Utah’s capital was their position outside of the American cultural mainstream and the specific expectations placed on their behavior by a unique society. While women in New York could follow both regional and national trends at the same time—because there was little distinction between the two—women in Salt Lake had to navigate and amalgamate the conservative values of their environment and the progressive impulses of the broader culture. Stated another way, because the Church was outside of the American mainstream for so long, young women had to piece together the ideals of their community and their desires to belong to the modern youth culture. Young women in Salt Lake City demonstrated that they could be part of the regional and national communities. The flapper in Utah’s capital could bob her hair and attend Sunday services. By choosing to unite the ideals of her immediate and distant environments, the flapper in Salt Lake City brought the city further into the American cultural mainstream and broadened the definition of the iconic female. She made Utah modern and nationalized the flapper.
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