Journal of Mormon History Vol. 16, 1990

Table of Contents

• The Power Of Place and the Spirit of Locale: Finding God on Western Trails

Stanley B. Kimball, 3

• Fawn M. Brodie, "Mormondom's Lost Generation," and No Man Knows My History

Newell G. Bringhurst, 11

• Remembering Nauvoo: Historiographical Considerations

Glen M. Leonard, 25

• The Nauvoo Heritage of the Reorganized Church

Richard P. Howard, 41

• Mormon Nauvoo from a Non-Mormon Perspective

John E. Hallwas, 53

• The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints

Ronald K. Esplin, 71

• Learning to Play: The Mormon Way and the Way of Other Americans

R. Laurence Moore, 89

This full issue is available in Journal of Mormon History: https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/mormonhistory/vol16/iss1/
Editorial Staff
LOWELL M. DURHAM, JR., Editor
ELEANOR KNOWLES, Associate Editor
MARSHA SONNAG BRADLEY, Associate Editor
JACK M. LYON, Associate Editor
KENT WARE, Designer
PATRICIA J. PARKINSON, Compositor
SHAUNA GIBBY, Production Artist
PATRICIA SCOTT, Business Manager

Board of Editors
MARIO DE PILLIS, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
JEAN BICKMORE WHITE, Weber State College
CLAUDIA L. BUSCHL, Newark, Delaware
W. GRANT MCMURRAY, RLDS Church, Independence, Missouri
JAMES B. ALLEN, Brigham Young University
DAVIS BITTON, University of Utah
CAROL CORNWALL MADSEN, Brigham Young University

Journal of Mormon History is published annually by the Mormon History Association, P.O. Box 7010, University Station, Provo, Utah 84602 (phone 801-378-4048), and distributed to members upon payment of annual dues: Student, $7.50; Regular, $10.00; Sustaining, $20.00; Friend of Mormon History, $100.00; Mormon History Association Patron, $500.00 or more. Single copies $8.00.

The Journal of Mormon History, annual publication of the Mormon History Association, reflects the purposes of the Association: "to foster scholarly research and publication in the field of Mormon history."

Manuscripts dealing with all aspects of Mormon history are invited. First consideration will be given to those which make a strong contribution to knowledge through new interpretations or new information. A panel of readers will also consider general interest of the paper, extent and accuracy of research, and literary quality.

Papers received before April 1 will be considered for a $300 prize. The winning paper will also be guaranteed publication in the Journal of Mormon History.

Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, with footnotes also double-spaced in a separate section at the end. For matters of style, consult The Chicago Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press, 1982) and a recent issue of the Journal. Preferred length is fifteen to twenty-five pages, including footnotes. All manuscripts are deposited in the MHA Archives after review unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope. The Mormon History Association assumes no responsibility for statement of fact or opinion by contributors.

Submit manuscripts for review in 1989-90 to Lowell M Durham Jr., 4234 Camille Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84117.

Typesetting and Production: Deseret Book Company
ISSN 0094-7342
Contents

The Power Of Place and the Spirit of Locale: Finding God on Western Trails
Stanley B. Kimball 3

Fawn M. Brodie, "Mormondom's Lost Generation," and No Man Knows My History
Newell G. Bringhurst 11

Remembering Nauvoo: Historiographical Considerations
Glen M. Leonard 25

The Nauvoo Heritage of the Reorganized Church
Richard P. Howard 41

Mormon Nauvoo from a Non-Mormon Perspective
John E. Hallwas 53

The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints
Ronald K. Esplin 71

Learning to Play: The Mormon Way and the Way of Other Americans
R. Laurence Moore 89

FRONT COVER: The Nauvoo Temple.
BACK COVER: The Nauvoo Temple in ruins. Steel engraving by Frederick Piercy from his book Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley (Liverpool: Franklin D. Richards, 1855).
Photos on page 6 courtesy Stanley B. Kimball. All other photos courtesy Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

©1990 Mormon History Association
The Power Of Place and the Spirit of Locale: Finding God on Western Trails

Stanley B. Kimball

For twenty-six years I have tried to share my findings and adventures as I researched, traveled, lectured, and wrote about trails, especially those used by the Mormons during their migrations. Tonight I wish to tell you what, for the most part, has never appeared in my writings and papers—the intensely personal, private, and spiritual experiences that have come to me while tramping the West.¹

The old trails are natural places of worship, linear temples that provide me with beauty, remoteness, and tranquillity. They are also schools of knowledge and experience about life, about others, about myself. They have enriched my life and made me a better person, a better historian.

I have taken to heart the advice of English historian R. H. Tawney, who said, "What historians need is not more documents, but stronger boots." We need to get out of our offices, libraries, ivory towers, and archives and experience the places we write about. It has been my good fortune to follow—on foot, by Jeep, and by plane—fifteen trails through fifteen states, aggregating more than ten thousand miles—much of the time following my ancestors, all the time following my heritage, and often enjoying the sensible power of place and tangible spirit of locale.

I have come closer to God on the trails in three ways: though the splendor and order of nature, by way of my pioneer heritage, and by association with my fellow beings.

Stanley B. Kimball, immediate past president of the Mormon History Association, is professor of history at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville.
Nature

The trails I travel were highways for my ancestors, a nineteenth-century people who believed themselves a remnant of God’s chosen Israel who were leaving a modern Egypt for a new Zion.

Along the trails are pastures, streams, rivers, mountains, everlasting hills, high places, waste places, deserts, solitary and quiet places, still waters, highways, paths, springs, wells, and fountains—landscape features bringing to mind favorite scriptural passages and forms. Seldom am I nearer to my God than when I am in places full of biblical imagery, where I can see no evidence of the human hand. This nearness is because we do not live in ourselves alone but become a portion of what is around us.

The various wildernesses and desert areas remind me of the times the Savior and other biblical individuals withdrew into such places for reflection and contemplation. Some people look at the wilderness along the trails and refer to this “godforsaken land.” That is unfortunate. I remember some rhymed doggerel I read once in a Wyoming motel. It began

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{This God forsaken land they call it.} \\
\text{As they gaze with pitying eye.} \\
\text{Nothing here but sagebrush} \\
\text{And a vast expanse of sky.}
\end{align*}
\]

and ended

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{This loneliness they talk about} \\
\text{Is God’s own peace.}
\end{align*}
\]

There are high places along the trails, such as Ancient Bluff Ruins, where I am disposed to reflect. I have lifted mine eyes unto those hills, where I felt as I felt thirty-nine years ago on high places in the Holy Land, where hymns of childhood, such as “High on a Mountain Top” and “Oh, Ye Mountains High” flooded my mind.

From promontories such as Independence Rock or atop some of the great gorges on the trails I am moved to rededicate myself to good works. Once on an elevation near Rocky Ridge in Wyoming, I chanced upon an old rancher on horse back. We chatted, and I commented on how much closer I felt to Deity here than in many other places. To which he responded, “Hell, son, you ought to, you’re a mile up nearer heaven.”

At other times, however, I have cast my eyes down and cried out of the depths of uncertainty and asked God to confirm the sureties of my youth, to help me see through the dark glass of confusion, to save me from the pride of learning and the vanity of mind service.

There are no greener pastures, no stiller waters than those found at Pacific Springs—acres of shimmering diamonds in the desolate area just beyond South Pass. There I can hear, internally at least, the admonition “Be still and know that I am God.” There is a great quiet, a peace that passeth all understanding, a companionable solitude in which I am least alone.

Other sources of water in the deserts and waste places lend understanding to
biblical references to fountains, wells, and springs of life and salvation. The literal and spiritual implications of such references are intensified on trails.

Along many parts of the trails, I welcome the memory of that departed world of my ancestors and other westering peoples and the silence many before me have sought for introspection and communion. Such a temple of silence exists at Martin’s Grove, where a dead pine tree in that V-shaped cleft in the Rattlesnake Mountains is the only reminder of those of my faith who in 1856 huddled and perished there in a Wyoming blizzard.

Heritage

When I tramp old western trails, I share a great deal—the past, my heritage, my common membership in the human race. I participate vicariously with a cross-section of humanity, with the more than 250,000 people who went West before the coming of the railroad, with people of all races, nationalities, and faiths with all kinds of motivations. Especially can I share the religious devotion of those priests and missionaries who suffered in the wilds to teach all nations the Good News.

I have felt the joy of some Latter-day Saints when they first saw their new Zion. Jane Reo Pearce, an English convert, for example, noted in 1851 that she was filled with “joy and gratitude for the protecting care over me and mine during our long and perilous journey.” In 1856 John Crook, also from England, wrote “There was the scene before us that we had long looked for and read and sung about, the City of the Saints. Oh what joy filled each bosom at the sight,” and in 1862 Thomas Memmott, recorded, “Oh, how my heart leaped for joy at the grand sight. The Zion I had so long wished to see.”

I have felt the power of place and the spirit of locale particularly strong at locations where I know prayer circles took place, events unique to my people, separating them from all other westering companies.

At least six of my own direct ancestors crossed the plains, so I identify immediately with their experiences, but more importantly I identify, as all Mormons to the latest African convert can, with their God-fearing, God-oriented lives. Four of these ancestors left trail accounts that lend a closeness achieved in no other way. The contemporary Mormon is prouder of nothing more than the fact that one or more of his or her ancestors “crossed the plains.” The contemporary convert can look to those same people as spiritual models.

Along these trails of faith and testing, many pioneers found God in the wilderness, or at least increased faith and a greater immediacy with God. (And so have I.) A study of their trail accounts documents this conclusively, and it has been my good luck to have had the time and opportunity to annotate nearly nine hundred of them—and this too has been a trail experience, one bringing me closer to my heritage.

Humanity

Today one can not travel the old trails and remain very long in the hallowed silences of the past; the present is very real, most intrusive, and difficult to avoid.
The author standing in the ruts of his ancestors at California Hill on the Oregon Trail, Nebraska

Nearly forgotten trail marker in Dawson County, Nebraska
Avoidance, however, is not only difficult and impractical but also unwise and limiting. There is much to be gained through interacting with our fellow beings in their contemporary lives along the trails.

Over the years I have had many rich experiences and pleasure through arranged and chance meetings with people on the trails. There is a common brother and sisterhood, a bonding, a sharing (there is that beautiful word again) that is something special, something different from everyday life.

Over the miles, I have met with all kinds of people in all kinds of circumstances and been given help, encouragement, and friendship. Everywhere I have gone, I have found people excited about the old trails, tolerant of and interested in the Mormon dimension, and proud of the big or little piece of Mormon history in their local area. I was able to talk with many, ask questions, even camp on their property.

These people came from all walks, classes, and economic stations of life. There were ranchers, farmers, colleagues, horseback riders, hikers, history buffs, service personnel, government employees, and bar habitues. (In one eastern Iowa town, the only person who knew the location of what I wanted to see was the local barfly.)

In turn I have been able to help many others. All kinds of people have come to me for help of all kinds—where to best position themselves to watch striking sunrises, how to ride a horse across the trail in Wyoming, how to follow the trail by motorcycle, how to locate the grave of ancestors, where to plan a Boy Scout hike, what was the size of a handcart and what would have been in it, what did the Platte River ferry look like, where is Lone Tree (there were three of them), who where the five Mormon women who made it all the way to San Diego with the Mormon Battalion, just where did the Battalion intersect the Santa Fe Trail. They wanted photos identified and paintings checked for accuracy, my opinion about cherished trail legends, or the moving of trail markers, and for me to give evidence before state and congressional committees.

I met with church men of many faiths. In my own faith, scores helped me, all the way from President Spencer W. Kimball to branch presidents in little congregations along the trails.

Members of organizations such as the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Sons of the Utah Pioneers, Daughters of the American Revolution, Chambers of Commerce, the Boy Scouts of America, the Oregon-California Trails Association, the Santa Fe Trail Association, the National Trail Council, and the Mormon History Association were helpful. My family, my university, my friends, and my church have been very understanding and supportive, emotionally and financially.

Especially prized was the help and encouragement of my friends in the Mormon History Association. I have been over the trails with colleagues like Eugene England, Richard Jensen, William Hartley, Ronald Esplin, Mark McKiernan, and Ken Stobaugh. I gained from their perceptions, both in the field and from their subsequent writings. One wrote the following when he reached the end of the trail and "looked down through granite peaks to the large golden cup of the valley": "It is possible to sense the joy and relief and awe the pioneers must have felt as participants in the literal
fulfillment of the ancient promise that the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the tops of the mountains." One also taught me about C.B. radio, a peculiar art form I found useful more than once in the field. I have also learned from acting as a guide for professional writers and photographers.

One of the great and lasting experiences of my life has been my decades-long association with LDS and RLDS historians, devoted, dedicated men and women patiently grubbing for truth, often misunderstood, unappreciated, criticized, even hindered. Such scholars are often the churches' first line of defense. Our official histories are easy to criticize. Only our professional historians are trained and equipped to go deeply enough into the records of the past to properly answer the ever-present detractors.

Some instances on the trails stand out. Once on the Utah-Wyoming border at the Bear River crossing, a rancher's wife divined that I had the G.I.'s, the Rocky Mountain Two Step, Montezuma's Revenge, or diarrhea, and asked me if I wanted a cure, to which I answered in the affirmative. She promptly handed me a shot glass of peach brandy. I said, "But ma'am, I don't drink." To which she retorted, "I didn't ask you whether you drank or not, I asked you if you wanted to get rid of what you have." I took the medicine and, whether it was really efficacious or whether it was the shock to my system, I do not know, or particularly care, but it worked. I was cured.

Once in the Three Crossings area of Wyoming, I ignored all advice and tried to drive a regular car through some sandy spots on the trail and got stuck up to my axles. It took two trucks in tandem to pull me out, and neither driver would accept a dime for their services. One time in Kansas I ran out of gas. I put the word out on my C.B. radio, and in a matter of minutes two "good buddies" stopped and gave me a gallon of gas and would accept no compensation. On the Santa Fe Trail, a dentist extracted a painful thorn from my finger while I was in a parking lot—no charge. A rancher in Wyoming drove miles out of his way to show me some springs I could not find.

I got lost more than once and, sometimes in the process of getting back where I belonged, I made discoveries I never would have otherwise. Once however, at twilight, only prayer, I am convinced, saved me from a very difficult time. (As you can see, I got out safely.)

People have opened up closed museums, libraries, and offices for me, have given me keys to locked fences, put me up for the night, and personally shown me obscure places. Others have done research for me—photocopied things in libraries, gone to newspaper morgues, taken photos, copied texts on site markers, lent me their cars, let me borrow family documents to copy and return. People phoned and wrote me to be sure I was aware of trail developments in their area and alerted me to things I might not otherwise have learned of or seen.

I once lectured in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and, in passing, mentioned how I wished I had one of the (now very rare) wooden Mormon Trail markers placed across Iowa in the 1930s. Sometime later a farmer, who had heard me, offered me one he had in his barn. (It is now in my basement family room and, along with
Finding God on Western Trails

other unique trail memorabilia, will someday go to the Church Museum in Salt Lake City.)

Some of my choicest experiences on trails was camping in Nebraska, Wyoming, and Utah with friends from the Bureau of Land Management, the Church Historian’s Office, and Brigham Young University. Here was trail sharing and living at its best. Here were men, brothers at their best (it has not been my privilege yet to go camping with the sisters), fishing, botanizing local flora, digging out of mud and snow, slapping mosquitoes, cooking buffalo steaks over a campfire, enjoying a “Hunter’s Breakfast” (which, incidentally, is one pound bacon, one dozen eggs, one onion, and a can of chopped green chili peppers), noting the incredible sidereal splendors when far from electric lights, wondering which star might be Kolob, and observing the occasional passing of some weather satellite overhead. We would ponder the heavens, for in Wyoming the heavens really do declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. We also looked for the few celestial bodies mentioned in the Bible: Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades. Then to bed in our tents, drifting off to sleep listening to the various night sounds of the local fauna and enjoying the pleasant aroma of campfire smoke and crushed sage.

I have also camped out at Adam-ondi-Ahman in Missouri. And many years ago, I twice had the privilege of sleeping all night in the Carthage Jail, once with my son. As we lay on our camp cots, we read of the martyrdom by lantern light. While these experiences are more trail related than actual trail adventures, they were unusually spiritual and moving—as was the time I tramped around Nauvoo in a snow storm with a dear friend, Don Oscarson. I have had few experiences in life more moving than that.

Also very special was the time in 1979 I spent on trails with members of the Sons of Utah Pioneers when I laid out and flagged their Marathon Run from Nauvoo to Salt Lake City. Later, in a van, I paced the runners part way across Iowa. I have also had the opportunity many times of taking friends and students over the various trails, for up to twelve days at a time; sometimes Violet has accompanied me and given me her unique insights, especially into the motivation and experiences of women such as Narcissa Whitman, the martyred missionary and first white woman to cross the Rockies, and the honeymooning Susan McGoffin, the first white woman on the Santa Fe Trail, who wished “for the genius of an artist that I might pencil such scenes . . . of nature’s grandest and most striking works.”

These experiences I have had with people along the trails or interested in trails over many years have resulted in strong bonds between me and many others, bonds of respect and affection, bonds that have brought me closer to God in the most real sense of all, through my companions in mortality, through association with other sons and daughters of our common Father.

I have been exceptionally fortunate, even blessed, over the past twenty-six years, and I would like nothing better than another twenty-six years on the old trails communing with nature, my heritage, my God, my companions in this phase of existence, and sharing these adventures with others.

NOTE

1. I wish to acknowledge the contributive comments of Eugene England, who critiqued an earlier draft of this paper.
Fawn M. Brodie, “Mormondom’s Lost Generation,” and *No Man Knows My History*

Newell G. Bringhurst

Fawn M. Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man knows My History*, generated immediate notoriety and controversy within the Mormon community in the wake of its publication in late 1945. The book was controversial because Brodie presented the Mormon prophet from a “naturalistic perspective” — that is, as primarily motivated by non-religious or secular considerations. Brodie herself later noted: “I was convinced before I ever began writing that Joseph Smith was not a true Prophet.”

The controversy generated by *No Man Knows My History*, caused spokesmen for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to denounce the book and its author and to picture both as wholly alien to the Mormon community. An extensive, unsigned review entitled “Appraisal of the So-Called Brodie Book” published in the *Church News* dismissed the biography as “wholely atheistic” and merely “a composite of all anti-Mormon books that have gone before pieced into a pattern conformable to the author’s own particular rationale and bedded in some very bad psychology.” Apostle John A. Widtsoe concurred, through an *Improvement Era* review, noting that “Everything in [Brodie’s book] has been presented by other writers in the large anti-Mormon field of writing,” adding that “as a history of Joseph Smith, the book is a flat failure [and] will be of no interest to Latter-day Saints who have correct knowledge of the history of Joseph Smith.”

---

Newell G. Bringhurst is an instructor of history and political science at College of the Sequoias in Visalia, California.
Further disassociating Brodie's biography from the Mormon community, certain Church spokesmen played up the influence of the author's non-Mormon Jewish husband, Bernard Brodie. The *Church News* "Appraisal" quickly jumped on the fact of Brodie's own acknowledgement of her husband's help, in particular that his "qualities of judgement and perception... affected my whole approach to the book." This "likely furnishes the key to her attitude," noted the *News*, asserting that Bernard Brodie's "tradition and upbringing probably inclined him away from rather than towards acceptance of Christian beliefs." Indeed, according to Dale L. Morgan, there were widespread rumors that Bernard Brodie "was the real author" of the book, which in Morgan's words reflected a pervasive "ugly undercurrent" of anti-Semitism in Utah.

Stories also circulated about Fawn Brodie's own background. One alleged "insanity in [Brodie's] ancestry." A second, more prevalent story alleged that Fawn was actually not a McKay by birth. Noted Brodie herself, "The word is going around in Salt Lake that I am only an adopted daughter of the McKays and not their true flesh and blood at all." She then added with a note of wry sarcasm, "I dare say quite a number of the brethren are privately calling me a 'bastard' daughter," which elicited this response from Dale Morgan:

> The gossip about you is getting interesting! Now "adopted," and perhaps in due time, as you suggest, "bastard." Let's hope it doesn't reach the stage where they start to call you a bitch! Enough is too much!9

The ultimate act of disassociating Fawn Brodie and her book from the Mormon community came with her formal excommunication from the Church in June 1946—an act in which the author was found guilty of heresy.

Such Mormon actions make it all too easy to view Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* as the product of influences completely outside the Latter-day Saint community. Such, however, was not the case. Indeed, when one carefully examines the contemporary Mormon intellectual environment, it is clear that Brodie's book was, in many ways, the product of a regional literary movement that had its genesis in the late 1930s and came to full flower during the 1940s. This involved an outpouring of both fictional and nonfictional works touching on Mormon themes and written by authors with ties to Utah or the Mormon community. These included such Mormon-born writers as Vardis Fisher, Paul Bailey, Maurine Whipple, Virginia Sorensen, and Samuel W. Taylor. Also a part of this group were two notable non-Mormons with Utah roots, namely Bernard DeVoto and Wallace Stegner. The works produced by these authors were generally published by established eastern presses and widely reviewed—thus drawing national attention to the whole field of Mormon letters. These writers have been labeled by Edward A. Geary as "Mormondom's Lost Generation" because they, like their earlier counterparts during the 1920s in the larger American literary community, tended to be alienated from their social-cultural environment. In Professor Geary's words, this Latter-day lost generation symbolized "an eruption of creative vitality in response to a cultural breakdown," celebrating a more "heroic age" and lamenting its passing.

Fawn Brodie was aware of and was influenced by this incipient literary movement.
Indirect influence came though her exposure to the works written by this "lost generation" as they appeared during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Direct influence came through Brodie's interaction with certain persons who were very much a part of this "lost generation." The first of these was Brodie's own uncle, Dean Brimhall, who was of crucial influence during this period. Although not a novelist or historical writer, Brimhall intellectually was very much a part of "Mormondom's Lost Generation." A younger brother of Fawn's mother and the son of one-time Brigham Young University president George H. Brimhall, the younger Brimhall had received his Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University in 1920. A New Deal Democrat, Brimhall served as an administrative assistant in the Department of Labor's management of the Works Progress Administration. He was, moreover, known as a freethinker and a critic of various aspects of Mormon doctrine and practice. Indeed, Brodie herself characterized him variously as a "skeptic," "rebel," and "propagandist." These qualities helped to make him, in Brodie's own words, "beyond all question my favorite uncle."

Brimhall stimulated Brodie's interest in the Church Security Program—an interest that led directly to Brodie's first and little-known publication in the field of Mormon studies. The Church Security Program (later known as the Welfare Program) had been initiated in April 1936 in reaction to the anticipated curtailment of federal relief and was touted by Church leaders as a Mormon version of the WPA. Brimhall was critical of this program even though it aided many destitute Church members. He felt that Church officials overstated its effectiveness in taking Church members off federal relief rolls and found instead that the number of Mormons receiving public assistance remained high. According to Brimhall's own statistics, "only six states had a 'higher load' on the Emergency Works Program than Utah."

Prompted and encouraged by Brimhall to make her own study of this problem, Brodie arrived at essentially the same conclusions. Echoing her uncle, she felt that the Church was deliberately creating the illusion that it had removed "most or all of its members from Public assistance" rolls. But she went one step further, suggesting to her uncle that the Church, in collecting tithes and other donations used in its relief efforts, was "actually making money on the whole business," adding that "if it is true ... I think it's too good to be kept hidden." Brodie then told her uncle, "I have been working up this paper which I hope will be worthwhile to someone if it ever sees the light of publication." But if it were to be published, she added:

I shall take the utmost pains to prevent anyone from home discovering who wrote it. I have too deep a regard for daddy and mother to let them know my present attitude toward the plan, and the Church as a whole, especially since I am trying to make a minor move against it.

Less than a year later, her article, entitled "Mormon 'Security'" appeared in the February 1938 issue of the Nation. Brodie concealed her identity by writing under the pseudonym "Martha Emery" and describing herself in the "contributors" section as simply "a daughter of the Mormon church." In the article itself, Brodie expressed her discontent with the Church Security Program, which she believed fell far short of its advertised goal of keeping its own members off various New
Deal relief programs, noting instead that the percentage of Utah workers on such programs was from 32 to 60 percent higher than in the nation as a whole. The Church, she claimed, was actually benefiting materially from this program in that "far from endangering its solid financial structure [the Church] is actually the gainer from the security plan." Such Church gains came "in large measure" from "the voluntary labor and donations . . . from the most pious Mormons, the poorer classes, who are already heavily taxed." These "heavy contributions" in turn had a pernicious effect in that they "materially lowered" the capacity of the average Latter-day Saint "for saving and investing, and for tiding himself over unemployment." To support her case, Brodie then asserted:

The fact that in 1935 there were proportionally 25 percent more Mormons than Gentiles on relief in Salt Lake County is an indication of the serious depletion in personal resources resulting from the church's exactions from its members, for they cannot truthfully be said to be less thrifty or industrious than are their Gentile neighbors.

Brodie then warned that "Mormon preachers . . . have reason for worry" because "Federal relief is being curtailed" with "the heavy hand of economy" reaching towards the Mormon community. Concluding on a note of irony, she declared, "The Mormons have been preparing for the day of want. The day of want is upon them." Despite Brodie's authorship, Brimhall's influence and encouragement was clearly evident in both the content and basic interpretation rendered.

The influence of Dean Brimhall continued as Fawn Brodie commenced research in 1938 for what ultimately became *No May Knows My History*. In a June 1939 letter to Brimhall, she outlined the research she had completed up to that point. Her evidence already pointed toward a "naturalistic interpretation" of Joseph Smith and early Mormon origins. "I had the most fun," she noted, "with the Book of Mormon & was able to trace almost every idea in it right down to Ontario Co. New York 1827. The lost tribe theory, the exterminated race theory, anti-Masonry, anti-Catholicism — the whole gamut of sectarian religious controversy—all of which make up the Book of Mormon." She continued, "I hope that you'll have the time to look over [my] research." She then added this revealing note: "I think your own analysis is sane & judicious, perhaps because it conforms with my own." She then confessed that her ultimate ambition was to "turn out a genuinely scholarly biography" characterizing what she had done thus far as "the most fascinating project I've ever worked on."

Three years later, in June 1942, Brodie disclosed to Brimhall that she had completed "a 300-page manuscript on Joseph Smith," which she described as "a very crude first draft and far from finished." Brodie continued to attribute secular motives to Smith's various activities, in particular his "crystal-gazing" and use of the Urim and Thummim, confiding that "it's all very absorbing, and sometimes depressing." Then, revealing her own alienation from Mormonism, she declared that Smith's "career continues to astonish me—as does the stubborn survival of the church." Six months later, in November 1942, she gave Brimhall a further update on her biography, expressing her "hope" that he might "find time . . . to read what I have written" thus far. She then confessed, "The more I work with [Joseph Smith] the more of a challenge he becomes."
Despite this, Brodie pushed ahead and in February 1943 applied for an Alfred A. Knopf Literary Fellowship to aid her efforts. In her application, she submitted a preliminary draft consisting of the first seven chapters—some 162 pages covering the period from Joseph Smith's birth to 1831. In her letter of application, Brodie maintained that she was “singularly well-equipped” to write such a biography. Reflecting the orientation of Mormondom’s “Lost Generation,” she asserted: “I know the Mormon point of view intimately, having been reared in the bosom of the church until I was twenty.” She then went on to note, “since then I have achieved an attitude of complete objectivity toward Mormon dogma.”

In evaluating her application, M. Rugoff, one of the Knopf judges, clearly saw Brodie within the context of Mormondom’s “Lost Generation.” He noted that “she was brought up as a Mormon (but has left the fold far behind).” He saw her work in relationship to “the recent great wave of Mormon stories ranging from the work of Vardis Fisher and Maureen Whipple to that of Virginia Sorensen.” These writers, noted Rugoff, “were all successful.” But “they made me wonder who Joseph Smith really was” and why there was “no [definitive nonfiction] biography of him.” Upon reading Brodie’s work, he proclaimed, “Well, this is it,” characterizing it as “perspicacious, balanced, thought through, [and] astringently sane.” Brodie’s application was judged the best out of a total of forty-four submitted, and in May 1943 she was awarded the Fourth Annual Knopf Literary Fellowship for Biography, which carried a stipend of $2,500.

The direct influence on Brodie of Mormondom’s “Lost Generation” continued to wax strong in the wake of the author’s initial contact with Dale L. Morgan in June 1943. Morgan was an exact contemporary of Brodie, having been born in 1915 (the same year as Brodie) of Utah Mormon stock, and like Brodie he attended and graduated from the University of Utah. Despite his deep fascination with Mormonism’s past, Morgan, again like Brodie, was not an active, practicing Latter-day Saint. Although completely deaf, Morgan had by 1943 already established himself as a respected scholar having numerous publications to his credit, including two major books, *Utah: A Guide to the State*, published in 1941, and *The Humboldt: Highroad of the West*, which appeared in 1943. Almost immediately, Brodie and Morgan became fast friends, developing a long-lasting professional relationship that would endure for the next thirty years—until Morgan’s untimely death in 1971 at the age of fifty-six.

In working with Brodie on *No Man Knows My History*, Morgan quickly assumed the role of chief critic “whose indefatigable scholarship in Mormon history,” according to Brodie, served as “as added spur to my own.” Indeed, Morgan became a virtual mentor to the fledgling author. This Morgan quickly demonstrated in critiquing a preliminary draft of Brodie’s work consisting of ten chapters—which took the story of Joseph Smith and the Mormons up through their expulsion from Jackson County, Missouri. With abrupt frankness, Morgan told Brodie that “this draft of your book is not, properly speaking, a biography of Smith” but rather “a history” of the Mormon leader. He pointed to the preliminary stage of her writing and research up to this point, noting, “You are articulating the skeleton, primarily; you are crystallizing your own individual conception of the main facts of Joseph Smith’s
life, establishing a rationale by which you can come to grips with him as a human being." Morgan viewed the manuscript as "over-simplified in its point of view; you are positive beyond what the facts will support, when all the obscure lights and shadows of those facts are closely examined." Then, putting it another way, he told Brodie:

Your own point of view, as set forth in this manuscript, is much too hard and fast, to my way of thinking; it is too coldly logical in its conception of Joseph's mind and the development of his character. Your view of him is all hard edges, without any of those blurrings which are more difficult to cope with but which constitutes a man in the round.

Elaborating on this criticism, he noted, "I am particularly struck with the assumption your MS makes that Joseph was a self-conscious imposter." Morgan declared that he himself was "not prepared" at that point "to make any final judgements about" the Mormon leader. But he was willing to say that in general I hold this view of him: Regardless of how he got started with the Mormon affair, he came to believe absolutely in what he was doing; his sincerity can hardly be challenged. I think he had an extreme capacity for fantasy, and ultimately the fantasy may have become more real to him than reality itself, to the point that it displaced reality.

Pursuing this point, Morgan referred to Brodie's own earlier confession that she believed "Joseph was more of a man than [she] made him out to be" in the manuscript, noting that what she had written "was too much in the vein of 'I expose.' " Finally he felt that Brodie's "hard and fast" conceptualization affected her use of factual information. He noted; "Your chain of reasoning looks logical, but it is attended by a string of ifs all along the line (precisely as with the orthodox Mormon reasoning), and the probability of error increases as the chain of reasoning lengthens."

He urged Brodie to "exhibit a good deal of humility with respect to the facts." In conclusion, he recommended that the final manuscript be so written that Mormon, anti-Mormon, and non-Mormon alike can go to the biography and read it with agreement—disagreeing often in detail, perhaps, but observing that you have noted the points of disagreement and that while you set forth your point of view, you do not claim that you have Absolute Truth by the tail.32

In overall terms, Morgan was much more incisive, thorough, and penetrating in his critique than Knopf had been in awarding Brodie her fellowship earlier that year.

In response to Dale Morgan's suggestions, Brodie spent the next several months, from late 1943 until mid-1944, revising those first ten chapters. She also did primary research for the controversial final four years of Joseph Smith's life—the years he was in Nauvoo. The completion of this research would enable her to write up the relevant final chapters and thus finish the manuscript. But as she worked away, she encountered various unforeseen difficulties. In November 1943 she wrote Morgan, explaining that "the book is already getting much too long," chastising herself that she "simply must stop trying to write the history of the church, and start writing a biography." Then in a revealing not of self-confession, she added, "Perhaps I am dodging the man because I am still not quite certain what I want to do with him."33
However, over the next several months she made significant progress. On April 1, 1944, she wrote Morgan announcing that she was “in a celebrating mood” because, as she termed it, she had “finally succeeded in putting five bullets in the prophet.” Adding that “while I don’t yet have him buried I feel that the book is done. Now I can toss all my notes in the closet and go to work on the revision.” But such celebration was short-lived. She wrote to Morgan later that same month concerning her difficulties at revision, confessing, “I am quietly tearing my hair over the Book of Mormon again. Those chapters are the ones I have worked over most and are still the least satisfactory.” Brodie continued to have difficulty in her revision; she wrote Morgan in early May that it was going “rather badly.” She admitted, “I am too prone to cling to what I have written before, even though it doesn’t satisfy me.” Then she added, “What I rewrite entirely doesn’t satisfy me either.” To make matters worse, she indicated feeling “so wretched” due to her “spring curse—hayfever” combined with a “beastly cold.”

In late May, Brodie was further distracted when her father, Thomas E. McKay, suffered “a bad heart attack.” She wrote Morgan, expressing extreme anxiety and sensing a relationship between this unfortunate development and her own writing and research. She was “haunted by the thought” that her father “might die shortly after the book came out,” adding that “the consequences for my own peace of mind would be simply unbearable,” regardless of whether or not the book was “a shock to him.” With extreme anguish, she then proclaimed, “Sometimes I wish to God I’d never started the book.” But Thomas McKay did not die. He recovered to the point that he was able to resume his duties as an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve. Brodie meanwhile pushed ahead with her manuscript and by July 1944 informed Morgan that she had the first fourteen chapters typed up and the revision “pretty well completed on the other thirteen chapters.” She did confess that “the chapters on Joseph’s wives and on Mormon metaphysics” needed “a great deal of work yet,” noting that she was able to handle “the political narrative much better than the theological matter, most of which bores me.”

One month later, in August 1944, Brodie gave her entire revised manuscript to Morgan to read, and within the month he returned it with his evaluation. He proclaimed it “downright fascinating,” finding “the research… wide and deep without being ostentatious; the prose… admirably muscular” and the text “full of stimulating ideas” with a rapidly moving storyline. Most important, he felt that Brodie now had a “biography” rather than a mere “history of Joseph’s life.” Thus Morgan’s overall evaluation was much more favorable than it had been with Brodie’s first draft.

Morgan, however, did express a number of continuing concerns. He felt that Brodie had not made “the necessary final analysis of Smith’s character.” Thus Brodie’s manuscript belied “a certain tentativeness” toward the Mormon leader. Also, Morgan felt that she had not “exactly explained” the “extraordinary magnetism” that the Mormon leader “had for his followers.” Expanding on this point, Morgan noted that Smith “gave them something they never got from anyone else” and “left an indelible impress upon their minds” and that in return “they gave him a love they never have given anyone else.” Last but not least, Morgan rendered “a
general criticism" that Brodie had made certain "bold judgements on the basis of assumptions." He admonished her to "give careful attention" to this point prior to publication. Such "generalizations" if carried forth into the final book would "expose" Brodie "to attack as you are exposed in no other way." He predicted that this would come from Mormons who didn't like the book and would go over it "with a fine tooth-comb looking for ways to discredit" it.40 Brodie found Morgan's critique "stimulating and instructive," and she asserted that her book would "benefit much" from it.41 Two months later, in October 1944, Brodie sent her revised manuscript off to Alfred A. Knopf.

Thus Dale L. Morgan, like Dean Brimhall, played a central and indeed crucial role in the bringing forth of Fawn Brodie's controversial biography. Brodie, moreover, received important help from several others identified with or considered part of Mormondom's "Lost Generation." Claire Noall, a fellow writer and photo journalist, provided Brodie with important information and documents relative to Joseph Smith's practice of polygamy in Nauvoo. Noall was interested in this topic by virtue of her own research, which resulted in several books including *Intimate Disciple*, a biographical novel about her own grandfather Willard Richards, who had been Joseph Smith's confident.42 Also important in providing Brodie with information on early Mormon polygamy was Stanley Ivins, the son of one-time apostle and important Church leader Anthony W. Ivins. According to one writer, the younger Ivins's interest in Mormon polygamy "became an obsession" during the 1930s—at about the same time that Brodie was beginning her own research.43 A third individual, Vesta Crawford, also provided Brodie with important materials on early polygamy. Crawford, a Utah-based poet and writer, aided Brodie despite her own close ties to the Church as reflected in her position as editorial secretary and later associate editor of the *Relief Society Magazine*.44 Brodie also received help from Juanita Brooks, who, like Crawford, remained close to the Church. Brooks, then hard at work on research that would lead to her own controversial books on the Mountain Meadows Massacre and John D. Lee, first met Brodie in 1943, and the two women quickly developed a professional and personal friendship based on a mutual respect that transcended their differing views about Joseph Smith and Mormon origins. Brooks readily provided Brodie relevant information from her own research, explaining to Dale Morgan, "I admire her courage, and will be glad to furnish anything I can."45

Even more interesting was Brodie's relationship with M. Wilford Poulson, a professor of psychology at Brigham Young University. Like Dale Morgan and Stanley Ivins, both of whom he knew well, Poulson was very interested in early Church history and was an avid collector of old Mormon books and diaries.46 Poulson, moreover, was, in the words of one writer, "a closet dissenter" or "disaffected Mormon" with "an inquiring mind." This made him very much a part of Mormondom's "Lost Generation."47 Poulson's initial contact with Brodie came, quite likely, through Dean Brimhall, a fellow psychologist who had at one time taught with Poulson at BYU. Poulson provided Brodie with some historical materials during the early phases of her research.48 More important, he apparently influenced Brodie's thinking on certain crucial aspects of Joseph Smith's career. In one case, Brodie...
Fawn M. Brodie

was made aware of certain parallels between the career of Joseph Smith and that of schismatic Mormon leader James J. Strang. Poulson had deciphered the coded portions of Strang’s “Diary,” which revealed Strang to be “intensely ambitious but frustrated until he deliberately became a fake prophet strictly for what was in it for Strang—the pomp and trappings of authority, the wealth from tithes, the adulation of the flock and the choice of pretty girls for plural wives.” According to one writer, Brodie learned of Strang’s code from Poulson and applied Strang’s attitudes to Joseph Smith. On another occasion, Poulson apparently told Brodie “frankly” that “he thought Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon to make money.” Poulson also agreed with Brodie’s conception that Thomas Dick’s The Philosophy of a Future State “was extremely important in fixing the source of many of [Joseph Smith’s] metaphysical conceptions.” Poulson, moreover, like Dale Morgan, assumed the role of literary critic, reading through and critiquing a final draft of No Man Knows My History prior to its publication. After a preliminary reading of the manuscript, Poulson dropped Brodie a note expressing his belief that she “really had something.”

However, Wilford Poulson’s overall behavior belied a general ambivalence toward Brodie’s work. This was initially reflected in his critique of the manuscript completed and returned to Brodie in December 1944. “His praise,” observed the author, “was grudging and tentative,” while his criticisms were entirely “concerned with details rather than with the larger aspects of Smith’s character.” Brodie in writing to Dale Morgan took this to mean that Poulson “doesn’t think too badly of it.” However, in March 1945 Poulson revealed more serious reservations through what Brodie described as “a curious little note asking that his name not be used in any form in connection with the book.” This was followed by a more lengthy letter in which Poulson outlined his overall impressions. On the negative side he noted, “Frankly, I had hoped your presentation would be more worthy of being characterized as definitive. I had hoped [that] you would bring to bear the appropriate canons of historical criticism upon your sources.” Then, getting to the nub of his criticism, he proclaimed, “I believe the future truly great biography of the Prophet Joseph Smith will not ungenerously trim him down to the proportions of a liar, an impostor, an adulterer and anything else mostly bad.” This out of the way, Poulson then went on to confess to the author that “many good things” would result from her book. He said it was “bound to stimulate wide and careful reading, pro and con” into the early history of the Church, noting that it “asks for a really objective and truly critical work in this field.” He then praised Brodie herself:

You have courage and you do get things done. You are probably much aware of imperfections and big gaps in the presentation. You have been big enough to even ask for and welcome straight-out-from-the-shoulder criticism. You will not be spoiled by either praise or blame that may come.

Finally, in acknowledging his own role in bringing forth of No Man Knows My History, Poulson disclosed, “I noted with some satisfaction a number of contributions which I happily made in time for the material to be taken into account.”

The critical role played by Wilford Poulson, Dale Morgan, Dean Brimhall, and others identified with Mormondom’s “Lost Generation” relative to No Man Knows My History is significant for several reasons. First, the fact that Brodie received
crucial help from such persons—all of whom were still identified to some extent with the Church—will hopefully put to rest the common but inaccurate Mormon perception that Brodie's book was entirely influenced by persons and ideas completely alien to the Mormon community. Second, the biography itself, in terms of its basic structure and tone, fits very much into the context of the literary flowering of Mormondom’s “Lost Generation.” Therefore, Brodie's book, far from being an aberrant, isolated work, was as much a part of this new literary tradition as the historical works of Bernard DeVoto, Dale Morgan, and Wallace Stegner and the novels of Vardis Fisher, Maurine Whipple, Virginia Sorensen, and others.

Finally, it could be argued that the notoriety and animated controversy caused by Brodie's book, including her excommunication, was perhaps beneficial in the long run. The expulsion of Brodie from the Church in June 1946 did not, as some feared, have a chilling effect on the literary flowering then in progress. Instead, Mormon writers such as Virginia Sorensen, Samuel W. Taylor, Blanche Cannon, and Ardyth Kennelly continued to produce outstanding works of fiction published on the East Coast and reviewed nationally. The writing of quality historical nonfiction also continued apace with the appearance in 1946 of Dale L. Morgan's *Great Salt Lake*, followed four years later by Juanita Brooks's controversial *Mountain Meadows Massacre*. This continued outpouring of outstanding fiction and nonfiction by Mormondom's "Lost Generation" was noted by none other than Fawn Brodie in an October 1952 *Frontier Magazine* essay entitled "New Writers and Mormonism." Brodie, moreover, was willing to acknowledge that the Church, by this time, had adopted a "new tolerance," noting that "the old terror of persecution has vanished, with the result that within the Church there is in general far greater tolerance of the dissenting voice and the genuinely creative spirit." Brodie also noted that "the Church has shown somewhat the same degree of tolerance toward the younger historians," namely Dale Morgan and Juanita Brooks.

In conclusion, it could be argued that Fawn Brodie, enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the "New" or "Lost Generation" of Mormon writers. At first, while working on *No Man Knows My History*, she benefited from their help and influence. Then, in turn, Brodie, once her book was completed, served as a sort of "lightning rod" absorbing the brunt of Mormon hostility—both official and unofficial—that for a number of years had been building up against her fellow writers. In this instance, it appears Sterling McMurrin was correct when he wrote in his 1981 tribute in *Dialogue* that Fawn Brodie helped to usher in a "New Climate of Liberation" insofar as Mormon letters were concerned. This is a notable achievement for which we as scholars of Mormon studies should be grateful. It is this "climate" and indeed "tradition" of "liberation" that we all have an obligation to maintain and protect despite recent adversities and setbacks.

NOTES
I wish to thank a number of persons whose assistance was of great help in preparing this paper. Particularly helpful was Bonnie Hardwick, director of Manuscripts for the Bancroft Library, who granted
Fawn M. Brodie

this writer special access to the unprocessed papers of Dale L. Morgan. Also of significant help was Asbel Green, editor-in-chief of Alfred A. Knopf, who directed my attention to the correspondence between Knopf and Brodie as contained in the Harry M. Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin. Also providing important information were Linda Thatcher, librarian for the Utah Historical Society, and Craig L. Foster of the Brigham Young University Special Collections Library. Finally, I am grateful to Michael Magliari of the College of the Sequoias, whose careful reading of a preliminary draft of this paper was of great help in improving its overall quality.


2. This review published under the title "Appraisal of the So-Called Brodie Book" in the Deseret News for May 11, 1946, was written by "a Church Committee" of which Apostle Albert E. Bowen was apparently the principal author. This critique, moreover, apparently mirrored the official Mormon position, for it was reprinted by the Church and circulated as a missionary tract under the title Appraisal of the So-Called Brodie Book.

3. Improvement Era, March 1946.


6. Dale L. Morgan to Fawn M. Brodie, July 16, 1946. Original in Fawn M. Brodie Papers, University of Utah Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. According to Austin Fife writing Brodie was the "rumor" that "you collected all your data in Washington D.C. where you are married to a 'Jew.' " Austin Fife to Fawn M. Brodie, May 4, 1946. Original in Fawn M. Brodie Papers.


8. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, December 22, 1945. In a letter written just eight later, Brodie noted that the "word is spreading" that she was "merely an adopted daughter." Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, December 30, 1945. Original in Dale L. Morgan Papers, Bancroft Library. Also see Austin E. Fife to Fawn M. Brodie, May 4, 1946, original in Fawn M. Brodie Papers, Bx9.


10. See Vardis Fisher, Children of God: An American Epic (New York, 1939); Paul Bailey, For this My Glory (Los Angeles, 1940), Sam Brannan and the California Mormons (Los Angeles, 1943), The Gay Saint (Hollywood, 1944); Maurine Whipple, The Giant Joshua (Boston, 1941); Virginia Sorensen, A Little Lower than the Angles (New York, 1942), On this Star (New York, 1946); Samuel W. Taylor, Heaven Knows Why (New York, 1949), The Man with My Face (New York, 1949).

11. See Bernard DeVoto's, early quite critical, and often sarcastic essays: "Utah," American Mercury, 7 (March 1926) and "Centennial of Mormonism," American Mercury, 19 (January 1930). DeVoto wrote on the Mormon experience in a somewhat more moderate and more scholarly tone in his widely acclaimed The Year of Decision: 1846 (Boston, 1943). For Wallace Stegner, see his Mormon Country (New York, 1942). But it should be noted that both DeVoto and Stegner were primarily noted during this period for writings dealing with non-Mormon subjects and themes.


13. Brodie's awareness of, and close reading of the literature of this "lost generation" is reflected the comments and observations that she made in various letters that she wrote both Dean Brimhall and Dale Morgan all during this period. Also see Brodie's general comments and analysis of these writers' works in her published article, "New Writers and Mormonism," Frontier Magazine, October 1952, pp. 17–19.


16. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, April 13, 1937. Original in Dean Brimhall Papers, University of Utah Special Collections.

17. However, Fawn M. Brodie in her letter to Dean Brimhall of April 13, 1937, original in Dean Brimhall Papers, added "Of course the Church probably isn't really making money, but at any rate it is clear that the people themselves are financing every bit of the plan & paying extra tithing beside. No Church capital is being endangered."

18. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall. Original in Dean Brimhall Papers, April 13, 1937.


20. This was reflected in Brodie's acknowledgement that Brimhall had sent her his "entire report" on the Mormon Security program which ultimately provided the main basis for her Nation article. See: Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, April 13, 1937. Original in Dean Brimhall Papers. Also Brimhall in a May 17, 1937, letter to Brodie as contained in the Fawn M. Brodie Papers, noted "Enclosed you will find a couple of letters that I think will be of interest to you in your article" and then added "I have a mass of newspaper clippings that would be good material but I don't know how deep you want to go into the subject."

21. Indeed, it appears that the historical research that Brodie did for her "Mormon 'Security' " article help point her towards Joseph Smith and early Church history. In describing her proposed essay, prior to its publication, she noted that it was "largely a general discussion of the Security program in the light of the old tradition established by Joseph Smith and entrenched by Brigham Young." See Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, April 13, 1937. Original in Dean Brimhall Papers.

22. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, June 14, 1939. Original in Dean Brimhall Papers.

23. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, June 18, 1942. Original in Dean Brimhall Papers.

24. Fawn M. Brodie to Dean Brimhall, November 3, 1942 Dean Brimhall Papers. Brimhall in addition to acting as a "sounding board" or critic for Brodie as she wrote her manuscript also provided information which aided her in the development of her "naturalistic portrait" of the Mormon leader. In a March 17, 1944 letter to Brodie as contained in the Fawn M. Brodie Papers, he referred to a quote attributed to Brooks Adams in his The Law of Civilization in which the famous writer made reference to "the last generation" subscribing to "the theory that human civilization is a progressive evolution moving on the whole steadily toward perfection, from a lower to a higher intellectual plane." Brimhall then added that if "New England really was saturated with this idea...this quotation is pertinent to an understanding of Smith's doctrine on Eternal Progress—one of the fundamental dogmas of Mormon theology."

25. Fawn M. Brodie to Alfred A. Knopf, February 14, 1943. Originals in Alfred A. Knopf Papers, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin. In outlining the interim nature of the biography at this point she noted: of the period covering the Mormon "wars" in Missouri during the 1830s I have written a first draft. But the final four-year period during which Joseph Smith built Nauvoo Illinois, making of it at the same moment a holy shrine and a political cauldron, remains to be studied as well as written. I hope to have the book finished in time for publication in 1944, since that is the centennial of his death.

26. Ibid.


28. It is worth noting that Brodie, herself, took the initiative in seeking out Morgan. In their first correspondence, Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, June 15, 1943, original in Dale L. Morgan Papers, Brodie introduced herself by stating: "I have had four people within the last fortnight tell me that I should be all means meet you and draw upon your phenomenal knowledge of Mormon source materials before I proceed any further with my own study—a biography of Joseph Smith. Two of these people you know well—Nels Anderson and Jarvis Thurston."

30. For a the best account of Dale L. Morgan's life and activities see: John Phillip Walker, editor, Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism (Salt Lake City, 1986)


34. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, April 1, 1944. Original in Madaline McQuown Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

35. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, April 1, 1944. Original in Madaline McQuown Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.
40. Ibid.
41. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, September 2, 1944. Original in Dale L. Morgan Papers.
44. For a brief description of the activities of Vesta Crawford see: Allene A. Jensen, “Utah Writers of the Twentieth Century: A Reference Tool”, Master of Science Thesis, University of Utah, 1977, p. 27. The exchange of materials and ideas between Crawford and Brodie is mentioned and discussed in various letters that Brodie wrote to Dale Morgan between 1943 and 1946.
47. This according to the observations of Levi S. Peterson in Juanita Brooks, Mormon Woman Historian, pp. 65, 266–67.
52. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, September 26, 1944; October 26, 1944; December 5, 1944. Originals in Dale L. Morgan Papers.
53. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, October 26, 1944. Original in Dale L. Morgan Papers.
54. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, December 5, 1944. Original in Dale L. Morgan Papers.
55. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, March 24, 1945. Original in Dale L. Morgan Papers. In explaining to Morgan Poulson’s behavior Brodie noted: “He gave all the reasons except the true one. Of course, I don’t blame him, and in a way I am relieved, for I should hate to have been the cause of his getting into trouble with the Church. He’s in a ticklish enough spot as it is. Nevertheless, his refusal is a sorry commentary on the state of academic freedom at the ‘Y.’ ”
57. Ibid.
58. See for example: Virginia Sorensen’s three books, On This Star (New York, 1946), The Neighbors (New York, 1947) and The Evening and the Morning (New York, 1949); Samuel W. Taylor’s two books, Heaven Knows Why (New York, 1948) and The Man With My Face; Blanche Cannon, Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning (New York, 1948); and Ardyth Kennelly, The Peaceable Kingdom (Boston, 1949).
60. Fawn M. Brodie, “New Writers and Mormonism,” Frontier Magazine, October 1952, p. 18. But sensitive to her own experience with the Church and subsequent excommunication, Brodie quickly pointed out that such tolerance had its limits, noting that such was the case: in regard to what is written about the still sacrosanct person of Joseph Smith, where official Mormon critics reveal very tender nerves . . .
For one hundred fifty years, we have been remembering Nauvoo. Our memories—not one but many and varied—have reflected who we were, when and where we lived, how we believed, and what we wanted to remember, or to forget. The individual and collective memories of the City Beautiful do not present an objective recall of information. The formulation of a historical memory is instead more a subjective process. Because it is one of active construction, the way we remember is continually changing. Memories respond to shifting needs. They grow and develop in conversation and through community and social interaction.¹

As we observe Nauvoo's sesquicentennial, we can enhance our understanding of our shared inheritance by considering the ways we have remembered. It is possible through these one hundred fifty years to identify four distinctive perceptions of Nauvoo's past. These historiographical perspectives include: first, the experience as recalled by Nauvoo Residents; second, the viewpoint of Visitors to Nauvoo; third, the memorializations created by Celebrants of Nauvoo's past; and fourth, the reassembled framework of Interpreters, including creative writers and historians.

1. Residents

The remembered past for Residents of Nauvoo's period and place took the form of reminiscence. The Residents were participants or witnesses. They conveyed

¹ Glen M. Leonard, of Farmington, Utah, is a historian, editor, and museum administrator. Versions of this paper were presented at the Mormon History Association annual meeting at Quincy, Illinois, May 11, 1989, and at a Nauvoo Sesquicentennial Symposium at Brigham Young University, September 21, 1989.
direct, personal memories of Nauvoo in conversation and in written reminiscences and autobiographies. In remembering Nauvoo, some of them projected the perspective of Mountain Valley Mormons; these Old Nauvooers were followers of Brigham Young. Others found a memory to their liking in Joseph Smith III. These Remnants remained east of the Rockies to live as Mississippi Valley Mormons. A third kind of Resident was the non-believer in Joseph Smith's message, the Neighbor of Nauvoo. Whether Old Nauvooer, Remnant, or Neighbor, all were Resident participants who recalled Nauvoo through reminiscence. These first memories influenced later perceptions and continue to mold our own ways of remembering Nauvoo.

In their Mountain Valley refuge, Old Nauvooers shared personal perspectives with one another and with immigrants and a younger generation who had missed out on the direct experience at Nauvoo.\(^2\) The form these rememberings took was autobiographical; they consciously (and by official encouragement) echoed the language of first-person religious testaments—patterns created by Nephi, Saint Luke, Joseph the Prophet, and Joseph's mother.\(^3\) The main themes in these reminiscences were personal and family religious history. Most Old Nauvooers testified of meaningful religious experiences, particularly conversion. They traced lineage and descent. When prodded, the few participants in plural marriage produced affidavits. The Utah exiles recorded memories of gathering to Nauvoo, and of recoiling from or responding to opposition, of sorrowing over the Martyrdom, of choosing to follow the Twelve as divinely intended successors, and of preparing for endowments and sealings and a forced exodus.\(^4\)

Those who remained behind to follow another Joseph shared with their Mountain Valley cousins an autobiographical perspective. Yet the gathered converts who became Remnant Nauvooers reacted against the collective memory of Utah's Old Nauvooers. The Mississippi Valley Saints remembered not a new temple theology of sealings but a pristine Church of Christ built upon first principles. Some of them remembered a Prophet fallen through error as well as assassination, an unfinished temple, a minority exiled while a majority scattered to await a new organization. Theirs was a patient waiting for the maturing of an heir who would assume not the throne of a king but the ministry of a disciple.\(^5\) As Joseph Smith III observed in 1910, like the accumulated Remnant memory, his own opinions and convictions had been influenced by perceptions of events.\(^6\)

Outside participants, Nauvoo's Neighbors, remembered those eight vital years either as a bad dream or as a neglected opportunity. The activists could not forget the threat to their own political or economic opportunity. Their memory celebrated the expulsion of a unified and sincere but misdirected people. For the negative Neighbors, the Mormon exile meant the wise removal of a cancer upon the local landscape.\(^7\) Less threatened Neighbors remembered Nauvoo's rise with fondness for its potential in developing economically a region thereafter neglected.\(^8\)

2. Visitors

Not everyone interested in remembering Nauvoo lived there to make history. A second approach to Nauvoo's past has been that of the Visitor, one who reported
observations made during a temporary stay in Nauvoo. Some such outsiders were Journalists; others visited Nauvoo as Pilgrims.

The Visitors of the 1840s who were Journalists stepped off the riverboats curious, as were their readers, to know of Joseph Smith and his frontier boomtown. As reporters for the popular press, they found what they came to see: political intrigue, carnal sensuality, and economic opportunism. In Brother Joseph they found a charlatan and militaristic Muhammed who was beguiling many naive and gullible believers. As one Visitor put it, among the Mormons he found “a mixture of shrewdness and extravagant self-conceit, of knowledge and ignorance, of wisdom and folly.” The Journalists’ pens scratched out a strange mixture of sensation and pity, emotions to sell penny papers.

Other Journalists reflected cultural rather than political perspective. They visited Nauvoo as feature writers for the illustrated weeklies and monthlies or as authors of their own travel narratives. They reported a Nauvoo of “industrious, hard-working, and frugal people,” farmers who were making the prairies blossom with corn-tassles, craftsmen throwing up a city in a swamp overnight and erecting from limestone quarries a curious House of God. Their detailed descriptions of the temple were a guided tour of stairways, halls, and clock-towers, culminating in steeple-top views of Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo. Though chiding the Mormons for mixing religion with politics, these Visitors could observe, “It is . . . not improbable that the Mormons are often misrepresented, and that their conduct is less flagrant than rumor proclaims it to be.”

Journalists in the twentieth century have observed Nauvoo from a viewpoint much like that of these friendly feature writers. The readers of this century have been given walking tours of a historic Old Nauvoo. Whether a Sunday travel feature or a magazine picture tour, the report echoes a common message: Here in a small town, once a major city of national curiosity, is a quaint place now without its controversial founding families. As one writer observed in 1924: “The town of Nauvoo [is] a sleepy little village, without a railroad. It is a town with a remarkable past, but it does not glory in that past. It played a tremendous part in the early history of Illinois, but the obscure village is more of an asset to the state and the country than was the little city of fifteen thousand people that once looked out on the Mississippi.”

The Visitors arriving not by assignment to write but to tour for personal benefit came as Pilgrims. They visited to experience, to observe, to document, and even to report a fallen Nauvoo. A Nauvoo but a shadow of her former self is what they found.

The earliest of the Pilgrims to visit Nauvoo were the former Residents themselves. One Old Nauvooer, returning after an absence of seventy-eight years, declared, in rhyme:

In ’46 I left Nauvoo
Behind an old ox team.
Now I’m going back in a Henry Ford,
To see how it will seem.

Through these visits, the Exiles recovered what Howard R. Driggs called a
"wealth of memories." Nostalgia filled their reports. Elder Franklin D. Richards reported in 1886 one such ritual of remembering: "We drank at the well which I dug," he said. "We plucked locust seeds from trees which I planted more than forty years ago. We picked bits from the moss-covered, crumbling pickets which I shaped with my own hands when I was in the flush of young manhood. . . . The house itself was gone. A small shanty stood in its place, surrounded by lilacs in full bloom." For most of the returning Old Nauvooers, the joy of return was tempered by a realization of what their old Nauvoo had become without them. Richards exclaimed, "Oh, the old home of the Saints, once so great, so lovely and so dear; but now fallen into desecration and decay!" After her visit to the old family home in 1883, Sarah Kimball said, "I... felt like weeping over the desolation." A reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune concluded a half century later: "The glory that was Nauvoo faded, and dreams of its future were never realized. Since that time the town has been but a shadow of its former greatness." The Returning Exiles found little consolation in learning that Nauvoo was the only town on the Mississippi River, as one observer put it, "notable chiefly for what it had been rather than for what it hoped to be."

The Church Agents from Utah shared in this perspective. Visiting Nauvoo to complete unfinished business or to encourage laggers to move West, they chronicled the decline of Joseph's abandoned New Jerusalem. While John Scott was gathering up lingering Saints in 1848, he climbed to the roof of the temple for a view of the city. "It's truly a scene of destruction," he wrote that night. "All parts of the temple, city and surrounding country is one scene of desolation; horror and dread seemed to be depicted in the countenance of every person that lives in Nauvoo. Not even the Saints that live there are altogether clear of the same doleful looks." "A wilderness!..." exclaimed Andrew Jenson in 1925. "I wandered through the weed-covered streets, one after another, and only here and there saw a human habitation surrounded by weeds. . . . I came to the conclusion that a curse had indeed rested upon the place ever since the Saints were driven from there." This memory of Nauvoo as deserted city, popularized by Thomas L. Kane's 1850 address, informed Mormon Visitors for a generation.

Though comparatively little remained to be seen, Visitors continued their pilgrimage to Hancock County. Unlike their ancestors, the sons and daughters of the Exiles were Tourists who envisioned a Nauvoo society still living. That life they saw first in a society transplanted across the American Plains. "What [became] of the exiled founders?" asked B. H. Roberts in 1887, after visiting a Nauvoo he described as "half deserted, half dilapidated. . . . and . . . withering under a blight, from which it refuses to recover." The exiles had not perished in the wilderness, he noted, but had with God's help "founded not only a greater city, but a commonwealth also, and," he said, they "are moving rapidly forward to fill their high destiny." For Roberts, and for others of his day, Nauvoo rose and fell, yet an escape from the Promised Land preserved a people in Egypt's wilderness.

The survival of a Nauvoo in the West did not satisfy all who discovered Nauvoo's lost glory. Among visitors of the nineteen-teens and -twenties were certain Devotees — descendants or antiquarians who "remembered" a brighter past and regretted
Nauvoo's declension. They optimistically anticipated her return to glory through future restorations.

3. Celebrants

In the years after World War II, when tourism became a national pastime, Nauvoo was transformed. A generation of affluent Tourists yearned to be modern Pilgrims. Packing their Kodaks into the family sedan, they headed out to retrace the Mormon Trail to and from Nauvoo. They created their own memories of a Nauvoo newly remembered as monument and message. Thus it is that the Tourist in our own time experiences a Nauvoo created from a third perspective, that of celebration. For some, it was not enough to reminisce or report. Such heirs of Nauvoo's legacy—like their ancestral Resident Nauvooers—were fearful that generations beyond their own would forget. Nauvoo must be memorialized, her participants honored, her accomplishments proclaimed, as it were, from the remaining housetops.

It was from the Pilgrims visiting a neglected Nauvoo that first arose the idea of celebrating the city by reanimating dying buildings, installing monuments, and proclaiming messages. "Before Carthage jail every true Latter-day Saint will stand with mingled feelings of regret and reverence," said visitor Howard Driggs in 1911. "We do well to preserve these historic shrines," he continued, "not to stir up bitter memories of the dead past; but to inspire and enrich the lessons of life our fathers, by their heroic struggles and sacrifices, have bequeathed to us as our greatest heritage." A few years later, Junius Wells admonished concerning Nauvoo's surviving old homes:

It has seemed to me that descendants of their builders who may be able would show no more than a just appreciation of the lives and achievements of their forebears were they to purchase these old homesteads, put them in repair and keep them so. . . . [Of Joseph Smith's homestead, he said:] Some time in the future let us hope that this superb site on hallowed ground may be occupied by an adequate memorial in honor of those who dwelt there in life and whose mortal remains lie beneath its neglected sod.

Sentiments such as these set in motion the personal efforts of Dr. J. LeRoy Kimball in 1954 and of others with shared interests in restoring historic Nauvoo. Celebrants working through Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., since 1962 have given new life to the buildings abandoned by the Old Nauvoosers, while like-minded restorationists in the Reorganized Church have reclaimed the properties of Remnant Saints such as Sidney Rigdon and the Smith family. As one supporter of Nauvoo's restoration explained it: "I think it is important to the future of America that we do have places where people can go away from the distractions of the twentieth century and hear about early America and its past and gain inspiration from the lives and culture of the people of the eras represented. . . . That is why I have been so interested in having Nauvoo become a national shrine."

The city we visit today is a selection from the possible pasts. It is most of all the celebration of twentieth-century ideas delivered in yesterday's dwelling places. The red brick buildings celebrate achievement and loyalty; they symbolize stability, certainty, and finality. Just as the Celebrants have chosen not to remember a desolate
city abandoned to die, so they have forgotten symbols of the tentative, the temporary, and the downtrodden—the log cabins of the poverty of our Nauvoo beginnings. The Celebrants have remembered a Nauvoo risen from the swamp in glory. They have made Nauvoo beautiful again.

In like manner, historic markers in Nauvoo celebrate accomplishments judged worthy of our shared memory. Today, these monuments to the past identify five celebratory themes: First, at Carthage, a newly refurbished jail and visitors’ center, along with monuments to Joseph and Hyrum, reinforce the importance to our collective memories of the Martyrdom. Second, overlooking Old Nauvoo, inscriptions on three monoliths explain the significance to Latter-day Saints of the Temple. Third, a sculpture garden outside the LDS Visitors’ Center represents an expansion of an earlier commemoration of the beginnings of the Relief Society—an idea resurrected by Celebrants of women’s place in the Restoration. Fourth, the restored buildings themselves stand as monuments to the individual Saints and to the idea of a gathered community. Fifth and finally, at the river’s edge a gray sandstone marker announces the transplanting of Nauvoo’s organized society westward with the words “Exodus to Greatness.”

The memorialization of Joseph’s City has been realized as well in sermons, pageants, and media presentations in visitors’ centers. The orientations, as do the oral messages in restored homes and shops, seek to affirm, inspire, and enrich the lessons of life bequeathed by the honored founders. Visitors learn about contemporary Mormon values as subsets to living history. Similarly, the open-air spectacle of musical pageant unfolds a sensory ritual reminding one of a C.C.A. Christensen panorama infused with life. Don Oscarson, collaborator with Maughn McMurtie in the pageant “City of Joseph,” said its purpose is to portray Mormons, then and now, as a believing people. An exuberant choral group declares, “The things people believe in are the things people do.”

Sermons, too, reiterate the message that Nauvoo was a place of faith and preparation. “While we did not stay and inhabit the cities that our parents struggled hard to build and beautify,” wrote mission president German Ellsworth, “yet we learn to build by building, we learn to beautify by doing that kind of work, and all of this has prepared the Saints of the Lord for the work required. . . . The spirit that built Nauvoo,” Ellsworth declared, “was the Spirit that carried the Saints across the plains, . . . the spirit that cleared the sage brush, dug the canals, planted the trees and built temples to the most high God.” Another Celebrant, in a later generation, echoed, “[The forced evacuation from] Nauvoo is no dark and shameful blot on the history of the Church. Nauvoo was not a failure,” he continued. “Even when the Saints were forced to leave, they took all that was learned here and incorporated it into the building of Salt Lake City and the Intermountain West. Nauvoo was literally moved, body and soul, thirteen hundred miles to the West.”

In these ways, Celebrants have remembered Nauvoo to make her remembered past meaningful to them.

4. Interpreters

A fourth kind of message depends upon an investigation of the past that uses evidence created by Participants, by Visitors, and by Celebrants, worked into a
framework provided by an Interpreter. In this approach, an investigator seeks understanding by reconstructing the past. Interpreters may either emphasize the imaginative reconstruction to create historical fiction or poetry, or they may seek a more direct and — some would say — impartial description of the past called history.

The earliest novels to exploit Nauvoo's story drew heavily upon the viewpoint of journalistic propaganda. Works by Frederick Marryat (Monsieur Violet . . . [1843]) and Robert Richards (a pseudonym for an Anglican clergyman, The California Crusoe [1854]) include stereotypical glimpses into a Nauvoo society characterized by fanaticism, fraud, and political intrigue. The bias is not unlike that reflected by some popular writers a century and a half later, among them G.M. Warren, whose Destiny's Children (1979) is a formula western complete with hero and villain, sex and violence.

Many other twentieth-century Interpreters who fictionalize Nauvoo convey messages of uplift and faith — to celebrate Mormon values and to establish as role models the people of Nauvoo. Such was the approach of Mabel Sanford, an RLDS convert and Nauvoo resident. Her 1939 novel, Joseph's City Beautiful, is the story of a British immigrant's awakening to the merits of the Reorganization view of Mormonism. Similar in tone is the fictionalized biography, Timbers for the Temple: A Story of Old Nauvoo in Days of Her Glory, written in 1922 by Elbert A. Smith. In this work, Smith uses his father, David H. Smith, as model for his central character, tellingly named David Nobleman. Of his method, the author says, "Memory is the magician that enables us to reconstruct the past. Where memory fails, imagination with the aid of historical records 'carries on.'"

Fiction by Latter-day Saints of the Utah-based church generally follows this same celebratory pattern. A recent example is James R. French's dramatized romance, Nauvoo, published in 1982. A journalist himself, French casts a non-Mormon newsman bent upon exposing the Saints in Tom Sharp's paper as an outsider looking in. This investigative journalist befriends a widowed Latter-day Saint woman, interviews her, and eventually falls in love with her. But French's story of love and intrigue is but a vehicle for a larger idea. Thus a review observed, "Nauvoo is more than a novel. It is a message. It is a strong cry for religious tolerance and religious freedom."

Variations on the celebratory pattern are found in the work of Utah expatriates Samuel W. Taylor and Virginia Sorensen. In Nightfall at Nauvoo (published in 1971), Taylor unfolded a quest for what he called "essential truth." His agenda is revealed in words spoken by New York journalist Sam Brannan, who confides, "There was often a big gap between the real story and what appeared in print." Taylor celebrates the profane. His is a journalistic attempt to recapture Resident reminiscence from the perspective of dissident as well as loyalist Nauvoans.

When Virginia Sorensen introduced a tone of skepticism into her 1942 novel, A Little Lower Than the Angels, she fell short of recreating a secularized memory of Nauvoo. Sorensen delivered instead what literary historian Ed Geary called a text "marred by sentimentality."

Like many novelists, the few poets who have recalled Nauvoo put on the garb of the reminiscing Resident and the memorializing Celebrant. Almost singlemind-
edly, poetry remembering Nauvoo celebrates the City Beautiful by recalling and honoring fallen prophets and affirming rightful successors. Typical are the verses by the Prophet's youngest son, David H. Smith, who laments his father's death and burial in "The Unknown Grave," and William W. Phelps's hymn offering heartfelt "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah." Note as well the lines dedicated by William Appleby to Brigham Young in 1848, which read, in part:

The Twelve still holds the Keys of pow'r
With 'Brigham' at their Head—
With blessings on the Saints to show'r
That will by them be led.

In our own time, poets S. Dilworth Young, R. Paul Cracroft, and Clinton F. Larson head the list of those echoing affirmative themes. A segment of Elder Young's *The Long Road* remembers June 27, 1844, as a date of divine destiny for the loyal Smith brothers. Cracroft's graphic recreation of the Martyrdom imitates the eyewitness account of a Resident's report. Larson's play *The Mantle of the Prophet* achieves the poet's search for essential significance in a moving, metaphorical memorialization. In commenting on Larson's work, fellow poet Marden J. Clark reminds us that "not factual historical truth, but ideal, spiritual truth is the aim of the poetic imagination." And: "Dr. Larson's attempt to make us aware of the spiritual through beauty results in literature that is strongly, almost furiously, affirmative."

A second form of Interpretation is historical narrative. As Interpreters, historians—like novelists—are people for whom "remembering Nauvoo" means "understanding Nauvoo." They place the need to understand above the need to experience, observe, or honor Nauvoo. Rather than reminisce, report, or memorialize, they reconstruct a memory of Nauvoo in an attempt to know what it really was and what it means today. They seek to correct faulty memories, to analyze biased reports, to demythologize, or to reinstate. In the use of sources, Interpreters seek understanding from a variety of Residents, Visitors, and Celebrants.

The historian as Interpreter is not without perspective. Indeed, the influence of those other, less formal historiographical approaches has made some historians more a Participant or a Pilgrim or a Celebrant than an Interpreter. At the very least, each Interpreter is influenced by other perspectives.

The historians who first wrote of Nauvoo were those who *had* lived there. These former Residents created participatory history. For them, "remembering Nauvoo" meant "experiencing Nauvoo." Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*, compiled by Utah's Old Nauvooers, is such a reminiscence. It is a collection of first-hand accounts organized into the frame of reference of Mountain Valley Mormons. In his preface to the work, the Prophet declared that his intent in writing was to "put all inquirers after truth into possession of the facts, as they have transpired,... so far as I have such facts in my possession." The Nauvoo portion of the work, assembled in Utah, echoes the Old Nauvooer's reminiscent collection of facts about temple-building and apostolic succession.

When the historians in Independence compiled a *History of the Reorganized Church*, they recalled a Remnant version of Nauvoo. It emphasized an ecclesiastical disorganization at Nauvoo together with an unfinished temple and doctrinal changes
affected by minority leader Brigham Young. The interpretive framework of this Mississippi Valley remembering is captured in the editor's assertion that "in the remnant, which, out of the confusion into which the church had been plunged, sounded the rallying cry to scattered Israel, pointed to the old paths, and recognized only the word of God as law, the investigator will recognize the original church in succession."50

The perspective of Resident Neighbors is represented by authors such as Thomas Ford, whose posthumous History of Illinois (1854) seeks to justify the political position of an outside participant.51

Historians who have emphasized the perspective of the Visitor to Nauvoo fit one of two subcategories previously suggested, that of Journalist or Pilgrim. For the historian as Visitor, "remembering Nauvoo" means "observing Nauvoo."

Visiting Journalist historians were outsiders looking in, and their inward glances were fleeting glimpses of reality. They saw what their reading audience expected them to see. John C. Bennett, though at one time a Resident, wrote his History of the Saints (1842) from the bias of the unsympathetic Journalist. Similarly, Joseph H. Jackson's Narrative (1844) was yellow journalism at its worst—an anti-Mormon interpretation seeking sensationalism for political purposes. The disaffected John Whitmer's remembered Nauvoo was curiously religious. His judgmental journalistic interpretation imposed the paradigm of a Book of Mormon society of saints felled by prosperity and pride—a decline precipitated by spiritual wifery and bands of gadianton robbers.

The influence of journalistic accounts on less-strident histories can be found in the naive echoing of visitors' reports in a number of Illinois town and county histories. They borrow directly from the governor's standard account and proudly list the citizen soldiers who defended the homeland against intruding Mormons.53

The Visiting Pilgrim historians were inside outsiders, returning as it were to an ancestral home to re-examine what they had come to know vicariously. Perhaps it was as Pilgrim that Robert Flanders in 1965 wrote Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi. He secularized and humanized Nauvoo's story to remove it from the celebratory aura of sanctioned interpretations. His reconstructed Mississippi Kingdom was cast as prelude to the western exodus, and thus a fitting preface to Leonard J. Arrington's economic interpretation of the Great Basin Kingdom. Furthermore, Flanders utilized the reminiscences of both Old Nauvooers and Remnant Saints. This helped him to discover, from his vantage point as a Pilgrim son of Joseph, the difficulties of returning to the land of his spiritual fathers.54

Two other Pilgrim Interpreters discovered that by revisiting Nauvoo, you could, indeed, go home. Like Flanders, David E. Miller and T. Edgar Lyon were Visitors. Their perspective differed from his because they were helping to create a Williamsburg of the Midwest as commissioned agents of those who would celebrate.55 Like Old Nauvooers, from whom they gleaned their data, Miller and Lyon were Mountain Valley residents who saw Nauvoo as the gateway to the Mormon West. In their Nauvoo: City of Joseph in 1974, Miller and coauthor Della S. Miller set out to answer the challenges of such Journalist Interpreters as Sam Taylor and to fill gaps left in the hagiographies of Celebrant Interpreters.56 Lyon, in the beginnings of a
book left unfinished at his death in 1978, proposed to set the detailed story of a
Mormon community into the larger context of westering America. While not
necessarily memorializing, Miller and Lyon were nonetheless both site-specific town
historians interpreting Nauvoo from the perspective of western Tourists on behalf
of Celebrants.

If Miller and Lyon were not themselves true Celebrants, who were those for
whom “remembering Nauvoo” meant “honoring Nauvoo”? The answer may be
found within the pages of officially encouraged remembering—the brochures and
guidebooks to Nauvoo’s historic sites and the ancestral hagiographies and family
histories penned by descendants of Old and Remnant Nauvoos. Typically the
brochures headline “The Glory That Was Nauvoo” as they identify remaining build-
ings as “monuments of that once glorious era.” Two attempts to memorialize
Nauvoo in the late 1940s and early 1950s are books by E. Cecil McGavin and N. B.
Lundwall. McGavin’s Nauvoo the Beautiful (1946) is a selective, topical collection
cast in sentimental prose and saturated with quotations from the Old Nauvoos. It
emphasizes the personal tragedy of the Smith family. Lundwall’s compilation,
Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith (1952), unabashedly cele-
brates Joseph’s prophetic calling. At the same time, it magnifies that tribute back-
handedly by heaping dishonor upon those who were unfaithful to the cause.

More widely used memorials are those created within broader church histories
by B. H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Inez Smith Davis. Building solidly
upon the framework established by Nauvoo’s original Residents, these Interpreters
saw Nauvoo from the double perspective of both Visitor and Celebrant. In returning
to their ancestral home to report what they found, they memorialized the past with
histories that made Nauvoo a monument to a brighter future. Though fallen from
her days of glory, Nauvoo became for these writers a launching pad for great
accomplishments under new leaders in new places of refuge.

Roberts first outlined a political profile of Nauvoo as a persecuted enclave in
his mid-1880s serialization, “The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo,” for the Young Men’s
M.I.A. magazine, the Contributor. Compiled later in book form, this formed the
basis of the Nauvoo section in his 1930 centennial celebration, A Comprehensive
History of the Church. Like Nauvoo, the Comprehensive History was first written as
a series of magazine articles (in the 1890s), then revised and updated by publication
in book form. The Comprehensive History set a pattern echoed in Joseph Fielding
Smith’s 1922 priesthood course of study, Essentials in Church History. This popular
text and Inez Davis’s Story of the Church (1934) are the reports of two grandchildren
of the Martyrs. As emulative Pilgrims, they honor and defend.

These historiographical considerations would be incomplete without quick
glimpses at more recent rememberings, a few specialized studies by historical
Interpreters: Richard S. Van Wagoner’s Mormon Polygamy (1986) is intended, he
says, “neither to promote nor to assail plural marriage.” Rather, his survey as
Interpretation is cast as a Reminiscence; it seeks to understand the peculiar principle
in practice as the Old Nauvoos themselves experienced it. In Sisters in Spirit
(1987), edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, we
find Interpretive Celebration: These essays memorialize Mormon womanhood for
what it was and what their authors hope it may yet become. For Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy* (1975) was investigative, Interpretive Journalism. To discover "the ultimate source of authority in a democratic society," they take us into the courtroom. There they report the story from the perspective of political interpretation rather than the way reminiscence and memorial had remembered it. Finally, in *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (1984), authors Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippett Avery swept away the sour memories of Old Nauvoosers as well as the sweetened memorials to Emma to create their own Interpretive Celebration of a newly re-"elect"-ed lady. Each of these new-generation works reflects characteristics fitting the categories proposed as one of the many ways of understanding those who would understand Nauvoo. Though thoroughly researched and newly interpretive, most of these books reflect an interest in traditional topics of doctrine and social conflict such as polygamy and the Martyrdom.

As Interpreters of Nauvoo's pasts, historians seek an understanding beyond that of the biases they discover in reminiscences, reports, and memorials. Nevertheless, in their attempts to understand Nauvoo, they assume, in part, the perspective of a Resident, a Visitor, or a Celebrant.

To some extent, for all of us, each avenue we follow to get at the sought-after treasure of our past reflects, as it contributes to, our collective memory. Whether we remember what we have lived, report what we have seen, memorialize what we believe, or seek understanding for what we have discovered—or build a City Beautiful using all of these tools and views of history—we are engaged in a meaningful and continuing process of remembering.

As we formulate our individual and collective memories, we would do well to remember that it is an unfolding, a process. Whatever past we seek or find will have merit for us in its own time and place. We will be rewarded particularly if we recognize the validity of multiple memories. Let us not become forgetful of our many pasts. Rather, let us remember to remember and to understand those Cities Beautiful that were, and are, and will yet be called "Nauvoo."

NOTES


3. Published encouragements to keep personal diaries of religious experiences include "Do You Keep a Journal?" *Millennial Star* 1 (October 1840): 159-60 and *ibid.*, 9 (June 15, 1847): 191.

4. My reading of these themes is based on impressions gleaned from examining more than one hundred diaries and reminiscences of Utahns who had lived in Nauvoo, on file in the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, and in manuscript collections at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Many published autobiographies follow similar patterns.

5. The Remnant perspective is explained by Richard P. Howard, "The Reorganized Church in
36 Journal of Mormon History


22. Thomas L. Kane, *The Mormons: A Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, March 26, 1850 (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1850), pp. 4-6. Kane has also been quoted to support a celebratory view of Nauvoo: "The unmistakable marks of industry, enterprise and educated wealth, everywhere, made the scene one of singular and most striking beauty" (p. 3); quoted in the brochure *Nauvoo the Beautiful* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), [p.2]; and in L. Tom Perry, "Nauvoo—A Demonstration of Faith," *Ensign* 10 (May 1980): 74-76. Among visitors of Kane's time who noted the desolation of the abandoned city were Charles Lanman and J. H. Buckingham, quoted by Stanley Kimball, "Nauvoo," pp. 515-16, 548. Leonard J. Arrington gave the deserted-city image a space-age motif in his review of Flanders's book: "Nauvoo today is a ghostly
sketch, the empty frame of a city—like a launching pad after the rocket has gone." Western Humanities Review 20 (Autumn 1966): 357.


36. Stapley, "Nauvoo Visitors' Center Dedication," p. 5. See also, Heber J. Grant, Opening Address,
38 Journal of Mormon History


44. David Hyrum Smith, "The Unknown Grave," Deseret Sunday School Songs (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), no. 8; and William W. Phelps, "Praise to the Man," Hymns (Salt Lake City, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 27. (Note the use of Phelps's hymn in the memorial to the Prophet on the 145th anniversary of his martyrdom: "Hail to the Prophet," editorial, Deseret News, June 17, 1989, Church News Section, p. 16.)

45. William I. Appleby, Autobiography, July 1848, typescript, p. 208, MS 2737, LDS Church Archives. Used by permission.


55. That Nauvoo was patterned after Williamsburg not only physically as a restoration but conceptually as a place to celebrate values is clear from Stapley, Address, pp. 7-8; and the interview with J. LeRoy Kimball, Improvement Era 70 (July 1967): 12-18.


58. Historic Mormon Country (undated brochure distributed jointly by Northern States Mission
and Nauvoo Bureau of Information of the LDS Church); Nauvoo the Beautiful (LDS brochure, 1979); and Historic Nauvoo (cooperative brochure, 1989).


60. B. H. Roberts, The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo (1900; reprint, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965); Roberts, Contributor 8 (October 1887): 452; Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century I, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1930).


67. For a reminder that "the public tends to see the past—its own or others' or both—as undifferentiated and unchanging," see David Lowenthal, "The Timeless Past: Some Anglo-American Historical Preconceptions," Journal of American History 75 (March 1989): 1276.
The Nauvoo Heritage of the Reorganized Church

Richard P. Howard

Earlier Images of Nauvoo, LDS and RLDS

Nauvoo — its history and meaning — embodies an important distinction between the LDS and RLDS churches. Brigham H. Roberts, writing at the turn of the century in Utah, commented on the meaning of Nauvoo:

[The] Nauvoo period of the history of the Church [is] a period which is essentially a formative one, especially in regard to what may be considered the higher and more complex doctrines of Mormonism. It was in Nauvoo that Joseph Smith reached the summit of his remarkable career. It was in Nauvoo he grew bolder in the proclamation of those doctrines which stamp Mormonism as the great religion of the age. It was in Nauvoo that Joseph Smith's life expanded into that eloquent fullness which gives so much promise of what that man will be in eternity. It was in Nauvoo he contended against a world of opposition; against the power of falsehood and misrepresentation; against priestcraft; against corruption in high places; from here he corresponded with statesmen, and rebuked demagogues; from here he went to martyrdom — to seal his testimony with his blood.1

Samuel A. Burgess, writing as RLDS historian during the 1930s, published a tract on the history of Nauvoo. This work illustrates a point made by Robert Flanders in his book Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi:

The death of Joseph Smith in 1844 dissolved bonds of personal fealty for many Saints, and made opposition to Church authority easier; and the breakup of corporate Mormonism in Illinois assured the division of the Church. The largest group followed Young to Utah and founded another corporate Mormon society that dwarfed the one attempted in Illinois. The others, cast in a

Richard P. Howard is Church Historian of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, MO. Based on a paper given at the Mormon History Association meeting in Quincy, Illinois, on May 11, 1989.
dissenter’s role, drifted for years without strong leadership or a sure sense of identity. Their rebellion expressed itself not as criticism of Smith and his city by the Mississippi, but as criticism of the successor, Brigham Young, and his city by the Great Salt Lake.2

Burgess was continuing the long-established RLDS tradition of denying the substance of Nauvoo by remembering appearances. Burgess did not seek merely to put Nauvoo in the best possible light. He tried to elevate RLDS status by fixing the advent of Nauvoo doctrines and theology into a much later time frame: the Great Salt Basin, in the 1850s. Burgess repeated what Heman C. Smith, Joseph Smith III, J. R. Lambert, and many other RLDS representatives either had said or would later say, about Nauvoo:

1. Nauvoo’s population was between 25,000 and 50,000 by 1844, of a total church population of 200,000–250,000; the Westward Trek to the Great Salt Basin was therefore only a small minority (5 to 10 percent) of the Nauvoo Saints.

2. The Nauvoo Temple was built to accommodate General Conferences and public meetings. The Church was unable to come close to finishing its construction before the flight Westward. This gave rise to the “rejected church” theory advanced for many years by RLDS writers and speakers, based on Doctrine and Covenants 124:59 (107:18, RLDS editions). According to this promise, if the temple were not finished within the appointed time, the church, with its dead, would be rejected of God.

3. The University of Nauvoo was much further advanced in its programs and influence than the records indicate.

4. The Nauvoo Legion, similar to other military units in Illinois, was organized largely to defend Nauvoo against Indian attack.

5. The following factors caused Nauvoo’s demise:
   a. Political conflict was caused by the rapid growth of the city
   b. The habeus corpus power of Nauvoo’s municipal court was the pretext of outside opposition.
   c. The Nauvoo Saints were abolitionists. Elijah J. Lovejoy, an abolitionist, was killed in 1837 in Alton, Illinois.
   d. Nauvoo’s criminal element—outsiders who retreated into the city—gave the city a bad name
   e. Nauvoo’s Mormon Masonic lodge was so large that it threatened to control the other lodges in Illinois.
   f. Exaggerated reports and rumors of evil in the city increased antagonism in the larger populace.
   g. Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s assassinations at Carthage, followed by the repeal of the Nauvoo Charter, sealed the fate of the city.

6. Allegations of Church dissenters in the Nauvoo Expositor of June 7, 1844, were false, based wholly on hearsay evidence.

7. After going to Utah, Brigham Young introduced new doctrines such as Adam-God, blood atonement, and plural marriage.

8. The Utah apostasy required a reorganization of the Church. This took place in Wisconsin in 1852 and drew Emma Smith and her son Joseph Smith III into it by 1860.
9. The Reorganized Church was declared to be the lawful successor or the continuation of the original church by Judge L. S. Sherman in the Kirtland Temple Suit, in the Court of Common Pleas, Lake County, Ohio, in 1880. This position was reaffirmed by Judge John F. Phillips, of the U.S. Circuit Court for Western Division of the Western District of Missouri, in 1894, in the "Temple Lot Suit."3

RLDS historians until the 1960s may have suspected that Nauvoo was much of the root of the Great Salt Basin flower. The history they wrote, however, tended to fortify the legal position RLDS leaders had fought so long and hard to establish: that the RLDS church was in fact the legitimate successor to the original church presided over by Joseph Smith, Jr.

To write such history was to denounce the essence of Utah Mormonism. RLDS leaders and missionaries and historians repudiated Utah Mormonism as an apostasy from the pristine pre-Martyrdom church. This persistent policy forced the RLDS church into the ahistorical stance of denying the reality of Nauvoo history. That century-long denial had a profound effect on RLDS historiography until recent years.

With the 1965 publication of Robert Flanders's book, RLDS historians began to sense a new freedom and duty to explore and report the multiplicity of factors that marked the rise and fall of Nauvoo.

Positive RLDS Experiences in Later Nauvoo

Joseph Smith III was the eldest surviving son of Joseph Smith, Jr. He resided in Nauvoo. He became RLDS president on April 6, 1860, at Amboy, Illinois. He continued to live at Nauvoo until the spring of 1866, when he moved to Plano, Illinois. There he could give more concerted attention to his role as editor of the RLDS periodical The True Latter Day Saints' Herald.

Smith's years in Nauvoo, however, were marked by friendly ties with the local community. The horrors of persecution of Mormons was a thing of the past. Joseph was a respected citizen of Nauvoo, serving as justice of the peace for over seven years. He even ran for mayor in 1859, although getting only a third of the votes cast. He served as the presiding elder of the local RLDS branch from 1860 through 1865. These "Olive Branch" members—respectable citizens—lived peaceably in Nauvoo, winning new members slowly through the years. Shortly before Joseph's move to Plano, he and the RLDS people of Nauvoo were invited by a contingent of local citizens to establish RLDS general headquarters there.

This cordial relationship between the RLDS people and Nauvoo citizens helped create in RLDS minds a positive memory of their Nauvoo experience. A sign of these affirming images was Joseph's account of Nauvoo's friendly response to him in 1891 when he preached two sermons in a local Presbyterian church:

We were listened to with marked and respectful attention; our subject for the first service being a purely gospel theme; our second, a consideration of some of the reasons why we believe Joseph Smith to have been a prophet, and in present revelation... We were listened to with marked and respectful attention; our subject for the first service being a purely gospel theme; our second, a consideration of some of the reasons why we believe Joseph Smith to have been a prophet, and in present revelation...

There was a feeling expressed that we should return and further present our faith; and some interest appeared to have us do so, which we promised. Both papers, the Independent and the Rustler, noticed our meetings favorably. We quote from the Independent:

"Joseph Smith delivered a fine sermon at the First Presbyterian church last Friday evening..."
and also one on Sunday evening. The church was well filled on the former night, but on Sunday it was literally jammed. Mr. Smith is a fluent and logical talker and whatever he said was heartily sanctioned by a majority of the audience. Mr. Smith was raised in this city, and he has many friends here who regard him in the highest sense as a man. Whenever he concludes to speak in Nauvoo he will be welcomed by everybody and will draw good audiences to hear what he has to say."

From the Rustler we quote:

AN ABLE SERMON

"Joseph Smith, of Lamoni, Iowa, son of the Mormon Prophet Joseph, preached at the Presbyterian church last Friday and Sunday evenings. Whenever it our good fortune to be able to hear Bro. Smith, we do so, for we never go away without hearing good, practical talk. What he has to say is always boiled down and given in a manner which impresses all with the fact that if he wants a treat he might as well go to hear him as a lecturer. Mr. Smith's sermons were prefect and full of thought. Sunday night the church was crowded. He told his hearers about the Mormon Church and himself; how, when he had walked along the thoroughfares, ladies would pass to the opposite side in order to not meet him, simply because he was the son of the Mormon Prophet. He entertained his hearers; they were pleased, and they went away saying that the sermon was excellent. He gave them new ideas, ideas which, if followed out, will make them happier. Mr. Smith holds a warm place in the hearts of our people."

The Early RLDS Nauvoo Heritage: Plural Gods and Polygamy

Plurality of Gods

Since the 1960s, RLDS historical works have increasingly acknowledged that plurality of gods was a theological innovation from Nauvoo about 1842. The teachings and sermons of Joseph Smith at Nauvoo, together with his Book of Abraham (1842) document this development.

The question faced by early RLDS leaders was the place of the plural gods doctrine in the RLDS message. At a meeting of the RLDS First Presidency and Council of Twelve, this issue came into focus:

President Smith proposed a Question for discussion as follows, Are there a plurality of Gods?

Br. Blair spoke in the affirmative showing that the prophet Alma declared that men became as Gods. Lehi also on the 42 page of BM. and Paul says of Jesus, Thy Throne O God endureth forever and ever.

Resolved that we believe the doctrine of the plurality of Gods is scriptural

Resolved that when the doctrine of a plurality of Gods is taught it should be done with prudence.

Prest Smith said We should not be justified in making the faith of Individuals on this matter a test of fellowship.5

Also in 1865 the RLDS church published its first synopsis of faith and doctrine. In it, under the caption "Godhead," appeared several pages of scriptural citations supporting the doctrine of plural gods.6 It is clear from this that plural god doctrine was a meaningful concept to RLDS leaders. Included were references to the Book of Abraham. Many Herald articles featured the plural gods concept, especially during the early 1860s.

Gradually, however, this doctrine fell into disrepute in RLDS literature. Church writers also tried to associate the inception of the plural gods doctrine with Utah Mormonism—rather than with its true source, the teachings of Joseph Smith. The result was yet another distortion of Nauvoo history in the RLDS consciousness.
William Marks had been president of the High Council at Nauvoo, and a close friend of Joseph Smith and his family. In July 1853 factional leader Charles B. Thompson published a letter from Marks in Thompson's periodical. Marks was then one of Thompson's representatives. Marks remembers his 1844 conversation with Joseph Smith about polygamy:

Joseph, however, became convinced before his death that he had done wrong; for about three weeks before his death, I met him one morning in the street, and he said to me, Brother Marks, I have something to communicate to you, we retired to a by-place, and set down together, when he said: "We are a ruined people." I asked, how so? he said: "This doctrine of polygamy, or Spiritual-wife system, that has been taught and practiced among us, will prove our destruction and overthrow. I have been deceived," said he, "in reference to its practice; it is wrong; it is a curse to mankind, and we shall have to leave the United States soon, unless it can be put down, and its practice stopped in the church. Now," said he, "Brother Marks, you have not received this doctrine, and how glad I am. I want you to go into the high council, and I will have charges preferred against all who practice this doctrine, and I want you to try them by the laws of the church, and cut them off, if they will not repent, and cease the practice of this doctrine; and" said he, "I will go into the stand, and preach against it, with all my might, and in this way we may rid the church of this damnable heresy."

Shortly after William Marks joined the Reorganization, he became one of its leaders. In late 1859, he and others were looking to publish a periodical. Marks in October wrote to Isaac Sheen about some aspects of Nauvoo history. Sheen published the letter in January 1860. The following excerpt reveals Marks's anxiety over conditions in the Nauvoo church, with emphasis on polygamy:

About the first of June, 1844, (situated as I was at that time, being the Presiding Elder of the Stake at Nauvoo, and by appointment the Presiding Officer of the High Council) I had a very good opportunity to know the affairs of the Church, and my convictions at that time were, that the Church in a great measure had departed from the pure principles and doctrines of Jesus Christ. I felt much troubled in mind about the condition of the Church. I prayed earnestly to my Heavenly Father to show me something in regard to it, when I was wrapped in vision, and it was shown me by the Spirit, that the top or branches had overcome the root, in sin and wickedness, and the only way to cleanse and purify it was, to disorganize it, and in due time, the Lord would reorganize it again.... A few days after the occurrence, I met with Brother Joseph. He said that he wanted to converse with me on the affairs of the Church, and we retired by ourselves. I will give his words verbatim, for they are indelibly stamped upon my mind. He said he had desired for a long time to have a talk with me on the subject of polygamy. He said it eventually would prove the overthrow of the Church, and we should soon be obliged to leave the United States, unless it could be speedily put down. He was satisfied that it was a cursed doctrine, and that there must be every exertion made to put it down. He said that he would go before the congregation and proclaim against it, and I must go into the High Council, and he would prefer charges against those in transgression, and I must sever them from the Church, unless they made ample satisfaction. There was much more said, but this was the substance. The mob commenced to gather about Carthage in a few days after, therefore there was nothing done concerning it."

In the same issue of the Herald, editor Isaac Sheen reprinted his own letter, written and published more than seven years earlier in the Saturday Evening Post. There he chided Utah Mormons for claiming Joseph Smith's authority for their polygamous teaching and practice. Sheen observed:

This excuse is as weak as their excuse concerning the ancient kings and patriarchs. Joseph Smith repented of his connection with this doctrine, and said that it was of the devil. He caused the
revelation on that subject to be burned, and when he voluntarily came to Nauvoo and resigned himself into the arms of his enemies, he said that he was going to Carthage to die. At that time he also said, that if it had not been for that accursed spiritual wife doctrine, he would not have come to that. By his conduct at that time he proved the sincerity of his repentance, and of his profession as a prophet. If Abraham and Jacob, by repentance, can obtain salvation and exaltation, so can Joseph Smith.9

It thus appears that early RLDS leaders for a brief time felt easy about writing openly of what they remembered about Nauvoo polygamy. The April 1860 Amboy, Illinois, conference, however, was the scene of a sort of psychological denial that changed the picture immensely. Joseph Smith III’s inaugural address at Amboy on April 6, 1860, pointed the RLDS church in a different direction for treating Nauvoo polygamy. He said:

There is but one principle taught by the leaders of any faction of this people that I hold in utter abhorrence; that is a principle taught by Brigham Young and those believing in him. I have been told that my father taught such doctrines. I have never believed it and never can believe it. If such things were done, then I believe they never were done by divine authority. I believe my father was a good man, and a good man never could have promulgated such doctrines.10

Joseph III abhorred polygamy so strongly that he could not bear to name it for his hearers that day, though his meaning was clear to all. His leadership team, however, saw things differently. They were unable to let one speech by their new prophet dissuade them of that which they recalled as tragic events at Nauvoo. That memory would not go away. Five years later, Joseph Smith III and his counselor William Marks met with members of the Council of Twelve. Among other things, they discussed Joseph Smith, Jr.’s connection with plural marriage:

The question arose as to whether Joseph the Martyr taught the doctrine of polygamy. President Marks said Brother Hyrum came to his place once and told him he did not believe in it and he was going to see Joseph about it and if he had a revelation on the subject he would believe it. And after that Hyrum read a revelation on it in the High Council and He Marks felt that it was not true but he saw the High Council received it.11

The minutes record no further discussion of the matter. Marks could not deny his memory of Nauvoo without discomfort, however. Five months later he wrote about Nauvoo polygamy to Josiah Butterfield and Hiram Faulk:

Brother Joseph came to me about two weeks before he was killed and sais Brother Marks I want to talk with you we went by ourselves and he sais this polygamy business in the church must be stopt or the church is ruined and we can’t stay in the United States I have been deceive in this thing and it must be put down I thought it would be an advantage to mankind but I find it proves a curse I asked him how it could be dun he said I must go into the high council and he would prefer charges against those in adultry and I must cut them off and he would go on to the stand and preach against it and thought by so doing we might put it down but the mob soon commenced gathering and there was nothing dun.12

Here William Marks recalls Joseph’s feeling about polygamy as having changed radically. He remembers Joseph as having told him that he “thought it would be an advantage to mankind, but I find it proves a curse.” This accords with Sheen’s earlier statement that Joseph had repented of his connection with the “accursed spiritual wife doctrine.” It also agrees with Marks’s 1853 statement that Joseph had told Marks, “I have been deceived in reference to its practice.” Everyone at the
Amboy 1860 conference, however, knew Joseph III's view, for he announced his verdict the day he was ordained prophet: "I have never believed it, and never can believe it."

Some of the early RLDS leaders, however, could not ignore their memory of important aspects of Nauvoo history. They continued to ponder what they remembered—what they felt pressured to forget. On April 9, 1867, the Presidency and Twelve discussed the issue of Nauvoo polygamy and Joseph Smith, Jr.'s relation to it:

The following resolution was put and tabled.

Resolved that we do not believe that the revelation, alleged to have come through Joseph Smith, the Martyr, authorizing polygamy or spiritual wifery came from God, neither do we believe that Joseph Smith was in any wise the author or excuser of these doctrines.

J W Briggs, Z H Gurley, E C Briggs and John Shippy defended the resolution, Wm. W Blair, Josiah Ells & C Derry opposed it on the grounds that its passage would be more injurious than good because of the almost universal opinion among the Saints that Joseph was in some way connected with it.

J. W. Briggs, Moved it be tabled, and hence the resolution was lost, president Smith then told us that the passage of the resolution would do more injury than good.

Whatever the "almost universal opinion among the Saints" was, Joseph Smith III continued to hold fast; he never had believed his father was connected in the least with Nauvoo polygamy, and he never could believe it. Joseph's view prevailed among the Saints by the mid-1880s and remained in place until very recent years.

Intimations of Revisionist History: Paul M. Hanson

Paul M. Hanson, RLDS apostle from 1913 to 1958, in 1924 was involved in the controversial clash with president Frederick M. Smith over leadership policies. Hanson was somewhat out of harmony with positions President Smith had taken. At about this time, he had purchased several original letters and papers containing insights into Joseph Smith's place in Nauvoo history. He wrote to Samuel A. Burgess concerning the issues raised in those documents. The text of his letter as touching the polygamy issue is as follows:

I will be glad to discuss with you at an opportune time the evidences connecting J. S. with spiritual wifery (if not the revelation on polygamy). The position that has generally been taken by the Reorganization on the subject is a secure one, as viewed by me; principles are the safest foundation.

It is not necessary to prove a man was equal in character to Christ, in order to prove he was used as an instrument in the hands of God in blessing man.

But it is evident if it is recognized J. S. gave the revelation, the whole "Mormon" situation is rendered more complex.

As to how it should be disclosed is the uppermost question with me—truth is the supremest thing in the world. It is knowledge of "things as they are" and as they were, etc. The truth makes one free.

... In the Nauvoo Neighbor Joseph tells about what led to the receiving of the revelation on man being married for eternity. He was not referring to how some other person received the revelation. In closing, the synopsis of his speech reports that he "spoke at considerable length in explanation of the principle" (I am trusting to memory). That alone settles the question as to the authorship of that revelation; if there was no truth to it, such a report should have been immediately denied, since it was published in a church paper.

The Marks letter in my possession clearly represented J. speaking as having been in favor of polygamy. It is strange after all the discussion that had taken place if Marks, in the Presidency
at the time of writing, October, 1865, would use the word "polygamy" when he should have used "spiritual wifery;" and then he adds: "These are all solemn truths."

... The original letter from Nauvoo [Jacob Scott, Jan. 5, 1844] quotes substantially a good part of the Utah revelation—written, postmarked, etc. before June 27, 1844.

... I am convinced that much of what the Utah church has, existed before June 27, 1844.

... To refer to some of these things now would be looked upon as an attack on Joseph the Seer, and an indication of apostasy.14

Paul Hanson was a lone voice urging exploration of the meaning of documents calling for revisionist Nauvoo history. What he wrote to Samuel A. Burgess here apparently lay dormant for another dozen years or more. Hanson tried to broach the subject with Israel A. Smith, who three years later entered the First presidency of the RLDS church:

It is the long-range view of the situation that gives me concern, rather than the immediate present. But a policy should be followed now that will meet future as well as present needs.

I think I see—I do see possibly the time coming when students will bore into early church affairs; and then coming in contact with the Expositor and the Nauvoo Neighbor of June 19, 1844, will ask some pointed questions. Projecting our minds into the future, how would we answer those questions? Particularly, if from the head and other leading men of the church such a position and teachings have gone out to the whole membership that Joseph, the seer, had nothing to do with introducing or supporting marrying for eternity. And with this the doctrine of polygamy is well nigh inextricably mixed.

One question would be in relation to the affidavit of Austin Cowles, who was a counselor to Wm. Marks, president of the high council in Nauvoo, in the Expositor.

... Another question would be the existence of what was disclosed in the Nauvoo Neighbor, not discussed at any time in the official organ of the church, but brought into the open through what was charged in the Expositor. And then direct questions bearing on the reported speeches of Hyrum Smith and Joseph Smith in the city council of Nauvoo.

It is evident why the Utah church has never used the Expositor and [the] above Neighbor—they cannot use them to any profit—but this is not enough for us. The world is our field. And I believe students will come forward in time considering these questions almost, if not entirely, apart from the existence of the Utah church.

The papers referred to are public property. If students, including the membership of our church, do not ask questions in regard to them it is because of their lack of knowledge of their existence and their contents.

It is not enough for our church to pursue a policy that satisfies persons living on side streets, or I should say who do not know of the foregoing papers; their claims corroborated, or apparently corroborated by the Scott letter of Jan. 5, 1844 and the Marks letters, particularly of 1865.

I see the implications of not taking a clear and definite stand that Joseph, the seer, had nothing to do with spiritual wifery, but I also see the effects of the church being led implicitly to believe this, and then possibly suddenly being asked some pointed questions by students as has been suggested.

I see also the results of any admission that Joseph, the seer, had a revelation on the subject of marrying for eternity; it would start some on a toboggan—while it is not in fact required to prove Joseph Smith was equal to Christ, some, if not many, would wonder if there was a sound basis to other professed revealed subjects. This is a serious aspect of it all.

No one would be happier than I to see a clear and satisfactory answer to the evidences referred to that confront us. Personally, as president of the Twelve I do not wish to be a silent onlooker while a course is being followed that ignores the existence of the evidences mentioned—that would put me in the position of sometimes being asked, Did you know of the Expositor, Nauvoo Neighbor of June 19, 1844, etc., when the church was being given to understand that Joseph, the Seer, had nothing to do with marrying for eternity, and yet said nothing? True Latter Day Saintism, which is Christianity, does not teach one to be afraid of one's own thoughts.

What should be our policy?
If possible, find a clear, at least a reasonable answer to Cowles, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, and Marks' letter of 1865. It is not my thought that any of these matters should be proclaimed from the housetop. But I do believe until they can be answered, it would be well to keep still about Joseph, the seer, having nothing to do with spiritual marriage, etc. This would at least reduce a possible shock later on.

A rather deep sense of responsibility has rested on me in connection with various documents that have come into my possession. It is singular, but no one has seemed especially interested in the subject. Bro. Burgess stated he was "familiar" with it. Perhaps all others have felt the same. Yet no one cared to read the context of anything to which attention was called. With such a lack of interest, or of appreciation, of the letters, etc., what would be their worth in their hands? They would not even be read.

I wish you to know that all I have is available to you in your research—truth only is the thing desired, whether in the field of science or of religion.15

Hanson's documents (the ones he bought in 1924) were placed in the RLDS archives in 1961. Maurice L. Draper, member of the RLDS First Presidency, researched them in 1968 and quoted extensively from two of them in his publication, *Marriage in the Restoration*.16 There was no negative reaction to Draper's publication of these materials. Flanders' work had probably cleared the way for serious exploration of this sensitive issue.

The RLDS Heritage of Historical Tourism

One of the more promising, positive aspects of the RLDS Nauvoo heritage is its program for historical reconstruction and restoration and tourism, begun after World War I. The background for this program was an obscure event of 1905. Heman C. Smith, Church historian and apostle, was visiting Nauvoo. He saw that the Utah Mormon Church was beginning to make its presence felt there, and wrote to the Presiding Bishop E. L. Kelley of his concern over that:

The Brighamites have recently been here over fifty strong and held a conference. We are following them with a series of meetings in City Hall. They have made quite an impression on those who want to sell property by giving out the impression that they are coming back to build up the place within two years. The story is out that they have bought the Nauvoo House, but Mr. C. E. Bidamon, in whom the title is, answers me that it is not so. He says they asked him what it could be bought for and he told them it was not for sale. I went to Carthage and examined the records and find a mortgage on the property which I enclose a copy of. It may be that the Brighamites have bought this note and mortgage and if so they may get possession as the mortgagors are ne'er to do well and I think will never redeem. I suggest that if they have we had better stand behind Bidamon and help him to redeem if he will turn it over to us for further consideration. If they have not secured the note perhaps we better look after that. The Utah fellows are already making a point against the Smith family on the grounds that the revelation promised them place therein from generation to generation forever [Section 124:59; 107:18, RLDS ed.] and their being ousted is evidence of unfaithfulness.17

E. L. Kelley replied on 20 October 1905, urging Heman C. Smith to negotiate with C. E. Bidamon towards getting the Nauvoo House. He suggested either helping Bidamon meet payments, or ideally, trying to buy it from him, giving him occupancy until he could find another place to live ["one or two years at least."] This process took about four years to accomplish.18

The RLDS church has come a long way since then. Earliest efforts to establish historical houses at Nauvoo were frustrated by lack of funds and trained personnel.
Another impediment was a negative attitude toward Utah Mormonism. This problem distorted the RLDS memory of Nauvoo, making a balanced, cordial presentation to a Mormon audience a rare event.

Today the RLDS church has accomplished some truly professional levels of historical restoration, reconstruction, and interpretation at the Joseph Smith Historical Properties near the river. The reconstruction of Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store, directed by F. Mark McKiernan, Kenneth Stobaugh, and Irwin Fender, has had a direct impact on revisionist RLDS history of Nauvoo and Joseph Smith. McKiernan's master plan for RLDS historic sites, done in 1976–77, helped to professionalize history at RLDS historical sites, not only at Nauvoo but at five other sites as well. The RLDS church's restoration and reconstruction work at the Mansion House and the Smith Homestead buildings has given much attention to authenticating the original features and uses. Kenneth Stobaugh, long-time director of RLDS historic sites, has since the mid-1970s worked with Alma R. Blair of Graceland College to professionalize the training of docents at the sites. The effect has been more honest and gracious public tours than previously had been the case.

The new visitors center's theatre offers an insightful and nondefensive audiovisual presentation to the public. This multi-image production gives a more honest view of Nauvoo than had been possible before Flanders. The RLDS heritage of Nauvoo, then, could be divided into two periods: Nauvoo before Flanders, and Nauvoo after Flanders. Robert Flanders's work was the watershed for RLDS members' understanding of the Nauvoo experience. Most RLDS people can read the following 1973 quote from Robert Flanders with genuine appreciation:

Nauvoo was a volatile mixture of elements—American patriotism, immigrant dreams of the promised land, displaced-person desperation, religious mysticism and fanaticism, free experimentation with new social, ethical, and politico-economic modes, optimism, opportunism, energy—and escalating violence, within and without. But no matter that Smith, his religious corporation, and his people, were in the end not entirely innocent victims; they were victims nevertheless.... The conflict with the Mormons was, as a Carthage man put it bitterly, “war to the knife and knife to the hilt.” In the end the result was another typical case of overkill. Americans could not yet conceive of themselves living together in the Promised Land with others of fundamentally different values and goals, and resolving their conflicts with “underkill.” Coexistence is a new idea a century later, and one with which many Americans are still uneasy. Of course Mormons themselves denied the notion of cultural federalism—of the right of others to be “wrong,” and were themselves oppressed when that right was denied them. 19

Conclusion: Implications of Historical Professionalism for RLDS Historiography

The distinction between LDS and RLDS interpretations of Nauvoo still remains. LDS historians revere the developments at Nauvoo as primal for later Mormon developments. RLDS historians, on the other hand, see in Nauvoo a painful symbol of early Mormonism's tragic metamorphosis. Nauvoo, from the RLDS perspective, is a sad story, but one that no longer can be fictionalized to justify a distorted image of Joseph Smith. Flanders and others in his wake have taught RLDS people that there is every reason to tell the sad tales right along with the happy ones. Who we really are rests on the whole spectrum of past experience. And it has not all been without pain and sorrow.
All of this perhaps can be well summarized by referring to the matter of authentic group identity, as presented by Robert Bella and a team of other scholars. They compiled a book offering a profile of individualism and commitment in American life, and they offer some insights about the way a nation or group develops an identity:

Communities…have a history…they are constituted by their past…. For this reason we can speak of a real community as a "Community of memory," one that does not forget its past. These stories of collective history…are an important part of the tradition that is so central to the community of memory…. But the stories are not all exemplary…. A genuine community of memory will also tell painful stories of shared suffering that sometimes creates deeper identities than success…. And if the community is completely honest, it will remember stories not only of suffering received but of suffering inflicted—dangerous memories, for they call the community to alter ancient evils. The communities of memory that tie us to the past also turn us toward the future as communities of hope. They carry a context of meaning that can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and see our own efforts as being in part, contributions to a common good.20

NOTES
5. RLDS Council of Twelve, meeting at Fox River, Illinois, May 2, 1865, Minutes, Book A, p. 12.
7. "Epistle of Wm. Marks, . . ." in Zion’s Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ, July 1853, 53.
11. RLDS Council of Twelve, Minutes for May 2, 1865, Book A, p. 11. Seven attended this meeting: Joseph Smith and William Marks of the First Presidency, and W. W. Blair, James Blakeslee, Charles Derry, Reuben Newkirk, and John Shippy of the Twelve.
12. William Marks (Shabbona Grove, DeKalb County, Illinois), letter to Hiram Falk and Josiah Butterfield, October 1, 1865; RLDS Archives; original spelling and grammar preserved.
13. RLDS Council of Twelve Minutes for April 9, 1867, Book A, p. 34. Attending this meeting were Joseph Smith III of the First Presidency and apostles Edmund C. Briggs, Jason W. Briggs, W. W. Blair, Charles Derry, Josiah Ellis, Zenas H. Gurley, Sr., and John Shippy.
15. Paul M. Hanson, Toledo, Ohio, letter to Israel A. Smith, Independence, Missouri, May 3, 1937.


Mormon Nauvoo from a Non-Mormon Perspective

John E. Hallwas

Mormon Nauvoo (1839–1846) was a remarkable community because of its religious utopianism and rapid growth, but its historical significance derives primarily from the violence that it provoked, which resulted in the expulsion of the Saints from Illinois. Hence, from a non-Mormon perspective, the community must be understood not in relationship to the Restoration movement but in relationship to the Illinois frontier. The key to Nauvoo’s fate is that it was an ambitious theocracy that asserted itself within a Jacksonian social environment deeply devoted to democracy.1 To understand the community’s violent decline, then, we must also comprehend the cultural context in which it arose and the democratic ideology2 held by the non-Mormons (and dissident Mormons) who opposed it.

The roots of the so-called Mormon Conflict of the 1840s are in the American religious-political-social revolution that occurred in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Briefly, under the influences of the Great Awakening, American political revolution, and Second Great Awakening, there was an enormous shift away from the traditional, patriarchal structure of authority and toward an individualistic, equalitarian social order. And as William E. McLoughlin has pointed out, by the Jacksonian era, “romantic ideology, romantic nationalism, and romantic Christianity” had gained power, and “the will of the nation came to rest in precisely the same place as the spirit of God, namely, in the people” (McLoughlin 1982, 175). There was a fusion of temporal and spiritual power in the common man as the

---

John E. Hallwas is Director of Regional Collections at Western Illinois University Library. He has written or edited a dozen books related to Illinois history and literature, including *Western Illinois Heritage* (1983), and he edits a journal, *Western Illinois Regional Studies.*
United States came to embody God's purpose, in the public view, and popular sovereignty became the means of realizing the nation's destiny: to establish a new, divinely sanctioned social order, committed to individual rights. At the same time, of course, with the loss of traditional authority and the lessening of denominational adherence came the growth of dissenting groups, the emergence of ecclesiastical divisions, and the wider toleration of religious differences. Republicanism became the common ideology of the people; individualism became a hallmark of the American character; pluralism—at least with respect to religion—became an acknowledged facet of national life; and the separation of church and state became an increasingly important axiom of democracy (Miller 1965; Wood 1969; Strout 1974; Bellah 1975; McLoughlin 1978, 1982).

This great cultural change had an enormous impact on Joseph Smith. Reacting to the sectarianism that was prevalent in western New York, he became engaged in a quest for authority—a quest that led to his special sense of relationship to God (De Pillis 1966). The religious system that emerged as his career unfolded was itself partly an expression of romanticism, a sweeping cultural development characterized by a turning from traditional creeds to individual revelations and speculations, from beliefs based on reason to faith based on experience, from humanistic universalism to cultural particularism (national and religious uniqueness), and from the acceptance of present social conditions to the embracing of utopian social ideals—among others factors. But Mormonism also reflected the religious tradition of Smith's native New England. A providentially created society with a covenanted relationship to God, a morally superior chosen people with a millennial mission: these concepts had originated in colonial Puritan culture and had contributed to America's identity as a redeemer nation before they became part of Smith's ideology (Davis 1953; Tuveson 1968; Bellah 1975; MacLear 1971, 1975; Blanke and Lynn 1979). And Mormonism also reflected a reactionary pattern of thought that arose among the New England clergy during the Revolutionary era: fear of moral degeneracy, demand for a republic of Christian virtue, and identification of America with the millennial Kingdom of God (Strout 1974; Hatch 1977). Smith absorbed that perspective too, but he asserted that the Mormons alone were the chosen people, not the American public, and that their development of a new social order, amid the apparent disorder of early nineteenth-century America, would hasten the Millennium. The nation would fulfill its divine destiny through the Saints (Hansen 1967; Wood 1980; Winn 1989).

Paradoxically, Mormonism was both a romantic rejection of authority, as embodied in the patriarchal Christian tradition—dismissed by Smith as “the Great Apostasy”—and a new, equally romantic assertion of authority, based on the notion that the truth came to the prophet and his church through a unique means, divine revelation to a spiritually sensitive individual. Although the new church reflected democratic values in some ways, the Mormon priesthood elite, created and directed by the prophet as God's agent, made all the important decisions. The church was a theocratic oligarchy (O'Dea 1957, 165). In short, what Joseph Smith did, while Americans were giving birth to a society marked by pluralism, equalitarianism, and individualism, was establish a new source of authority, a new hierarchy, and a new,
highly unified community, based on fresh spiritual experience, and thus he rescued Mormon converts from religious uncertainty and social insecurity (Wood 1980; Winn 1989). But theocratic authoritarianism and popular sovereignty were incompatible, so Smith's extension of his religious ideology into temporal affairs during the Jacksonian era placed the Mormons on a collision course with the rest of America.

Illinois was the locus of that collision. For the most part, the settlement of the state occurred between 1818, when statehood was achieved, and the late 1840s, when all but a few of the state's 102 counties had been established. During that time, Andrew Jackson became immensely popular in Illinois. The courageous, decisive, outspoken Old Hero was the essence of American individualism, and his presidency (1829–1837) symbolized the achievement of political power by the common man. He was a forceful spokesman for democratic and equalitarian values, so he seemed to embody the spirit of the people—especially to residents of the West. Jackson’s followers established the first true political party in Illinois, and, for a time, no anti-Jackson man could be elected there to a state or national office (Ford 1854; Pease 1919; Davis 1984).

As this suggests, the emerging Illinois commonwealth was deeply infused with the ideals of romantic democracy. In the process of pursuing self-realization in an open society, unencumbered by social class stratification and confining traditions, Illinois settlers commonly experienced a profound sense of freedom. So it was for British immigrant Morris Birkbeck. He came to the state before Jackson’s presidency, and he underwent a kind of romantic rebirth (as an equalitarian frontiersman) in the Illinois wilderness. As he said in *Letters from Illinois* not long after he had arrived, “Liberty is no subject of dispute or speculation among us backwoods men; it is the very atmosphere we breathe” (Birkbeck 1818, 70). He also described the democratic ideology of early Illinois residents, commenting that they were “the most decided foes of all legitimacy [religious and political establishment], except that of a government appointment by the people”—and they were prepared to fight for their “Republican principles” (24).

Indeed, on the Illinois frontier, freedom was easy to find, and democracy was vigorously advocated by almost everyone; but still, self-government had to be learned. Governor Thomas Ford, who understood the people of Illinois as well as any man of his time, makes this clear in his *History of Illinois*, which is really a case study in the establishment and operation of republican government. As he points out, in early Illinois “the great mass of the people, politicians and all, had a mere selfish destiny in view,” and “they did not want government to touch them too closely, or in too many places: they were determined upon the preservation and enjoyment of their liberties” (Ford 1854, 90). In other words, there was insufficient commitment to the common good and inadequate understanding of the obligations that democratic government imposed upon the people. Unfortunately, that was true of the Mormons and non-Mormons in Hancock County, despite their repeated assertions of republicanism.

In the scholarship on the Mormon Conflict in Illinois, there has been little
emphasis on the ideals of the non-Mormon public, as if that public did not have any ideals and simply reacted to Nauvoo out of religious bigotry, political frustration, community competition, and frontier belligerence (Gayler 1955; Godfrey 1967; Hampshire 1985). But that is to overlook the very essence of the non-Mormon perspective and, ultimately, to ignore the historical significance of Nauvoo. The people of Hancock County, like those throughout the State of Illinois, had a deeply felt democratic ideology, and they continually perceived Mormon Nauvoo in relationship to it.

Warsaw was particularly important, for it was the center of anti-Mormon feeling in the 1840s. Like most Illinois towns, it was a cumulative community, a kind of voluntary association devoted to the economic and social advancement of its members. The Warsaw pioneers hailed from a variety of states and countries and had various religious affiliations, so the town was something of a microcosm of pluralistic America. The five hundred or so people who lived there in 1840 were very optimistic about their future, for they recognized the importance of Warsaw's location on the Mississippi River, just below the Des Moines Rapids. Scores of riverboats arrived every month, and shipping was a very important business. By the late 1830s the town had a hotel, a fine brick school, and many substantial homes. It was a progressive community, whose leaders organized a temperance society, an agricultural society, and a library association in 1841 (Hallwas 1979; 1983, 37–48). The title of Warsaw's first newspaper, The Western World, expressed the community's sense of location in the land of mythic American promise—a place of new beginnings and endless opportunity, where the New World was still new.

More importantly, Warsaw was a practical exercise in self-government, founded (1834) and incorporated in the Jacksonian era, when the public—especially in the West—demanded non-interference with popular rights. "Freedom," not "faith," was the shibboleth of the community. In fact, Warsaw was named for the capital of Poland, where heroic freedom fighters had battled against the invading Russians in 1830, so the town's very name symbolized freedom and the willingness to fight for it. An early newspaper article that mentions the naming of the town also refers to "the enlarged patriotism of the proprietors"—that is, their commitment to democratic ideology ("Sketches" 1841).

In Warsaw, republicanism was fundamental: it had a religious quality. Common democratic ideals bound the people together, and the rituals of self-government, such as local elections and city council meetings, were symbolic affirmations of those beliefs. Likewise, Fourth of July celebrations—marked by the erection of a liberty pole, patriotic speeches, and public reading of the Declaration of Independence—affirmed the community's ideological bond through symbolic participation in the origin of the republic ("Our Anniversary" 1843). And Warsaw was, in a sense, connected with that origin, for it was located where a military outpost named Fort Johnson had been established during the War of 1812—a war popularly regarded as a second assertion of American independence and, hence, an instrument of the nation's democratic mission.

Warsaw's leaders had an enormous interest in politics, government, and history. Local newspapers printed the town's "Corporation Proceedings" (city council meet-
ings) in some detail, as well as numerous articles about the state and national governments and American history, including a locally written patriotic series, “Brief Biography of Eminent Americans.” Perhaps the most substantial contribution to the newspaper by a local author was “The Science and Progress of Government,” a three-part series that chronicled the rise of republican government and celebrated equal rights, democratic institutions, and America’s “glorious mission of political redemption” (Cleon [pseudonym] 1843). To the people of Warsaw, the nation to which they belonged had a transcendent value; and republicanism—or American democratic ideology—was the operative faith of their community, shaping their experience and mobilizing their wills.

In the fall of 1843, local leaders formed a civic group called The Warsaw Legislature, which was devoted to their ideology. It was a lyceum in which people of the community acted as a democratic assembly to discuss current issues and propose legislation. They assumed, for purposes of discussion, that Warsaw was a new American “state,” the organization’s members were the “legislature,” and their elected leader was the “governor.” The first “governor” was a local lawyer, who delivered his inaugural address on November 17, 1843. He asserted that Warsaw was an expression of republican ideals, a place where “indomitable love of civil and religious liberty... acknowledges no restraint inconsistent with the laws of conscience and moral right,” and where “the humblest citizen” may express his views of government and aspire to high office. Although he charged his listeners with responsibility to the public, he also celebrated the rights of the individual:

The people of Warsaw have expressed their preference for a representative government. Claiming all political power as inherent in themselves, they have delegated to you their authority.... They have made you their servants, not their rulers: from them you derive all your power and authority.... As the object of all legislation should be to secure the greatest good of the greatest number, in enacting such laws as you may deem necessary to promote the peace and prosperity of our young state, it should be your aim to employ the least possible coercion upon the will and action of the people.

The rights of conscience should be placed above all human laws; and such acts only as are wrong in themselves, impairing the natural rights of individuals or of society, should justify any restraints upon personal liberty.

By stating that “human laws” were less important than “the rights of conscience,” the speaker failed to recognize the deep relationship between such laws and “personal liberty.” However, he later reminded his listeners that “the intelligence and virtue of the mass of the people constitute the only base of civil and religious liberty,” and he confidently asserted that “our people” possess “all the elements of true greatness”—including love of liberty, perseverance, patriotism, energy, and independence of thought and action. He also declared that “the holy fire of liberty in a heart capable of appreciating its life giving influences” was as unstoppable as the Mississippi River (“State of Warsaw” 1843). In Warsaw, freedom was indeed a sacred cause, and surging individualism demanded strict limits on governmental power. All political authority resided in the people and was carefully delegated.

The Warsaw Legislature affirmed the town’s commitment to democratic ideology by its very operation within the community as well as by the views of those who addressed the organization. It was an ongoing testament to what the towns-
people deeply believed—that the good society arose not through a covenant with God that created a people, as at Nauvoo, but through a contract among individuals that created a government. (That made an enormous difference in what residents of the two communities regarded as tyranny.) The first meeting of The Warsaw Legislature was, in fact, a symbolic reenactment of the establishment of the community, a performance of their democratic cultural myth that reaffirmed their identity as Americans. In his inaugural address, the speaker declared that the people of Warsaw were “gathered from nearly every state in the Union, and from many nations of the Old World” and were making their “first attempts ... at enlightened self-government.” It is clear that the town of Warsaw institutionalized the ideals of its residents, just as Nauvoo institutionalized Mormon ideals. The so-called Mormon Conflict of 1840s was, then, not just a contest for local political control that got out of hand; it was an ideological struggle in which the non-Mormons viewed themselves as the champions of republicanism, standing opposed to those who would subvert that ideology.

It is not surprising that among such people Nauvoo became an issue of fundamental importance. After all, it was a hierarchical, collectivistic, and authoritarian community—and therefore outside the American political consensus. The bloc voting that Joseph Smith encouraged as a means of gaining political advantages for Nauvoo was an affront to the personal independence that Warsaw residents and other non-Mormons felt was essential to popular government. The misuse of the Nauvoo Charter to empower the municipal court with excessively broad jurisdiction, so the prophet could avoid trial on state charges, challenged the concept of equality before the law that was a much-respected democratic axiom in early Illinois. And, in general, the control of Nauvoo’s civil affairs by religious leaders, which non-Mormons at Warsaw objected to as early as the spring of 1841 (“The Mormons” 1841), violated the separation of church and state, a concept vehemently insisted upon by leaders of the Jacksonian era. As one non-Mormon from the area, who used the pseudonym “Hancock,” said of the Mormons in the Alton Telegraph, “Their religious and political creed[s] are identical, and as directly at variance with the spirit of our institutions as any system that man could possibly devise” (Hancock [pseudonym] 1845). That was an overstatement, but he was essentially right. At Nauvoo, social and political order ultimately rested on divine order, which was really an Old World idea that had led to the establishment of state religions in Europe and, ultimately, to the rise of religious persecution there.

Of course, non-Mormons at Warsaw and other nearby areas did not understand Mormon millennialism or the connection between that doctrine and the American sense of mission. They simply realized that the Nauvoo public did not thoroughly subscribe to democratic values—that, in fact, the community was a theocracy headed by a man whose religious position was the basis of his political and military power. This deviation from democracy became even more alarming to local non-Mormons in the spring of 1842 when the prophet, who was already Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion, became mayor of the town and chief magistrate of the municipal court. As one anonymous commentator put it in the Quincy newspaper, “The spectacle presented in Smith’s case—of a civil, ecclesiastical, and military leader,
united in one and the same person, with power over life and liberty, can never
find favor in the minds of sound and thinking Republicans" ("The Mormons" 1844).
As this suggests, many nearby people became convinced that if Mormonism suc-
cceeded, republicanism would fail, for the two ideologies were contradictory.

Furthermore, the people of early Illinois, like most Americans of the Jacksonian
era, had an enormous fear of despotism. That aspect of the American character
arose during "the birth of democracy in revolt against tyranny" (Schlesinger 1943,
517), and it was prevalent until the Civil War. As late as 1853, in fact, Abraham
Lincoln warned the people of Edwardsville, Illinois—and by extension, all Amer-
icans—against "despotism" at the hands of "the first cunning tyrant who rises" if
they failed to maintain their "love of liberty" (Lincoln 1858, 473). Fear of despotism
was repeatedly voiced by the non-Mormons in Hancock County with reference to
Nauvoo ("Our Position—Again" 1841). They even proclaimed their concern in
official form, as in these twin resolutions passed at the first Anti-Mormon political
convention in the summer of 1841:

Resolved, That with the peculiar religious opinions of the people calling themselves Mormons,
or Latter Day Saints, we have nothing to do—being at all times perfectly willing that they shall
remain in the full possession of all the rights and privileges which our constitution and laws
guarantee and other citizens enjoy.

Resolved, That in standing up as we do to oppose the influence which these people have
obtained and are likely to obtain, in a political capacity, over our fellow citizens and their liberties,
we are guided only by a desire to defend ourselves against a despotism, the extent and conse-
quences of which we have no means of ascertaining. (Gregg 1846)

Naturally, their fear was amplified when Smith became a candidate for president
early in 1844, and it was again increased when dissenting Mormons, who knew
about the secret Council of Fifty, revealed the prophet's plan to establish a political
Kingdom of God, with himself in charge (Davis 1844, 7–8; Ford 1854, 321). Indeed,
the dissenters themselves accused Joseph Smith of "despotism, engendered by an
assumption of power in the name of religion" ("Introductory" 1844).

Of course, most of the Mormons at Nauvoo failed to see any danger. They
thought their system of government was democratic—or at least not inconsistent
with democracy—and they repeatedly asserted their republicanism. Joseph Smith
himself said, on March 7, 1844, "We are republicans, and wish to have the people
rule," but he also added, "They must rule in righteousness" (HC VI, 237). The
implication was that he, as God's agent, set the parameters of righteousness, and
therefore the people ruled—or individuals participated in government—at his
pleasure. Moreover, they participated to serve his religious purpose, for he had
admitted earlier that the very instrument of government in Nauvoo, the city charter,
was his own device, concocted "for the salvation of the Church" (HC IV, 249). In
short, despite his apparent commitment to republicanism, the prophet established
a theocratic government at Nauvoo (Flanders 1965; Hill 1989). It is not surprising
that presidential candidate Joseph Smith openly campaigned for what he called
"Theodemocracy" in the spring of 1844 (Smith 1844; Brodie 1945, 864). He did
not realize that democracy and theocracy were incompatible. He failed to under-
stand that in the United States, not only must religion be free from political authority,
politics must be free from ecclesiastical authority. There could be no religious
denomination behind the government and no religious purpose for the government. Of course, Smith’s theocratic views were echoed by Brigham Young—who flatly declared that “the government belongs to God” (HC, VI, 322)—and by other Mormon leaders, although they also proclaimed their republican sentiments as well (Winn 1989).

One of the unfortunate ironies of the Mormon experience in Illinois was that Joseph Smith’s fear of mobocracy (as well as his desire for social unity) caused him to establish Nauvoo as a theocratic, militaristic city-state, which in turn aroused the deepest fears of non-Mormons and led to the very mobocratic attacks he hoped to avoid. Indeed, the man who delivered the speech on liberty and self-government to The Warsaw Legislature, quoted above, was William N. Grover, who became increasingly alarmed by Nauvoo’s challenge to democratic ideology and went to Carthage the following June, with some other non-Mormons, and murdered the prophet. In the process, of course, he and the other mobocrats violated the very ideals to which they subscribed, and they so forcefully polarized the Mormons and non-Mormons in Hancock County that effective self-government came to an end there. They also turned public sentiment against themselves, made Smith into a martyr, and obscured the ideological significance of their cause.

If the unrestrained popular will, that tramples on the rights of individuals and minorities, is the characteristic problem of democracy, the abuse of authority by religious leaders is the characteristic problem of theocracy. And that is exemplified by Joseph Smith’s suppression of religious and political dissent at Nauvoo, which culminated in the Expositor affair. The entire matter has not received adequate discussion by historians.

In the spring of 1844, a group of Mormons broke with the prophet and founded a new, reformist church. They did not hesitate to make their reasons public, and they met with some initial success, as revealed by this brief, non-Morman newspaper account of May 15:

The New Church appears to be going ahead. On last Sunday, there were about three hundred assembled at Mr. Law’s house in Nauvoo, and [they] listened with much seeming pleasure to a sermon from Elder Blakely, who denounced Smith as a fallen Prophet. He treated the Spiritual wife doctrine without gloves, and repudiated Smith’s plan of uniting Church and State.

After Blakely had concluded, William Law gave his reasons in strong language for leaving the false prophet.

Francis M. Higbee, then read a series of resolutions which set forth the reasons for withdrawing from Joe. After this a number of Affadavits were read, testifying to Joe’s villainy, and showing the evils under which a large portion of the citizens are obliged to labor.

The new church, and those opposed to Mormonism in Nauvoo, are said to be strongly in favor of repealing their Charter, it having been made an instrument of oppression rather than a benefit (“The New Church” 1844).

Earnest, well-informed, and influential dissent had come to Nauvoo, and it was both religious and political. The dissenters, led by William Law, who was counselor to the prophet in the church presidency and one of the foremost leaders in the community, had been scandalized by the secret practice of polygamy, and they had objected to it and to some other new doctrines. They had also criticized the prophet’s
subversion of democratic ideology. As Lyndon W. Cook has pointed out, William Law asserted that Smith “was totally ungovernable and defiant and was determined to obey or disobey the law of the land at his convenience” and that he “united church and state, both as mayor of Nauvoo (in the passage of city ordinances and the use of police power) and as an influential religious leader by manipulating or seeking to manipulate politicians for private purposes” (Cook 1982, 56). Law was a prominent businessman, committed to free enterprise, so he also objected when Smith tried to control the economic activities of the Mormon people by ecclesiastical authority. According to Cook, Law’s “democratic spirit” and “individualism” prevented him from assuming the kind of “total submission” to Smith that was characteristic of most other Mormons (55,70). That was probably true of the other dissenters as well. As their disenchantment with Smith’s leadership grew, so did their determination “to break the yoke of tyranny” that had fallen upon the people of Nauvoo (Law 1844). Dissenter Charles Foster put it this way in a letter to the Warsaw Signal: “We verily believe in the sentiment that ‘Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God,’ and with the arms and heart that God has given us, we will fearlessly and faithfully maintain our rights” (Foster 1844).

Before they had separated from Smith to form a new church, the dissenters had attempted to achieve reform by objecting to specific doctrines and policies, but their views had been rejected by the prophet. He began to treat them as enemies, attempting first to silence them by intimidation. As he said at a meeting on March 7, “I will wage an eternal warfare with those that oppose me.... I will disgrace every man by publishing him on the house top, who will not be still and mind his own business” (HC VI, 239). But the would-be reformers refused to be silenced. Soon, in a speech on March 24, Smith accused the leading dissenters of conspiring to kill himself, his family, all of his relatives, and the heads of the church (HC, VI, 272). No charges of that sort were filed, but Smith’s public portrayal of them as potential mass murderers, enemies of the people, opened the floodgates of slander and incited persecution. Men who had been regarded as upright Mormons were suddenly defamed as “thieves, counterfeitors, bogus-makers, gamblers, debauchers, murderers, and all that is vile,” as Willard Richards put it in a letter to James Arlington Bennett (HC VI, 517). John Taylor launched a campaign of vilification against them in the pages of the Nauvoo Neighbor, hoping to discredit them and drive them from the community. Some of the dissenters were threatened, and several were excommunicated. But rather than leave, they decided to remain and express their views. After all, they hoped to attract members to “The Reformed Church” (Scott 1844, 596), as they called it, from among the Nauvoo public. They had to stay. As all Mormon and Illinois historians know, they established a newspaper called The Expositor, which was to be the organ of their cause.

At that point, Nauvoo was on the verge of becoming more deeply American. Civil rights were being tested in a theocratic environment, and if the dissenters succeeded, even in firmly establishing a dissenting minority in the community—whether or not they ever removed Smith from political power or curbed his plans for a temporal kingdom—the town’s role as a unified separatist community was at an end. Indeed, Nauvoo’s symbolic identity as Zion was shattered by the very notion
that the Mormon community was apparently not the divinely inspired ensign of peace and freedom but rather a place of discord and loss of freedom, not the one true church but two rival churches, led by men who were outspokenly opposed to one another. No wonder the reformist church, which was planning to launch a newspaper and had appointed a committee “to visit the different families in the city, and see who would join” (HC VI, 347), was a crisis for the prophet. At stake was the Mormon antipluralistic notion that within the emerging Kingdom of God only one church had cultural legitimacy—and that church must be under the control of God’s prophet. Religious freedom and Mormon separatism were incompatible.

More deeply, at stake was Smith’s vision of a dichotomous America: the millennial Kingdom of God vs. Babylon (the evil kingdom of men), the children of God vs. the children of the devil. That perspective made the building of Zion imperative and democracy there impossible, for it labeled critics as enemies of the community (the kingdom), eliminating the right to disagree. As John Taylor said in attempting to justify the suppression of the dissenting newspaper, “Are a virtuous people to be condemned because they have the moral courage to put a stop to blacklegs, counterfeiters, and the veryest schophants and snakes that ever poisoned community?” (“A Question” 1844). If Zion had serious shortcomings and opponents of Smith had anything constructive to offer by way of reform, Nauvoo was part of imperfect America after all—not a bastion of virtue in a corrupt nation but a place where moral, social, and political problems existed and public pressure could bring change. Thus, the dissenters did threaten the community—not by planning to assassinate its leaders but by undermining its ideological foundation.

The prophet’s destruction of The Expositor was not just a temporarily successful effort to suppress religious and political dissent; it was an unsuccessful attempt to maintain his authority against individualism and his community against pluralism—the very aspects of American society that had created the religious uncertainty and rampant sectarianism that had troubled him years earlier. Moreover, because Smith had virtually consolidated all local power in himself, the destruction of the press was indeed bis act. The Nauvoo City Council was under his unofficial control, and the council’s minutes reveal that he personally and vigorously spearheaded the drive for declaring The Expositor a nuisance and having it destroyed. At the June 8 city council meeting, which was continued on June 10, he called for its destruction at least four times. He even asserted that the dissenters wanted to incite violence against Nauvoo—an irrational claim, considering that the organizers of the new church and their families were part of the community. “What the opposition party want is to raise a mob on us and take the spoil from us, as they did in Missouri,” he said, appealing to the fears of his listeners, and he added that he “would rather die tommorow and have the thing smashed, than live and have it go on, for it was exciting the spirit of mobocracy among the people, and bringing death and destruction upon us” (HC VI, 441-42). Ironically, The Expositor was probably doing the opposite—defusing hostility by creating the hope among non-Mormons that the dissenters would curb Smith’s power and Nauvoo would cease to be so threatening to democratic ideology. Indeed, Thomas Sharp, the leading anti-Mormon and a relentless agitator, hoped that the newspaper would divide the community.
and thus end its theocratic separatism: "We say success to the new undertaking—
for 'a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand' " ("The Nauvoo Expositor" 1844).
In any case, it was not the newspaper but Smith's destruction of it that incited the
mob.

After the city council consented to what the prophet wanted done, he acted
as mayor to order the city police to destroy the press, and then he acted as Lieutenant
General of the Nauvoo Legion to provide military support for the institutionalized
violence. Smith had clearly violated the dissenters' constitutional right to due
process of law as well as their right to publish their views, but of course he was
exonerated by the local court, where he was chief magistrate. In short, the prophet's
actions in The Expositor affair were clear evidence that at Nauvoo he was the
repository of governmental authority and that local institutions served the people
only insofar as they served his purposes. He was indeed "ungovernable," as William
Law so clearly recognized.

All of this received the most intense criticism from non-Mormons, including
the following biased but astute analysis in the Warsaw Signal:

Why did he [Smith] fear the Nauvoo Expositor, if he were an innocent and abused man? He had
a press under his own control, by which he could defend himself from all unjust aspersions. But
no! he knew that this press, located in the midst of his followers, would open the eyes of the
honest portion of them to his villainous practices.... Why stake so much upon the destruction
of this press, if he did not deem that either his power, or it, must be crushed?] ("From Nauvoo"
1844).

Although the non-Mormons inaccurately perceived the prophet as a villain,
they understood correctly that he ultimately did not trust the people: in this case,
he did not trust them to evaluate competing claims about his religious leadership
and his government of the community and make up their own minds. He asserted
his power by eliminating the dissenting press and thereby made it impossible for
the Nauvoo public to consider the issues any further and determine where they
stood and what they might want him to do. Against the democratic ideology that
was the very basis of community at Warsaw, he had committed the ultimate sin:
overt suppression of civil rights to maintain his sovereignty. Although non-Mormons
there and elsewhere in Hancock County were not directly affected—because they
were not residents of Nauvoo—they had identified deeply with the dissenters, who
had become surrogates for them in the battle against Smith's theocratic city-state.
And they felt threatened, for they knew that the powerful Mormon leader could
dominate Hancock County institutions in a similarly high-handed manner. So, some
of them took up arms and resorted to mob violence, incited by the inflammatory
articles in Thomas Sharp's Warsaw Signal.

The Hancock County violence of the mid-1840s was, then, firmly based on a
clash of values. This is not to deny that factors discussed by other scholars—such
as non-Mormon political frustration and Mormon misuse of the Nauvoo Charter—
contributed to the eruption of violence, but most of those matters are related to
the underlying ideological conflict. Even the charge of religious persecution, which
the Mormons leveled at their critics and which the non-Mormons denied, takes on
a new significance in this light. There was ultimately no separation between the
government and the church at Nauvoo, so non-Mormon opposition to Mormon
antirepublican behavior was regarded as religious persecution by Smith and his
supporters. By the same token, the Mormons' ambitious, repressive theocracy was
perceived as a threat to the democratic ideology that was so deeply held at Warsaw.
In short, ultimate values were at stake on both sides. Although the Mormons and
non-Mormons had much in common ideologically (Moore 1986; Winn 1989), this
fundamental conflict of values led to violence, for it was symbolized by the struggle
for political control of the county, in which the non-Mormons were defeated, and
it was again symbolized by the struggle of the dissenters (non-Mormon surrogates)
against theocratic despotism, which ended in a more disturbing kind of defeat.

Unfortunately, the two groups shared one crucial shortcoming. The Mormons,
with their cultural particularism, and the non-Mormons, with their Jacksonian in-
dividualism, were insufficiently committed to the social whole, the common welfare.
Each group readily, almost eagerly, perceived the potential threat from the other
group (theocratic despotism, mobocratic violence) because that threat verified its
own sense of identity as the politically righteous opposite. Although the leaders of
both groups viewed themselves as defenders of republicanism, democratic values,
and the Constitution, they were in reality defenders of their own rights, which is
not the same thing. For example, after Smith had denounced the reformist church
leaders as enemies of the community, convicted them without due process of law,
destroyed their newspaper, and declared martial law in Nauvoo, he ironically called
upon "lovers of liberty" to punish those "who trample under foot the glorious
Constitution and the people's rights" (HC VI, 499). Likewise, Nauvoo Neighbor
editor John Taylor cried out, "Let us enjoy our religion" and "the rights of Americans"
in the same article in which he attacked the dissenters as "wicked and malicious"
and justified the destruction of The Expositor ("Retributive Justice" 1844). His
comments too are deeply ironic: he called for freedom of religion while praising
an attack on religious dissenters by a repressive government that did not achieve
the separation of church and state upon which religious freedom rests. In the same
way, Warsaw Signal editor Thomas Sharp asserted that the non-Mormons stood
for "Virtue and liberty" and "our Political rights" in the same article in which he
summoned his readers to take up arms against the "band of villains" at Nauvoo
(Warsaw Signal broadside 1844). Thus, he employed the rhetoric of republicanism
to incite mobocratic behavior, ironically revealing that a newspaper could be det-
rimental to democracy. The leaders in both communities cherished their own
freedom, but their self-interested, localistic republicanism—modified by Jacksonian
individualism at Warsaw and by Mormon cultural particularism at Nauvoo—en-
genarded a shallow commitment to pluralistic America and its democratic insti-
tutions, which make freedom possible. So, when viable opposition to their political
will arose, and actions that aroused their fear developed, both groups readily
suppressed the liberty of others in a misguided effort to secure their own.

Oddly enough, one man who was caught in the middle and criticized by both
groups had the right perspective. Thomas Ford was not only one of the finest
nineteenth-century governors of Illinois, he was also an experienced judge with
an extreme dislike of unlawful violence and considerable insight into frontier people and communities. He forcefully decried both the constitutional violations at Nauvoo, connected with the *Expositor* affair, and the subsequent mobocratic actions of the non-Mormons. In fact, his letter "To the Mayor and Council of the City of Nauvoo," dated June 22, 1844, in which he censured the Mormon leaders for their civil rights violations, and his broadside letter "To the People of Warsaw, in Hancock County," dated July 25, 1844, in which he criticized their mob violence, are two of the finest historical documents of the Mormon Conflict. In the former, he sternly told the Nauvoo leaders, "Your conduct in the destruction of the press was a very gross outrage upon the laws and the liberties of the people" (HC VI, 534), and in the latter he warned the Warsaw mobocrats against further illegal actions, asserting that "mob violence" was "threatening our fair form of government."

Like Abraham Lincoln, Ford was an advocate of procedural democracy with a tremendous sense of commitment to the social whole and to the maintenance of democratic institutions. As he said to a citizen of Warsaw in a letter dated January 29, 1844, which discusses the growing antagonism between the Mormons and the non-Mormons, "I am bound by the laws and the constitution to regard you all as citizens of the state, possessed of equal rights and privileges; and to cherish the rights of one as dearly as the rights of another." For Ford, as for Lincoln, the love of liberty did not mean simply insisting upon it for yourself or your community but prizing it as the sacred right of all people, whether they supported or opposed your own values. Unfortunately, that high standard of democratic obligation was not matched by the leaders on either side of the conflict, and, consequently, Mormon Nauvoo became an American tragedy.

NOTES

1. Shortly after this paper was prepared for the May 1989 Mormon History Association meeting in Quincy, Illinois, two books appeared that relate directly to matters discussed here: Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism,* and Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830-1846.* Hill emphasizes that the Mormons rejected American pluralism, strove to establish a theocratic government, and were persecuted for their antiparallelism. Winn stresses that the Mormons felt alienated in what they thought was a corrupt America, strove to reestablish comunal republicanism, and were regarded as antirepublican subversives by non-Mormons. My paper has much in common with both books, but it differs from them as well. More narrowly focused, it is centered around two related matters: Mormon Nauvoo as a challenge to non-Mormon ideology, and the Reformed Church at Nauvoo as a challenge to Mormon ideology. In any case, the paper has been revised since being delivered, to reflect the new books by Hill and Winn—and to provide some additional evidence about the ideological conflict from contemporaneous documents.

2. I use "democratic ideology" and "republicanism" interchangeable in this paper, although the latter was the common term used by Americans in the Revolutionary era and afterward to denote a system of values that centered on the relationship of the individual to America, the new democratic social order. Freedom, equality, virtue, independence of thought and action, and devotion to the common good were key values of republicanism (Wood 1969, 416-90; Bailyn 1977, 291-97). By the Jacksonian era, that ideology had taken on an even deeper significance, chiefly through the communal and utopian dimensions of town development, the widespread sense of participation in the American democratic mission, the mythologizing of the Revolutionary past, and the celebration of individual rights.
3. Warsaw's heritage includes two military outposts: Fort Johnson, erected there by Zachary Taylor in 1814 and destroyed later that year, and Fort Edwards, erected there in 1817 and used by federal troops to support the fur trade until 1824 (Hallwas 1979). Early Warsaw residents tended to confuse those two forts, which preceded the establishment of their community, but they knew about them (the ruins of Fort Edwards stood until the mid-1840s). The forts provided the community with a sense of historical connection to American military operations in the West and, ultimately, to the War of 1812.


5. I do not use the term "civil religion" because it is a controversial concept with several meanings, as Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones point out in "The Civil Religion Debate," their introduction to American Civil Religion (1974). However, republicanism at Warsaw corresponds roughly to what they categorize as "folk religion," which has been described by Will Herberg and other scholars. I prefer to simply depict the manifestations of democratic ideology at Warsaw and assert its profound moral seriousness for the people of that community.

6. Grover was not convicted, but there is convincing evidence that he participated in the murders at Carthage. See Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, Carthage Conspiracy (1975), pp. 118-19, 126, 147-55. A man of much patriotic fervor, Grover read the Declaration of Independence to the Warsaw populace after community leaders had erected a liberty pole to mark the Fourth of July, 1843 ("Our Anniversary" 1843). In his inaugural speech to The Warsaw Legislature later that year, he referred to the "military organization and discipline" of "the Nephites" (i.e., the Nauvoo Legion of the Mormons) and then proposed the organization of the Warsaw militia as a "guaranty of our rights" ("State of Warsaw" 1843). He became a leader in that militia, which contributed to the formation of the mob that stormed Carthage Jail the following June.

7. It is impossible to know for sure what kind of information Smith had received, but M. G. Eaton and A. B. Williams had recently published affidavits about a conspiracy in the Nauvoo Neighbor (HC VI, 278-80). The latter's source of information was Joseph H. Jackson, "an adventurer and a desperate character," according to Hancock County historian Thomas Gregg (HC VI, 149). He had come to Nauvoo in 1843, joined the church, and apparently engaged in counterfeiting. In the spring of 1844, he broke with the prophet and associated himself with the dissenters. He later published an exposé in which he accused Smith of masterminding the counterfeiting and conspiring to kill Governor Boggs of Missouri, Reformed Church leader William Law, and others. See A Narrative of the Adventures and Experience of Joseph H. Jackson in Nauuo (Warsaw, Illinois, 1844). Obviously, Jackson was adept at spinning tales of conspiracy.

In his affidavit published in the Nauvoo Neighbor on April 17, 1844, Williams asserted that Jackson had told him, on March 15, "that Doctor Foster, Chauncey L. Higbee, and the Laws were red hot for a conspiracy, and he should not be surprised if in two weeks there should not be one of the Smith family left alive in Nauuoo" (HC VI, 278). As this suggests, Jackson evidently learned of "a conspiracy" and then drew his own wild conclusions about what might result from it. He probably became aware of the dissenters' plans to expose Smith and curb his power, and then misstated the matter as a conspiracy to commit murder.

M.G. Eaton's affidavit appeared on the same page of the Nauvoo Neighbor, and it confirms this view. He went to a meeting of a few dissenters, along with Jackson, and simply heard complaints about "the spiritual wife system" and comments that some dissenters feared for their lives because of their opposition to Smith. Eaton made no assertions about proposed violence against the prophet, but he mentioned that "I heard said Jackson say that the Laws were ready to enter into a secret conspiracy tooth and nails" (HC VI, 280).

Smith evidently heard of the matter from others as well (HC VI, 280-81). It is likely that in the highly charged atmosphere of Nauvoo in the spring of 1844 the secret meetings of the dissenters were exaggerated into a conspiracy to commit murder. The ultimate basis for such reports was perhaps Smith himself—who viewed critics as enemies and enemies as a personal threat. In a speech on December 29, 1843, he spoke about "the ungrateful treachery of assassins" and asserted, "My life is in danger" and "I am exposed to far greater danger from traitors among ourselves than from enemies without" (HC VI, 152). That speech did much to create an atmosphere in which opposition to the prophet would be construed as a murder conspiracy.

In any case, in the spring of 1844 Smith used the incredible story of a mass murder conspiracy to turn the community against his critics.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Foster, Charles A. Letter to the editor, dated 29 April 1844. Warsaw Signal, 8 May 1844, p. 2.


Gregg, Thomas. "A Descriptive, Statistical, and Historical Chart of the County of Hancock." Broadside, 2nd edition, February 1, 1846, at Western Illinois University Library.


"Introductory." *The Expositor* (Nauvoo), 7 June 1844, p. 2.


*Warsaw Signal* broadside, 14 June 1844. Included in the microfilm copy of the *Warsaw Signal*, Illinois State Historical Library.


The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints

Ronald K. Esplin

Traveling northward up the Mississippi from St. Louis 144 years ago, a river steamer passed dozens of small villages and a handful of emerging metropolises, each with dreams of commercial and economic success. While hardly carbon copies of each other, the river towns shared many features. Most had their wharf and warehouse and Water Street. Many had able, ambitious citizens and visionary leaders working for the future. Few had features not duplicated in another—if not in the next town upstream then in one after that.

Nauvoo in many ways resembled her river neighbors. Other river communities boasted a similar mix of shops and commerce—some had even greater variety. There were other Masonic halls and print shops and public inns. Though perhaps no one else had a "Seventies Hall," other cities had buildings that served similar community functions.

Nonetheless, long before tying up at the wharf on Nauvoo's Water Street, the riverboat traveler perceived something different as soon as Nauvoo appeared in sight. From several miles' distance, the passenger could see above the forest the tower of a building unlike any other on the river. Larger than the typical village church and of different design, it announced that here was a people somehow apart. And for those who knew the Mormons of Nauvoo, the building with its spire thrusting heavenward symbolized indeed how very much apart they stood.

The temple did not stand in 1839, of course. Even in 1844, the year Joseph Smith died, it was just emerging from view among the trees, and a half-dozen years

Ronald K. Esplin is director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
later it was gone. Yet from its beginning, it was the centerpiece of Nauvoo community and religious life, the focal point of Joseph Smith's religious mission. And it quickly assumed enormous meaning to those who looked back to Nauvoo for their religious heritage. Both before its completion and after its destruction, the Nauvoo Temple served to tie the Latter-day Saints to the City of Joseph and its unique religious significance. Though it functioned only a handful of months and stood only a handful of years, the Nauvoo Temple served then—and still serves today—as a powerful link between the Latter-day Saints and their religious roots.

Seeing Nauvoo through the eyes of Emmeline B. Wells and T. Edgar Lyon illustrates this vital link and the continuing impact of Nauvoo after its demise. Emmeline, a young teen in Nauvoo when the Prophet was killed, left for the West filled with memories of Joseph Smith and the temple. In Utah, years of intimate association and tutelage under Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Emma Smith's counselor in the Relief Society, deepened her understanding of the purpose and meaning of the Nauvoo Temple and the Nauvoo Female Relief Society. Decades later, as an octogenarian, she became general president of the Relief Society. In that station, Emmeline Wells shared with LDS women everywhere well into this century the Nauvoo women's experience. Until her service ended in 1921, she worked tirelessly to ensure we would not forget Nauvoo and what it meant.

For a later generation of Latter-day Saints, T. Edgar Lyon was "Mr. Nauvoo." Historian for Nauvoo Restoration, he walked its streets, searched its records, reconstructed its neighborhoods. No doubt his mind contained many images of Nauvoo. But for me, a student at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion in the 1960s, he resurrected a vibrant community focused on temple where religion had a daily impact on thought and action. It was a Temple City, the City of Joseph. Each month old timers in Salt Lake City's 20th Ward, where he grew up, made testimony meetings memorable by relating firsthand stories of Nauvoo, the temple, and Joseph the Prophet. These he brought to life for our generation.

Nauvoo was, and is, and will be important to Latter-day Saints because it was the City of Joseph. It was the city he built, where he lived and acted, where he died. Above all, it was the city where he fulfilled his religious mission, a mission intimately linked to the temple. In a very real sense, his other labors were prologue. Our cultural and religious roots are planted firmly in Nauvoo; it is to the City of Joseph—and the temple that he made the centerpiece—that we must turn to understand our religious heritage. That heritage includes economics and politics, the Red Brick Store and Masonic Hall, plural marriage and city building. But more than any other single thing, the focal point was the temple. In spite of his economic and political and military and civil involvements, Joseph Smith's mission and his legacy were religious: religious power, insight, teachings, and ritual. And that mission centered on the magnificent structure on the hill, never finished during his lifetime and demolished soon after his death, that dominated the religious landscape of Nauvoo just as it did the visual.

"I understand my mission and business," Joseph Smith declared from the pulpit in Nauvoo. No casual remark, this declaration bespoke a hard-won confidence that he at last comprehended fully what God expected of him. It had not always been
The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints

so. Between the Sacred Grove and Carthage stretched a difficult road as he endeavored to learn his duty. To understand what Nauvoo meant to him—and what he was trying to do there—we must go back.2

We can debate when Joseph Smith first conceived of or understood this principle or that possibility, or where he got the idea for this or the model for that. But what is not debatable in either historical or religious terms is that Joseph Smith, like other mortals, only gradually, “line upon line, precept upon precept,” comprehended what God expected of him and, more gradually still, found means to do it.3 If Joseph Smith in Nauvoo was confident, strong, and fully aware of his responsibilities, he started out, as acknowledged in later scripture, among the “weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised.”4

As a teen, “convicted” of his sins by powerful revivalist preachers, he went to the Sacred Grove, by his own earliest account, not desiring a call from God but seeking forgiveness. He emerged not with clear understanding of future prophethood but, at most, with some glimpse that the religious landscape would change and that he would play some role in it.

Not until visits with Moroni years later did he begin to sense what that role would be. It had something to do with ancient plates, he first learned, though he may have felt his duty was only to obtain them. Eventually he understood that he had both the responsibility and the gift to translate the record. He also learned that anything else must be future. “Pretend to no other gift... until my purpose is fulfilled in this,” he was told, “for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished.”5 This was not simply a matter of timing and priority but also of process: translating prepared Joseph Smith for further responsibility.

As Joseph Smith grew in understanding of his mission, revelation continually stressed something he had first learned from Moroni: all was conditional and depended upon his faithfulness. Chastisements and solemn warnings accompanied revealed instruction and promise, identifying these early years as ones when young Joseph struggled, learned from mistakes, and occasionally took his eye off the mark.

Scriptures preserve many solemn warnings to the young prophet. A person might have revelations and “power to do many mighty works,” read a revelation of July 1828, but if he “sets at naught” the counsels of God, he will fall.6 A similar warning several months later concluded with a promise, one that foreshadowed, even in 1829, what was to come in Nauvoo: if Joseph was faithful, “behold I grant unto you eternal life, even if you should be slain.”7

The April 6, 1830, organization of the Church brought to Joseph and Oliver Cowdery the responsibility to preside over the Church, “to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up,” in the words of scripture. Several weeks later, another revelation confirmed that, though he had formerly been called specifically to produce the Book of Mormon, his mission had now expanded. “Thou shalt devote all thy service in Zion,” he was told, “and in this thou shalt have strength.” This revelation also warned that “in temporal labors” he would not have strength, “for this is not thy calling.”8

Each step forward provided Joseph Smith an expanded view of what would be expected of him. With the Book of Mormon, priesthood restoration, the orga-
nization of the Church, and more, the process was the same: performance of duty today was a prerequisite for more complete understanding tomorrow. In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith looked back and described his growth and education during this early period. It came, he declared, through “the voice of God” and other messengers “at sundry times and in diverse places,” each “giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little.”9 This would continue until at least 1836, when experiences associated with the Kirtland Temple prepared the Prophet to more fully understand and complete what remained of his life’s work.

In New York in December 1830, revelation declared that the Saints should “assemble together at the Ohio.” And in January, an expansion of that instruction affirmed that the move to Ohio was essential so that a righteous people might “be gathered unto me,” for “there will I give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high”—the first intimations of Joseph Smith’s temple-related responsibilities.10

Once in Ohio, the blessings associated with the “gathering” and the temple, both foreshadowed in the New York revelations, unfolded only slowly. Indeed, learning and then implementing all aspects of his temple-related responsibilities became for Joseph Smith a central concern the entire last decade of his life, as we shall see. But in Kirtland he came to understand the essential relationship of gathering and temple to Zion and its power.

Even as Joseph Smith settled in at Kirtland, he knew that it was not to be the only gathering place. Though revelation commissioned Ohio as the place for “an endowment from on high,” Missouri, soon called Zion, would be the “center place.” By the spring of 1831, “the gathering of the Saints to Zion” was a major topic of discussion.11 Who would go to Missouri? When? To what specific part? What about Kirtland? That summer, at a special conference in Missouri, leaders designated the center place, dedicated a temple site, and began preparations for the Saints to gather. From this time forward, Missouri held special importance for Joseph Smith and his people.

As important as was Zion in Missouri, the vital “residue of the work . . . appointed,” to use the words of scripture, was in Kirtland. Without question, that “residue” included the temple. In September, as some Kirtland residents by assignment prepared to move to Missouri, the word of the Lord declared that Kirtland was to remain an important “strong hold” for five years. Only after that would all be free to leave for Zion.12 Why five years? Five years would see the temple dedicated and initial ordinances and revelatory experiences complete.

In Nauvoo, the Prophet taught publicly concepts related to Zion that he had clearly understood in Kirtland.13 The main object of gathering the people of God in any age of the world, Joseph Smith declared, “was to build unto the Lord an house whereby he could reveal unto his people the ordinances.”14 A fulness of priesthood power, of saving ordinances, and of instruction was impossible without a temple; a temple was impossible without gathering. Gathering and temple provided the foundation for Zion, for building a community bound together by God’s law and enjoying his power. It was this—not sword and gun but priesthood power through temple—that would “revolutionize the world.”15
If Joseph Smith did not understand priorities before, it was made perfectly clear in 1833. In May, Kirtland prepared to construct several important community buildings—one for the presidency, one for education, another for printing—each "wholly dedicated to the Lord from the foundation thereof." Then a June revelation chastened the leaders for not pressing forward with "the building of mine house" as a priority above all others. Though significant, the other buildings could not compare with the commandment to build a house in which, the Lord said, "I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high." After the revelation renewed the commandment, work on the temple began within a week.

Although by 1834 Joseph Smith understood priorities, hard lessons about "timetable" were still ahead: nothing would come as quickly or as easily as he might have hoped. Zion, he would learn, would be redeemed on the Lord's timetable, not man's, and even an understanding of order and priority did not reveal the timetable.

In 1833, enemies drove the Missouri Saints from their center place. Joseph Smith in 1834 led an armed band from Ohio in the hopes of reinstating the Saints on their Missouri lands. After considerable hardship, Zion's Camp, as it was called, disbanded before entering Jackson County. On June 22, before dismissing his men, Joseph Smith delivered, on the banks of the Fishing River, a pointed revelation. A later revelation suggested that even when the Saints do all in their power to fulfill God's commands, the timetable might be altered by the opposition of men. In this case, however, revelation declared that the Saints had not done enough. Because of transgressions, affirmed the revelation, "it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion." Nor could this occur "until mine elders are endowed with power from on high"—the priority again of the temple.

Though Zion must wait, Joseph Smith remained optimistic. Writing to Church leaders in Missouri two months later, he first reemphasized that the elders must "receive their endowment in Kirtland before the redemption of Zion." He then stated his belief that if the Church were united and made every possible effort, Zion might yet be redeemed in two years. For the next eighteen months, the Prophet directed all possible resources to complete the temple, with the firm idea of following that up with the "redemption" of Zion. But, as he would learn in the temple in May 1836, the Lord apparently had in mind a different timetable.

It is instructive to see the Prophet Joseph growing through all of this, expanding his knowledge of duty and mission. After expending much energy on Church organization before leaving Ohio with Zion's Camp in 1834, he apparently saw his work largely in organizational terms and judged his mission complete. But he returned with a different understanding.

"I supposed I had established this Church on a permanent foundation when I went to Missouri," he told the Quorum of the Twelve in 1835, "and indeed I did so, for if I had been taken away it would have been enough, but I yet live, and therefore God requires more at my hands." The additional requirements were temple-related. "There is one great deficiency or obstruction...that deprives us of greater blessings," he told the apostles on this occasion, and that is that they
must attend to certain "duties" in the temple. He fully understood by 1835 that his work could not be finished nor "the foundation of this Church complete and permanent" without temple-related powers, ordinances, and teachings.22

Apparently this came home to him with full power only at Fishing River in 1834. When he left for Missouri, he told the Twelve, he thought his mission complete. Two days after the Fishing River revelation, he did not. Cholera struck the camp June 24. Seventy men fell violently ill, Joseph among them, and fourteen died, hastily buried without coffins. "If my work were done," he told his brethren then, "you would have to put me in the ground without a coffin, too."23 That his work was not finished implied a promise that he would have time to see it through.

As the temple dedication neared in the spring of 1836, attention also turned again to Zion. Since the previous fall, Joseph had contemplated leading an enlarged Zion's Camp to help the Missouri Saints recover their Jackson County lands. In October, he had instructed the Twelve to prepare to move their families to Missouri in the spring. Now, March 13, a council of leaders concluded to emigrate on May 15 "if kind providence smiles upon us and opens the way before us."24 But it was not to be.

Before beginning ordinances in Kirtland, on March 29 the Prophet and several associates knelt "in the most holy place in the Lords house" to be taught by revelation "concerning our going to Zion, and other important matters." With the appointed day for emigrating fast approaching, he wanted confirmation of the plan. The voice of the Spirit said that if they would humble themselves, fasting and praying in the temple through the night, they would learn His will.25 Although the diary does not record the answer, the Prophet's instructions to the Twelve the next day, and his own actions thereafter, indicate that the answer removed his personal feeling of urgency about Zion.

It had been necessary to remain in Kirtland until endowed, Joseph affirmed on March 30, but the time was at hand when they could go forth empowered. Modifying the former instruction that the Twelve move to Missouri, he told them they were now "at liberty to go wheresoever they will," to Zion if they pleased, or elsewhere. The goal of redeeming Zion remained, but not the urgency.26

Joseph Smith also declared to those assembled that, in connection with the dedication of the temple and related ordinances, he had "now completed the organization of the church." And since those present had received all the necessary ordinances and instruction, he continued, they "were now at liberty... to go forth and build up the kingdom of God." Had Kirtland temple experiences ended here, the Prophet might have concluded that his work was done.27

There occurred the Sunday following one of the most significant events associated with the Kirtland Temple. After preliminaries, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery retreated behind lowered veils for "solemn and silent prayer." "The eyes of their understandings were opened," Joseph reported in his diary, and they saw Christ, acknowledging acceptance of the temple, and then in turn: Moses, with the keys of the gathering of Israel; Elias, with the keys of Abraham; and Elijah with vital keys of redemption and sealing.28 In 1829, Joseph and Oliver had received the first essential priesthood keys; here, in 1836, they received the last.
The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints

The April appearance of Elijah with additional temple-related keys opened the way for—indeed required—expanded temple ordinances. Implementing the ordinances suggested here and passing on the keys received would hereafter be among Joseph Smith's highest priorities.

The Prophet could not proceed immediately to discharge his additional responsibilities because the Saints were not yet prepared for further temple experiences. "All these things were to be done in their time, place, and season," George A. Smith later explained. With Kirtland temple ordinances, the Lord proceeded "with such great caution that, at all hazards, a few... might be able to understand and obey." Even so, some apostatized because there was too much, some because there was not enough, and "if the Lord had on that occasion revealed one single sentiment more... I believe He would have upset the whole of us."29 Before the Saints were ready for more, Joseph and others were forced to flee Kirtland, leaving the temple behind.

Though the Prophet, too, learned "line upon line, precept upon precept," at this point he was clearly well in advance of the Saints. The evidence suggests that he now understood, at least broadly, the full scope of his mission. His challenge changed from learning his duty to doing it—to preparing the people to receive the fulness and finding the proper time and place to proceed.

Given the nature of Joseph Smith's calling, it is not surprising that, one month following his arrival in Missouri in March 1838, revelation proclaimed Far West a gathering place and designated a temple site. The revelation required temple construction to begin without delay and that Far West be "built up speedily."30 No effort, however, could build the temple or the city rapidly enough. Violence first erupted in late summer. Fall saw the imprisonment of Joseph Smith and the Presidency, and during the winter of 1838-1839, the Saints were driven from Missouri. Once again obstacles prevented Joseph Smith from completing the indispensable temple-related aspects of his mission.

Joseph Smith's Missouri imprisonment, from November 1838 into April 1839, had a profound impact on his sense of urgency about completing his life's work. He had long been aware of and no doubt considered his own mortality many times as he contemplated his unfolding calling. But this was different. He had narrowly avoided death when first taken, and now "to all human appearance, could not be delivered" alive from his enemies—to borrow Brigham Young's phrase. In July 1838 he had declared: "All the world is threatening my life, but I regard it not, for I am willing to die any time when God calls for me."31 And now it appeared he would.

Despite his gloomy prospects, Joseph Smith and close associates shared in 1838 an assurance that God would protect him. Too much remained unfinished. Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail that, though their enemies seemed to have triumphed, "we most assuredly know, that their triumph will be but short, and that God will deliver us."32 Brigham Young, Heber Kimball, and Willard Richards, among others, claimed similar reassurance.33

Nevertheless, Joseph Smith did not emerge from Liberty Jail feeling invulnerable. Just as firmly as he believed he would be delivered, he apparently believed
that he would not live to see forty.\textsuperscript{34} While he had thought often of the possibility of death, it is probable that Liberty Jail brought for the first time a conviction that his allotted time was both fixed and short.

In jail, Joseph Smith had long days and weeks to contemplate these things and to review his labors. If he felt satisfaction in the progress through the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, he could only have felt frustration to note how little more of the essential had been accomplished in the nearly three years since. As he wrote from Liberty Jail in March 1839, "I never have had opportunity to give [the Saints] the plan that God has revealed to me."\textsuperscript{35} Pondering past problems, and perhaps his own performance, he concluded that "many things were introduced among the Saints, before God had signified the time,... notwithstanding the principles and the plans may have been good." Timing was important. The Saints must be prepared and God must approve before pressing forward again, but Joseph felt certain the time was near "when God will signify many things."\textsuperscript{36} Freed from prison in April 1839, Joseph Smith arrived among the Saints with an internal agenda, a sense of personal urgency, and a conviction that the city that became Nauvoo represented his last opportunity.

With this background, let's pause for a moment before we enter Nauvoo in 1839 to consider later assessments of what the Nauvoo experience meant. Historian Robert Flanders insightfully described Nauvoo as "the first full-scale model" of the kingdom of God as envisioned by Joseph Smith. Using a different metaphor, Richard Anderson described Joseph Smith's Nauvoo program as "a deliberate last will and testament of his work."\textsuperscript{37} In this view, Joseph Smith—propelled by premonitions of death—toiled in Nauvoo to complete, whatever the cost, the essential elements of his life's work. If Nauvoo was for Joseph Smith both his "first full-scale model" and his "last will and testament," then we must probe the meaning of Nauvoo in order to properly assess him and his life's work.

With little understanding of his sense of mission and purpose, critics then and now often measured Joseph Smith's Nauvoo performance by a set of expectations very different from his own. One modern observer, for example, after focusing on what might be called the Prophet's "secular" program, concluded that in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith "was losing control of many affairs, and perhaps of himself." This observer could not otherwise understand why the Prophet pushed certain things when reason should have dictated caution and suggested the probable disastrous results.\textsuperscript{38} From this perspective, Joseph Smith in Nauvoo was a flawed hero in a Greek tragedy moving inexorably to a fate that his own blind actions and imperfect character helped determine. Such an assessment fails to take into account the religious goals, insights, and understandings that influenced—almost compelled—so many Nauvoo decisions. It ignores the religiously based personal timetable and sense of urgency that prodded the Prophet in Nauvoo and ignores the perspective from which many of his closest associates evaluated the Nauvoo experience.

Clearly Joseph Smith's Nauvoo was complex. One can find much to criticize and much to admire. Given the Prophet's highly visible involvement in business and political affairs, it is tempting to look no further. But in a theocracy where
religious belief informed every aspect of life, he was clearly prophet-leader and spiritual mentor as well as political advisor and chief economic booster.

Joseph Fielding represents those who, focusing on the religious meanings, found pattern and purpose in Nauvoo events, even in the problematic ones. "My consolation," he wrote while still mourning the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum, is that they "had done all that they could have done and the Foundation of the great Work of the last Days was laid." For Fielding, these reflections "in a great measure took off the Edge of the Grief that I might else have felt, for I thought that [Joseph] had... fulfilled his own Purposes, and I felt willing to say amen to it." Though an eyewitness of some of the difficulties critics pointed to in criticizing Joseph Smith, for Joseph Fielding, the explanation was simple: "It seems as though the Lord had pushed things forward rather prematurely on account of the shortness of Joseph's Time."

Now that we have reviewed the Prophet's gradually developed self-understanding of mission, mortality, and personal timetable — especially as related to temple — we can better understand his Nauvoo "program." And we can see his death as did his closest associates — not as the consequence of misjudgment and events out of control but rather as the result of fearlessly pursuing the essential, regardless of the cost.

When Joseph Smith first entered old Commerce in the spring of 1839, the immediate need was not for a temple city but for refuge. Whatever his hopes, reality dictated that resources be used to regroup and to survive. So enormous was the challenge that, despite the Prophet's sense of urgency, the Saints had been in Nauvoo more than eighteen months before revelation authorized the construction of a temple.

During 1839–1840, Joseph Smith applied his energies to many projects important to him and to the Saints. He laid the foundations of a major city as a new gathering place. He also taught the Twelve many new principles, promising them that "God hath not revealed any thing to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve." Furthermore, he added, "even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them" — an allusion to temple.

But the lack of progress on critical temple-related responsibilities remained a concern. In July 1840, the Prophet spoke publicly of his dream of building in Nauvoo "as great a temple as Solomon did," adding emotionally that if it should be the will of God "that I might live to behold the temple completed... I will say, 'Oh, Lord, it is enough; let thy servant depart in peace.' " Joseph's reaction to a September 1840 father's blessing also demonstrates the internal tension he felt. During the deathbed blessing of his children, Father Smith promised that he would live to finish his work. According to his mother, Joseph, upon hearing this, cried out, weeping, "Oh! my father, shall I?" "Yes," said his father, "you shall live to lay out the plan of all the work which God has given you to do. This is my dying blessing upon your head in the name of Jesus... for it shall be fulfilled."

Though no doubt reassured by this promise, the sense of urgency remained; he could not shake the conviction that he must press ahead. The time was at hand to again emphasize temple.
In January 1841, Joseph received an important revelation. "I am well pleased with your offering and acknowledgements," it began, "for unto this end have I raised you up, that I might show forth my wisdom through the weak things of the earth." In Nauvoo, indeed since the Kirtland Temple, revelations acknowledged that Joseph "hath sincerely striven to do thy will," instead of the earlier chastisements and warnings. The Prophet's own statements in Nauvoo also reflect a growing confidence that he had done his duty and was acceptable to God.

"Your prayers are acceptable before me," the January 1841 revelation continued, "and in answer to them, I say unto you" proclaim the restored gospel to the world, establish Nauvoo as a cornerstone of Zion, gather the Saints, "and build a house to my name." A temple was imperative, "for there is not a place found on earth that he may come to restore again that which was lost... even the fulness of the priesthood." Further, the revelation defined this power, and the ordinances, revelation, and teachings "of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build" as the essential "foundation of Zion."45

The ceremonial laying of the cornerstones for the Nauvoo temple was the centerpiece of the April 1841 general conference. But substantial construction did not begin immediately, partly due to limited resources and competing priorities, and perhaps because the Twelve, who would become the temple's strongest supporters, were still in England. Upon their return, Joseph Smith called in August 1841 an "extraordinary conference." The time had come, he announced, for the Twelve "to stand in their place next to the First Presidency," and to assist, for the first time, in managing all the affairs of the Church.46 The "business of the church given to the 12"—Willard Richards's phrase—soon included directing resources for the temple.

In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith clearly felt tension between the sense of urgency to complete his work and the relative lack of preparation for the Saints to receive it. Though he had tried "for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God," he lamented in January 1844, many still "will fly to peaces like glass as soon as any thing Comes that is Contrary to their traditions. They cannot stand the fire at all."48 Throughout this period, he labored carefully to prepare the Saints for innovations and succeeded in introducing many. But in some cases he concluded to move ahead privately among those he felt would embrace new teachings, preserve them, and eventually deliver them to the Church.

In all of this, he was committed to doing what God required of him—his duty as he understood it—whatever the cost. "The object with me is to obey & teach others to obey God in just what he tells us to do," he taught several months before his death. "It mattereth not whether the principle is popular or unpopular. I will always maintain a true principle even if I Stand alone in it."49 Understanding that such religiously-based imperatives drove him, we can see purpose in Nauvoo decisions and actions that may otherwise seem unwise or premature. This applies, for example, to the introduction of plural marriage.

Inevitably plural marriage brought complications into the Prophet's life and into the Church, as he knew it would. No explanation for its introduction works as well as the simple one: he believed God required it of him and of the Saints.
Even so, he would not have introduced it then, given other priorities and the certainty of difficulties accompanying it, except that he believed God required it then. Though documentation about the precise nature of the imperative is inconclusive, with none from the Prophet himself, several witnesses claim that he moved forward in Nauvoo only after an angel declared he must act or his calling would be given to another. He saw it as a necessary use of the "sealing keys" so central to temple and as an essential part of the "restoration of all things." And when he did implement in Nauvoo a principle that he had understood for several years, he did so with full understanding of the probable costs. Brigham Young remembers him stating more than once that he was determined to press ahead though it would cost him his life, for "it is the work of God, and He has revealed this principle, and it is not my business to control or dictate it."51

Though perhaps less dangerous, moving ahead with his temple responsibilities presented the Prophet a no less difficult challenge. Progress on the structure itself was slow. That winter, after pondering the progress on the temple and renewed forebodings about his death, Joseph Smith made a momentous decision: he would complete, outside the temple, the responsibilities central to his mission. Fearing that construction might require more time than he had, he concluded that a set-apart upper room would have to substitute.52

Of necessity, without a temple, only a select few could receive, at first, the additional teachings and ordinances. But this approach offered the advantage that he could now proceed with the whole program even though not all the Saints were prepared. Those selected, he made clear, would be a vanguard, not an elite, receiving only "what will be made known to all the Saints...so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them," that is, the temple. The challenge remained of continuing to teach publicly as much as possible to prepare all the Saints—a task actually made more difficult by the inevitable rumors associated with private teachings.54 But there seemed no choice. In spite of problems, the work would be advancing again.

Progress, and the arrangement making it possible, provided Joseph Smith a satisfying freedom. Heber Kimball, one of the select group, understood: "Brother Joseph feels as well as I Ever see him," he wrote to Parley Pratt. "One reason is he has got a Small company, that he feels safe in thare hands. And that is not all, he can open his bosom to[o] and feel him Self safe."55

Throughout the winter and spring of 1842, the Prophet prepared for temple ordinances. Perhaps it was no coincidence that in March he published the book of Abraham, decided to permit the establishment of the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge, and helped organize the Nauvoo Female Relief Society. He may have seen these, along with important public discourses, as playing a role in preparing the Saints.

During this period, Joseph Smith spoke his mind freely to the newly organized Nauvoo Female Relief Society. Their record of his remarks provide a window from which to view him during this season of such importance to his mission. Especially revealing was the meeting of April 28, 1842. He now intended to "organize the Church in proper order," he told the assembled sisters, and that could not be done
unless the sisters, too, were properly organized under priesthood—something possible only in connection with the temple.56

On this occasion he also shared his premonitions. He would make use of this opportunity with them, he insisted, for he did not know as he should have many opportunities of teaching them... they would not long have him to instruct them—that the church would not have his instruction long, and the world would not be troubled with him a great while... he spoke of delivering the keys to this Society—and to the Church—that according to his prayers God had appointed him elsewhere.57

Sisters who had heard him three weeks earlier could not have missed his meaning. At the funeral of a young boy, he spoke solemnly of the pain he felt at the passing of his own brothers. Such losses are hard to bear, he said, and sometimes “I should have been more reconciled to have been called myself if it could have been the will of God.”

Some has supposed that Br. Joseph could not die but this is a mistake. It is true their has been times when I have had the promise of my life to accomplish such & such things, but having accomplished those things I have not at present any lease of my life & am as liable to die as other men.58

As he spoke, he was preparing for the moment, now only days away, when he would at last introduce the ordinances necessary to complete his mission and calling. In early May 1842, Joseph Smith instructed nine close associates in “the principles and order of the Priesthood.” This was the occasion of the first full temple ritual or endowment.59 Finally he was completing what he knew was required of him.

What was still lacking now the Prophet might have finished in a relatively short time—and apparently expected to—until realities beyond his control again intervened. Though we cannot here detail the obstacles,60 we can note that after this promising beginning, he did not return to complete what was begun here until the fall of 1843. In the meantime, as he readjusted his agenda to external realities, one thing remained constant. Knowing that he still had not completed his mission, he again felt a promise of protection until he could.61

Another constant throughout this period was work on the temple. Though it was not finished sufficiently for ordinance work during the Prophet's lifetime, he continually reminded the Saints of its importance, and of the promised blessings available to all within.

In September 1843, Joseph Smith returned to the ordinance work begun in the spring of 1842. By December and January, a number of men and women had received temple ordinances at the hands of the Prophet. Before the Prophet's death, approximately seventy men and women received these ordinances under his direction. By January 1844, nine members of the Quorum of the Twelve, along with some others, had also received the “fulness of the Priesthood” ordinances, essentially completing the Prophet's temple-related agenda.62 At last the stage was set for Joseph Smith's final essential duty.

In the last months of his life, Joseph Smith met frequently with the Twelve and with others who had received temple ordinances, teaching them more fully of
temple-related powers, responsibilities, and related doctrine. He also further instructed the Twelve about the importance of finishing the temple.

The climax came in an extraordinary council in late March involving the Quorum of the Twelve and others. Though dozens of reminiscent accounts comment on the council, the Twelve prepared the most detailed account soon after the Prophet's death. According to that account, "depressed in Spirit," Joseph Smith opened his heart "concerning his presentiments of the future."

Brethren, the Lord bids me hasten the work in which we are engaged. ... Some important Scene is near to take place. It may be that my enemies will kill me, and in case they should, and the Keys and power which rest on me not be imparted to you, they will be lost from the Earth; but if I can only succeed in placing them upon your heads, then let me fall a victim to murderous hands if God will suffer it, and I can go with satisfaction, knowing that my work is done, and the foundation laid on which the kingdom of God is to be reared.

He then rolled the burden of the kingdom onto their shoulders, "for the Lord is going to let me rest a while." That done, he declared: "I feel that I am free. I thank my God for this deliverance." As part of this "final charge" to the Twelve, as the apostles later called this council, Joseph Smith conferred "the keys of the sealing power" received from Elijah in 1836, upon Brigham Young, President of the Twelve. The Prophet could now declare "that he had conferred upon [them] every key and every power that he ever held himself before God." His life's work was complete.

In the April conference before his death, the Prophet testified to the Saints that, far from being, as some charged, "a fallen prophet," he had never been "in any nearer relationship to God than at the present time." A few weeks later, on the eve of his departure for Carthage, George Laub heard him speak for the last time: "The enemy is seeking my life and are laying plans to kill me, but if they kill me they kill an Innocent man. ... But I have laid the foundation of the work of what the Lord has given me to do, therefore have no longer leas of my life. I have accomplished my work that was given me & others can build on the same." The keys, the ordinances, the patterns, the teachings, and the temple: everything was in place. To echo Joseph Fielding, now we see why the Lord "pushed things forward rather prematurely on account of the shortness of Joseph's time." As Brigham Young reminded the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley as they broke ground for a temple that would continue what the Prophet had begun in Nauvoo, though "the enemy had power to kill our Prophet... did he not accomplish all that was in his heart to accomplish in his day? He did, to my certain knowledge... he had prepared the way.

And that is why today, though one hundred and fifty years have passed, Latter-day Saints continue to look back to the City of Joseph—to Nauvoo, its temple, and its prophet-leader—for many of the roots of their religious heritage.

NOTES


7. D&C 5:21–22; see also verses 31–35. One month later the Lord told Joseph and Oliver that enemies "can do no more unto you than unto me" (see D&C 6:29–30), that is, take their lives, and even if they did, "you shall dwell with me in glory." Such foreshadowings, coupled with later threats against his life, brought the Prophet to face the risks and accept them long before Carthage.


12. D&C 64:21–22. For the context, see Smith, History of the Church, 1:211.

13. For information on the principles taught in Kirtland, and reactions to them, see Ronald K. Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership, 1830–1841" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1981), chapter 5: "The Kirtland Experience: Diverse Perceptions of the Sacral Kingdom, 1835–1837."


16. D&C 94:3–12; see also Smith, History of the Church, 1:342, 349.


18. D&C 124:49–51. The wording suggests that this applied to the prolonged effort of the Saints in Missouri from 1831 on, but for the years up to 1833, apparently the fault lay more with the Saints. See, for example, D&C 101:1–10.


21. In 1831, as the Saints first learned of Missouri as the "center place," the Lord made clear that "ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter," adding that Zion would be redeemed only "after much tribulation" (D&C 58:3).

22. Diary of Joseph Smith, 12 November 1835, Church Archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives.

23. Smith, History of the Church, 2:114. After the Fishing River Revelation, Joseph Smith felt so strongly about the priority of the temple that he severely reproved the apostles when reports suggested they had inappropriately emphasized redeeming Zion more than temple during their summer mission in the East the following year. See Smith, History of the Church, 2:230–40; Esplin, "Emergence of Brigham Young," pp. 166–67, 213.

24. Diary of Joseph Smith, 13 March 1836; see also 24 September 1835, and 5 and 29 October 1835.


26. Diary of Joseph Smith, 30 March 1836; Jessee, Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, pp. 182–83. For the goal or promise relating to Zion, see D&C 101:16–17, 20.
The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints

27. Diary of Joseph Smith, 30 March 1836; Jessee, Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, pp. 182-83.

28. Diary of Joseph Smith, 3 April 1836; Jessee, Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, pp. 186-87; this is the original for what is now D&C 110.


30. D&C 115:5-12, 17. This also reaffirms Joseph Smith's essential role in both the construction of the temple "according to the pattern which I shall show" and as the one holding "the keys of this kingdom and ministry." See verses 14-16, 19.


32. Joseph Smith to the Church, 16 December 1838, later printed in Times and Seasons 1 (April 1840): 83; see also his account written after deliverance, Times and Seasons 1 (November 1839):7-8.

33. See Esplin, "Emergence of Brigham Young," p. 359 n. 73.

34. Upon learning of the Prophet's death in 1844, Lyman Wight, cell-mate with Joseph Smith in Missouri, informed Wilford Woodruff "that Joseph told him while they were in Joal [jail] that he should not live to see forty years but told him not to reveal it until he was dead." Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 28 July 1844, 2:432. Such a presentiment helps account for numerous Joseph Smith statements in Nauvoo about impending death. See Richard L. Anderson, "Joseph Smith's Prophecies of Martyrdom," The Eighth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, 26 January 1980 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1980), pp. 1-14.


40. D&C 124 (19 January 1841). Contrast this with Far West, where a temple was announced the month following the Prophet's arrival.

41. Comments of Joseph Smith, 27 June 1839, Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, p. 4.


43. Lucy Smith, Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet... (Liverpool & London: 1853), p. 267.

44. D&C 109:68. See also Section 132:53, 57.

45. D&C 124:1-3, 25-28, 34, 39-44. For any concerned that the temple should instead be built in Jackson County, verses 49-51 explain why, given the circumstances, the Lord would "require that work no more" at the present.


47. Diary of Willard Richards, 16 August 1841, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.


51. Brigham Young Discourse, 8 October 1866, Brigham Young Papers.
52. The year previous to this, Joseph Smith had begun temple-related baptisms for the dead without a temple. D&C 124:28–35 authorizes such baptisms (“which belongeth to my house”) outside the temple under certain circumstances. Though not his preference, the Prophet now extended this model to include other ordinances. Before the completion of the St. George Temple in 1877, temple ordinances in early Utah likewise were performed outside temples, first in dedicated rooms, then in a building erected for the purpose.

53. Smith, History of the Church, 5:2. Compare this with the Prophet’s public teaching of some temple-related principles, 16 July 1843, followed by the declaration “that he could not reveal the fulness of these things until the Temple is completed.” Ehat and Cook, Writings of Joseph Smith, p. 233.


55. Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, 17 June 1842, Parley Pratt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

56. Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, 28 April 1842, LDS Church Archives.

57. Ibid.


60. Difficulties with John C. Bennett erupted less than ten days after the first endowments. His excommunication for moral failings prompted a public “expose” of, among other things, supposed temple-related ritual, making it difficult to continue and, for a season, diverting attention and resources. In addition to the always heavy demands upon him as father, city-father (replacing John C. Bennett as mayor of Nauvoo), and spiritual head of his people, there were also unusual demands such as time spent in hiding to avoid Missouri enemies and, on one occasion, capture and escape. That some of those closest to the Prophet were not prepared in 1842 to receive the ordinances also influenced the timetable.

61. Statements to that effect can be found throughout this period. To the newly organized Relief Society he shared his feelings that “inasmuch as the Lord Almighty has preserved me until today, [He] will continue to preserve me until I fully accomplished my mission in this life.” (Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society, 31 August 1842.) In January 1843, he announced that he understood his mission and with God as his shield “I shall not be Sacrificed until my time Comes then I shall be offered freely.” (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 22 January 1843, 2:217.) “I defy all the world, and I prophecy they never will overthrow me till I get ready,” he declared later that year. (Diary of Joseph Smith kept by Willard Richards, 15 October 1843, Joseph Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives.) “I cannot lie down until my work is finished,” he said in the Spring of 1844, followed the next month by the declaration that “God will always protect me until my mission is fulfilled.” (Times and Seasons 5 (15 August 1844):617 and Thomas Bullock Minutes, 12 May 1844, LDS Church Archives.)


64. Undated Certificate of the Twelve, fall or winter, 1844–1845, Brigham Young Papers. For another version, see Orson Hyde, “Rigdon Trial Minutes,” Times and Seasons 5 (15 September 1844): 651.

65. Undated Certificate of the Twelve, Brigham Young Papers.


The Mormon History Association is grateful to Obert C. and Grace A. Tanner for funding the Tanner Lectures on Mormon History. Mr. Tanner has given the Association an endowment, from which the interest will be used each year to pay for the annual Tanner lecture.
The Social Hall, Salt Lake City, Utah, about 1920

THE SOCIAL HALL.
BUILT BY BRIGHAM YOUNG IN 1852.
FOR A THEATRE, BALL ROOM AND BANQUET HALL.
CHURCH COUNCILS, POLITICAL CONVENTIONS, TERRITORIAL LEGISLATURES AND U.S. DISTRICT COURTS HAVE OCCUPIED THIS BUILDING. IN TIMES OF EARLY TIMES IT STANDS AS A MONUMENT TO THE ENTERPRISE AND SOCIAL SPIRIT OF THE MORMON PIONEERS.

Explanatory plaque on the Social Hall, about 1922
Learning to Play:  
The Mormon Way and  
the Way of Other Americans  

R. Laurence Moore  

"My son," says the Christian father, "you should not attend a theatre, for there the wicked assemble; nor a ball room, for there the wicked assemble; you should not be found playing a ball, for the sinner does that."

Brigham Young, in commencing a defense of theater, March 6, 1862  

Americans, like people in any time and place, have always found ways to amuse themselves. Social historians have virtually demolished the notion that a universal internalization of the Protestant work ethic explains the rise of the American nation. Colonial Virginians were too lazy to work even when their lives literally depended on more rigorously disciplined labor. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artisans, apparently everywhere, came to work as much to drink and to socialize as to get anything done. And the fabled sobriety of New England Puritans controlled but did not obliterate their interest in sensual pleasures and in games. The Protestant ethic, as Max Weber demonstrated with such brilliance, represented an effort to establish steady labor habits in people who had none. The strategies developed by its proponents were intentionally repressive—and, given what had to be done, they were enormously effective. Nonetheless, we should not imagine that very many

R. Laurence Moore, a professor of history at Cornell University, is the author of *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*. This article is an expanded version of the Tanner Lecture he delivered to the Mormon History Association in 1989.
Americans ever regarded work as everything. Even Benjamin Franklin managed to prepare himself for Paris.

Having recognized that the demand for recreation is a historical constant, a constancy easy to spot after the regularized clock time associated with industrialization set work hours distinctly apart from other hours of the day, we must still recognize that play had a tough time turning itself into something fully legitimate in the United States. I want to focus on certain components of that struggle for legitimacy in the middle part of the nineteenth century. And I will begin by pointing to two seemingly antithetical religious attitudes toward the subject of play. The first is a dour message that was printed in 1851 in a Congregationalist publication, *The New Englander*: "Let our readers, one and all, remember that we are sent into the world, not for sport and amusement, but for labor; not to enjoy and please ourselves, but to serve and glorify God, and be useful to our fellow men. That is the great object and end of life." The second is from the records of a Mormon mother recalling a Utah Christmas in 1850: "On this day I went to Brigham's mill to a Christmas party. Stayed all night. We had a first-rate supper at midnight. I helped to get in on the table. They danced all night until five o'clock in the morning the party broke up."

I assume that the contrast needs no extended comment. But there is an irony that ought to be noted. Mormons are not highly regarded for their fun-loving qualities, at least among the "gentiles" whom I know. Skiers from the East Coast learn to identify Mormons by what they shun—alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, sex outside of marriage. These contemporaries identify Mormonism with the sort of Puritanism parodied by H. L. Mencken—the haunting fear that someone, somewhere may be happy. Lest we attribute this judgment solely to ignorance, we ought to remember that David Brion Davis, in one of the most important articles ever written about the nineteenth-century Mormon experience, saw the ghosts of John Winthrop and Cotton Mather pushing handcarts to the Great Salt Basin. "Mormonism," he wrote, "was a link in the Puritan tradition, asserting a close and personal God, providential history, predestination, and ideal theocracy, the importance of a Christian calling, and a Church of Saints."

How did Mormons, these latter-day Puritans, manage to "legitimate" ideas of pleasurable entertainment in the first half of the nineteenth century, an era when many—perhaps most—other Christian ministers viewed fiction suspiciously, identified the theater with the brothel, and looked with horror at evening parties that included dancing? And why has this Mormon pioneering in the realm of popular culture been largely forgotten, even with the contemporary contributions of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the Osmond family singers, and J. Willard Marriott. Elsewhere, I have risked writing in an interpretative way about the Mormon experience. I do not plan to do much more of that. To add anything would probably only confuse whatever I got right and repeat with embellishment whatever I got wrong. On the other hand, with respect to my current research on the interplay between religion and commercial popular culture, the Mormon experience has once again opened up a lot of questions for me.

Let me remind you of some things that are, in a comparative sense, quite
remarkable. While the Mormons were gathered in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith supported a theater as a medium of instruction and organized a dramatic company. Brigham Young, one of the original Mormon thespians, went further. Already by 1850, he had mobilized the Salt Lake City Saints to build an amusement resort north of the city near warm springs. Also, a social hall was dedicated on the first day of the new year, 1853. This housed theatrical performances, musical programs, and social dances. And, most wondrously, he ordered the construction of the famous Salt Lake Theater, which was completed in 1862. It seated 1,500 people, was as well equipped as any theater in the United States, and mounted a set of serious and comic plays that was probably unmatched by any company west of the Mississippi. This was eight years before the railroad reached Utah, and several months before the Temple was finished or the Tabernacle started.

What's more, revelers and theater-goers in Salt Lake City did things that Brigham Young did not wholly endorse. Sponsors of parties occasionally permitted a set or two of "round dances," polkas and waltzes that brought young bodies into dangerously close proximity.7 Young's original troupe of amateur "actors," a company that included one of his daughters, successfully wrested professional status from their reluctant leader. They also ignored, within reason, Young's dislike of tragedies, and they found ways around his ban against the depiction of violence onstage. I do not mean to suggest that Mormon entertainments were permissive. Quite the contrary. But they were advanced, as judged by the standards of most other church-going Protestants in mid-nineteenth-century America. Brigham Young had developed, in fact, what we might call an "ideology" of play at a time when most other American clerics still thought of play as the devil's invention.

Young did grow sensitive to his reputation as a man who liked to dance. In a reply to critics who had noted that Utah Mormons amused and enjoyed themselves a great deal, and who further suggested that entertainment must be part of their religion, Young issued a disclaimer: "Dancing and theatrical performances were no part of our religion." The Social Hall in Salt Lake City existed as a "fun hall," not as a place where it was appropriate to administer the sacrament.8 However, in one vital sense the disclaimer was wrong, or at least governed by another one of Young's favorite refrains: "Our work, our every-day labor, our whole lives are within the scope of our religion."9

Recreation could be distinguished from temple ritual, but as everything else that the Lord permitted as essential to human happiness, Mormon play was not something apart from Mormon service to God. Mormons could safely go to the theater because the stage, in Young's words, "can be made to aid the pulpit in impressing upon the minds of the community an enlightened sense of a virtuous life, also a proper honor of the enormity of sin and a just dread of its consequences."10 The confidence that lay behind that statement, the fact that not only the theater but a full range of entertainments had been incorporated into daily routines sponsored and encouraged by the Mormon hierarchy, remained in the 1860s one of the most distinctive things about the Mormon Church.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. Many other Protestant ministers were, by the middle of the nineteenth century, working their way toward a justification of
play. Yet, prior to 1850, their progress had not been rapid, and it is worth trying to understand why. To say that they had moral objections to most commercial forms of popular entertainment is true, but it is not a sufficient explanation of their often strident condemnation. If it were, then logically clerics could have developed an appreciation for leisureed pleasures only by becoming men of looser morals than their forebears. Doubtlessly some did just that. However, for most of them, play could be justified only when it could be safely construed as rigorously moral. And that required some rethinking and a reconstruction of strategies of how best to impress religious values upon people who no longer found the church, as a simple spatial matter, at the center of their everyday activities.

Every student of antebellum American culture has been impressed with the tremendous amount of prescriptive literature that was written with the intent of regulating and restraining behavior. The many advice books, written in particular for young men and young women, covered habits of diet, sex, sleep, reading, and work. The substantive part of what was good and proper to do could have been conveyed in a short list, even though it usually wasn't: Serve God; avoid passion and excess; be disciplined and temperate; stay busy in useful pursuits. The fulfillment of these primary duties entailed more and more a trained capacity to resist and avoid newly invented temptations. Almost everything that we associate with the emergence of popular commercial culture in the first half of the nineteenth century was either to be shunned altogether or approached with the utmost caution. The Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, in the days before his own tastes for leisureed pleasures were fully developed, rendered a typical list of proscribed amusements. No shooting matches; no taverns; no reading of novels, newspapers, and almanacs; no drinking, gambling, smoking, or swearing; no theater-going; no card-playing or dancing; no attendance at balls, race tracks, or circuses. As for anything suggesting the life of a sexual libertine, Beecher wrote severely that had he a son of such tendencies, he would wish him in his grave. "The plague is mercy, the cholera is love, the deadliest fever is refreshment to man's body, in comparison with this epitome and essence of moral disease."11

Beecher counseled the "common duties" rather than the habits of "reverie and mental romancing" (the imagination itself was a "wild pleasure").12 And the safe exercise of those duties was restricted to the havens of church, work, and family. Both Charles Dickens and Frances Trollope fled from the United States as a joyless society, and insofar as very many young men heeded all of Beecher's advice, it most certainly was.13 As one champion of common laborers, Mike Walsh, complained at mid-century: "The gloomy, churlish, money-worshipping, all-pervading spirit of the age has swept all the poetry of life out of the poor man's sphere.... Ballad singing, street dancing, tumbling, public games, all are either prohibited or discountenanced, so that Fourth of July and election sports alone remain."14 And even the rowdy fun associated with those latter activities was contested.

To be sure, the moral norms for behavior that we find in prescriptive literature written by Protestant clerics, by medical doctors, and by other champions of ordered domesticity are scarcely novel to the first part of the nineteenth century. Horse-
racing, drinking, gambling, and theater-going had never at any point in the American past been regarded as activities that sustained Christian virtue. On the other hand, what deserves notice in the antebellum period are the vigorous efforts to tighten the norms, to render them more stringent, without any convincing evidence that ordinary people had suddenly started sinning with greater exuberance. We are talking, after all, about an era when temperance came to mean not a moderate use of spirits, as had once befitted even religious meetings, but total avoidance; when the biblical commandment against adultery was interpreted to mean not a fidelity to one’s spouse but a virtual celibacy within the married state; when a religious people who had long practiced “bundling” as a way of staying warm on a cold night were told that dancing was a dangerously lascivious activity; and when the habit of reading, so long encouraged by Protestants, seemed suddenly to encounter Protestant objections that before would have suggested a Papist plot to keep books out of the hands of the people.

To say that antebellum American Protestants were suffering from a crisis of confidence is a safe and uncontroversial way to begin our analysis. But the observation has become so conventional that we often forget just how much they had to worry about. The American nation had been explicitly founded on principles of novelty. That bit of self-understanding was in part mythic, for no group of socially organized people exists without some foundation in collective experience that has spawned customs and traditions. Nonetheless, the very act of writing a Constitution signified that the American framework of government had no precedents among European governments. The uncertainties about whether it could work explain why virtually all Americans in public life agreed, by the end of the 1790s, that the future of their nation depended upon order and unity, that these societal requirements were in turn tied to public morality and virtue, and that the health of these depended on preserving and promoting the religious sentiments of American citizens. The Founding Fathers may have been Deists in private, but in the foxholes that they dug to fight the first political battles of the young nation, they became commonplace Christians.

The potential problems were formidable. The United States, although heavily agrarian in the first decades of the nineteenth century, was undergoing the first stages of industrialization and urbanization that had already transformed some parts of Europe. People poured into the country from abroad, and even more people moved around the country—from areas of older settlement to new communities on the frontier and, in a sort of reverse frontierism, from farms into cities. Between 1820 and 1850, those parts of the United States with the densest concentrations of population witnessed a revolution in the organization of work places and of the household, spatial changes that destroyed older forms of social cohesion and of social control. By mid-century, one could speak of distinct social classes in the United States: the very rich who behaved with more self-restraint than was commonly associated with wealth, Victorian middle classes who had organized themselves explicitly on rules of conduct that linked work and religion, and a large class of laborers who worked for wages, some of them as steadily as economic conditions permitted, others with as little effort as was necessary to meet their
need for food and shelter. African-American slaves were an additional affront to egalitarian ideals.

From a detached perspective, the whole enterprise of maintaining order was tenuous indeed. The moral imperatives stressed in middle class prescriptive literature were given energy and urgency because no one, it seemed, had adequate power to enforce norms. The nation had disestablished religion and placed the churches on a voluntary basis. The hope that the absence of a state church would put an end to the destructive tendencies of religious bickerings went unfulfilled. Despite important examples of interdenominational cooperation, the trend was toward religious division, even angry division. Well before the Civil War so decisively proved just how many things Americans would never resolve peacefully, Latter-day Saints and Catholics had tested with their blood the limits of free religious practice in the United States.

Fears raised about the religious fragmentation of the nation were heightened by a phenomenon that was universally conceded both then and now—the lessened public authority of the clergy. By 1850, their power to conduct church trials as a way of controlling families and communities had disappeared. They had become the hired hands of their congregations, and their tenure in office by the middle of the nineteenth century was less certain than it had been a hundred years earlier. Most Protestants were still prepared to let their ministers say anything they wanted on Sundays, but their influence over their congregations ended with the last word of their sermons. The middle classes whose female members most reliably attended churches and who saw to it that their children internalized the principles of evangelical religion built a wall of separation not so much between church and state as between church and home. After the 1820s, ministers found themselves with less and less legal authority to enforce sabbatarian legislation, to regulate the moral conditions of their communities, and to specify the conditions of work and play.

It is against this background that their resistance to new commercialized forms of leisure must be understood. The problem faced by Protestant clerics was really no different than that faced by other officials and professionals who aspired to maintain the cultural hegemony of their values. The world was becoming more impersonal. In the cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, even in the smaller towns of New England and of upstate New York, men and women who had once known one another, perhaps not intimately but by reputation, merged into nameless crowds. People lived in relatively close proximity, but their numbers had created a density that altered the consequences of that nearness. Even people who had the forums to address crowds and congregations directly, who could try to impart to them in old-fashioned ways a sense of common civic responsibilities, often did not know the people in their audiences. Audiences did exist. Antebellum Americans attended lectures to be informed, instructed, and entertained. But their relation to those who instructed them or made them laugh was usually one of anonymity. The problem of how to impose order and morality on anonymous masses was daunting, and one can appreciate why the first reflex, and one that was long sustained, was a search for ways to tighten the standards of correct behavior. That move prejudiced almost all forms of diversion.
Learning to Play

It won't do to call the reaction blind conservatism. The social progressives of the antebellum period worried the most about declining morality. As historical situations go, the rate of social change was unprecedented and seemed to spring from powerful technologies that were immune to moral control. For example, cheaper ways to manufacture paper, stereotype printing, and the steam-powered press were revolutionizing habits of reading, a development with important implications for the use of leisure time. The apparently insatiable demand for relatively new kinds of reading material (the novel, especially the serialized novel; the penny newspaper; the jumbo story newspaper; the illustrated periodical such as *Godey's Ladies Book*) signified not merely that more people were reading regularly. People were also reading more randomly and with less reverence than before. The choice of what they read was exclusively in their hands. And reading became a private activity rather than one mediated by oral discourse in public places.

For moralists, the problem occasioned by the availability of cheap reading material, which in this context needs to be viewed as an invitation to play, was not simply one of ensuring proper didactic content. Most of the print material sold in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century had little in it that was morally objectionable. Even sensational tales that graphically described the seamy underside of urban life stretched but did not destroy the boundaries of conventional moral discourse. What was bothersome was the uncertainty of what people, especially women, made of reading material, even wholesome reading material, in the privacy of their boudoirs. The Protestant encouragement given to the private study of the Bible had formerly applied in a world where Protestants heard the Bible authoritatively interpreted weekly or even daily. But there were no fully enforceable authoritative guides to diverse reading material in the nineteenth century. In this situation, the danger of reading increased in direct proportion to its power to provoke or stimulate the imagination.

The Protestant response to cultural change was in many instances bold enough. However, in the period before the Civil War, a Protestant minister found it extremely difficult to mention the word “amusement” or “entertainment” or “leisure” in a favorable way without immediately proceeding to link that to what was “rational” and “useful” and “serviceable to God.” To suggest that one could do something “light” and “diverting” because one was tired and wanted to give one’s mind a rest from “serious” subjects represented to them an impossible confusion of concepts. Understandably, accommodation to the times was often managed by allowing the right hand to ignore what the left hand was doing. Ministers continued to proscribe in their public statements some forms of play that they were clearly allowing in their own homes. This is not as hypocritical as it might sound. A novel read by a minister’s daughter in the living room of the rectory was much healthier than the same novel read elsewhere in secret. Censorship, as always, had as much to do with the place as with content.

This last point suggests why Protestant aversion was so stubbornly maintained in sermons and in denominational literature with respect to attendance at the theater and at balls. Unlike the saloon, or the race track, or any place where gambling was common, theatrical performances and balls began to gain moral-minded de-
fenders in the first part of the nineteenth century. Their point of view was a hard one to counter. They noted that the plots of nineteenth-century melodramas regularly punished vice and rewarded virtue. And they argued that the literary genius of William Shakespeare, who was the most popular playwright among all social classes in antebellum America, was tied to his moral genius. Likewise, they reasoned, the artistically patterned forms of dance that dominated social behavior at fancy balls posed no problems to conventional morality. Balls did not have to be, nor were they always, gaudy displays of extravagant taste. Men and women managed to dance and socialize without any observable immodesty or lustfulness.

I would suggest that clerical opposition to balls and the theater persisted, despite the defenders, and perhaps grew stronger between 1820 and 1850, because ministers feared a deception that could not easily be detected in the changed environment of a rapidly expanding and urbanizing America. To notice only what was ostensibly going on in places of amusement was to miss the danger. It was the atmosphere of the theater, not the play itself (however much stage acting itself was an example of deception) that corrupted. It was the unspoken understandings of the ballroom, not the formal elegance of the dance, that perverted. In both theater and ballroom, the formal rules of propriety concealed the expectation of seduction. In such situations, order was precariously balanced. In the theater, in fact, it constantly broke down as expressions of disapproval broke into fights, even riots. In the ballroom, the polite decorum that governed the manifest interaction between the sexes was more covertly subverted. The fundamental moral objection grew from the fear that in most public urban spaces, behavior could not reliably be controlled. That was because public surveillance no longer carried the authority of a morally unified community.

Significantly, when many theaters proved they could effectively regulate the actions of their patrons, when they at least got rid of the prostitutes in the “third tier” and could boast of audiences composed of husbands and wives and sometimes children, clerical hostility lessened. True, the process of “censuring” theatrical audiences drove many patrons out of the “opera house” toward pleasures that clerics had reason to regard as far worse. Nonetheless, various other experiments in urban planning had helped ease the fears clerics had of urban spaces that drew crowds together for purposes other than work.

Perhaps no single thing was more important in this respect than the design and construction of Central Park in New York City. It in turn encouraged the landscaping of countless green acres in cities across the nation. The grand vision of Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmstead, which was accepted by the government of New York City in 1858, on the one hand institutionalized the display of leisure and pleasure. Central Park was a place for all social classes to mingle and to escape the hectic pace of the city that would one day enclose it. On the other hand, the ideal of the park was “rational” recreation, the passive enjoyment of a quiet, natural setting that, according to Reverend H. W. Bellows, induced orderly and contemplative habits. “It has been observed,” he noted, “that rude, noisy fellows, after entering ... the park become hushed, moderate, and careful.”

For a long time, and for obvious reasons, team sports were banned from
American parks. The idea of using architecture to control public pastimes, as a way of sacralizing leisure for some purpose higher than mere enjoyment, was through the rest of the nineteenth century a standard way to judge the success or failure of the design of any large project. The same criteria that were used to sponsor the park movement (in the words of Andrew Jackson Downing, to “soften and humanize the rude, educate and enlighten the ignorant”) were applied to the great Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893. This project, brought together under the genius of Daniel Burnham, was finally, over many objections, opened to the public on Sundays, in large part so that “our mind-hungry, beauty-starved, ignorant, but eagerly ambitious masses could best make use of its civilizing and uplifting ministrations.”

We are, however, getting ahead of ourselves.

Possibly Protestant clerical accommodation to the proliferation of leisure or play opportunities, following the argument that leisure could be made effectively Christian, might have happened sooner and with less anxiety had it not been for the accelerated arrival of German and Irish Catholics into northeastern cities beginning in the 1840s. The German newcomers, with the evident pleasure that they took in beer gardens, their relish of sports, and their enthusiasm for street festivals, posed a problem. The easy conscience that accompanied these pleasures struck many American-born Protestants as un-Christian; but since Germans usually pursued leisure as a family enterprise, it was hard to make out a clear case of unwholesomeness.

Fortunately for the Protestant conscience, the pleasures of the Irish were easier to condemn. Everything the Irish did smacked of the unsavory. Their leisure activities seemed to revolve around rituals of drinking, especially dangerous in the Irish case because it was feared that drinking was an end in itself rather than a way of refreshing the body for a renewed round of disciplined work. Catholics were blamed for introducing permissiveness into American society, and Protestant clergy in the 1850s reacted by redoubling their vigilance and their opposition to most forms of urban entertainment. Catholics represented the full range of threats that they associated with industrializing society. There might be safe ways to play, as some parts of their experience were persuasively demonstrating. However, there were new things to fear, new reasons to suspect popular pastimes that defied their effective control.

At this point, we can recognize the clear advantage that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young had over most other American Christians. They had much less to fear in the matter of leisure because they retained effective control over what happened when Mormons socialized with other Mormons. In a gathered community, where the line between public and private was indistinctly drawn, public behavior was not protected by anonymity. It was not that the rationale used by Young to justify dancing and theater-going in Salt Lake City was unknown to other American Protestants. Frederic Sawyer, for example, in a book he published in 1847, *A Plea for Amusements*, urged it upon them: “Our amusements can never be made as healthy, and as useful, as they are capable of being made, until the religious portion of the community assumes their true position toward them. . . . If
libraries, and reading rooms, and gymnasiums, and galleries of art, and halls of science, and parties, and dancing, and museums and theatres, are to be made useful, it must be through the agency, and under the fostering care, and regulating hand, of the wise, the prudent, and the good. Religion must enter the common life and cease to be gloomy." However, from the standpoint of many ministers, Sawyer and others who shared his opinion were simply underestimating the difficulties of what they advocated.

The fact that most American Protestants did not live in gathered communities seemed to limit severely what the churches could in fact sponsor and control. Arguably, the Catholic Church worried less about the moral behavior of urban immigrants, not because the Church was indulgent toward immorality, but because American urban Catholics lived in closely bonded, ethnic neighborhoods. Proximity had traditionally been the best form of social control. But for Protestants who no longer lived in the neighborhood of their churches, the impersonality that resulted from urbanization was a potential disaster and a cause for constant worry. They too had shown little concern over drinking when church trials still intervened in the family life of communities and when masters and artisans had lived together under the same roof. Leisure became a different sort of problem when privacy turned legislative prohibition into the only possible sort of control. And that control was unreliable, given the large profits to be made from the commercial entertainments of the nineteenth century.

As it happened, American Protestants had more experience with sponsored entertainments and with the control of anonymous crowd behavior than might be imagined from reading their lamentations. As sponsors of the revivals that had so successfully brought antebellum Americans under the sway of churches, they were in fact cultural innovators. Antebellum revivalist ministers have been given credit for many things, not all of them positive. However, two achievements are frequently overlooked. They were our first, and perhaps in their present-day successors our best, crowd psychologists, at least in the practical sense of knowing how to stir a crowd while at the same time controlling their behavior. And they engineered the first successful experiments in showing that a religious meeting could be both a devotional worship of God and a pleasure-filled social event.

At the beginning of a nineteenth century, of course, no one justified revivals as social events. People might gather for religious meetings in the wilderness for as long as a week. They might camp out in tents, stay up all night, and give license to their emotions in ways that were unthinkable in other situations. The people who came merely to watch and to scoff might have regarded the "riotous" behavior as entertainment. But for the pious, revivalism was serious business. And for those who organized the revivals, the emphasis was upon control and order. A revival meeting became as rule bound as a regular church service.

Critics, of course, viewed the measures taken to ensure order as insufficient. The problem of regulation caused many denominational leaders, especially Presbyterians, to restrain their enthusiasm for revivals; and most revivals after 1820, in response to criticism, were conducted in urban areas under the strict sponsorship of organized churches. Only the Methodists continued to emphasize camp meetings...
Learning to Play

in the wilderness or in rural locations. But those Methodist camp meetings, which go a long way to explain the rising popularity of Methodism in antebellum America, managed in the same process of development to regularize religious enthusiasm and to sponsor religious renewal under conditions that seemed very much like those we now associate with vacations.

Ellen Weiss, in a splendid book on a Methodist camp meeting that was founded on Martha's Vineyard in 1835, has suggested how it happened. Her example, known as Wesleyan Grove, grew from a campground laid out for the temporary erection of tents into a thirty-four-acre compound of 500 permanent cottages, many of them architectural gems, and the overall layout of the community was carefully plotted. Since the site happened to command a magnificent ocean view, it inevitably tied those who came to worship there into activities of recreation. By 1867, Wesleyan Grove was closely linked to a neighboring community that was developed quite explicitly as a summer resort. Ocean Bluff had a board walk and, until it burned to the ground in 1892, one of the best-equipped resort hotels in the country.

Such a frank combining of religious revivalism with sea-bathing, bands, and commercialism would not have been countenanced by any Protestant denomination in the antebellum period. But the Reverend B. W. Gorham, who had written a manual for organizing a camp meeting in 1854, was reaching toward a religious justification of leisure. The camp meetings, he said, were successful because they called "God's people away from their worldly business and cares for several successive days, thereby securing time for the mind to disentangle itself of worldly care, and rise to an undistracted contemplation of spiritual realities." That is not yet copy for a travel agent's brochure, but it is an important step in that direction. Gorham found the divine justification he needed in the Jewish feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles—great festivals, he said, that proved "that there is an element in man which demands occasional excitement," a break from routine and above all a rest from labor.

Not every Protestant observer saw in the Methodist innovations either proper religion or, alternatively, much that invited pure pleasure. Andrew Dickson White, the first president of Cornell and a man with strict standards of propriety, was not taken by scenes at Oak Bluff. He was repulsed by the sight of young people roller skating with arms around each other to a waltz version of "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Charles Dudley Warner, an American writer who co-authored with Mark Twain The Gilded Age, judged what he saw of the bathing frolics of Wesleyan Grove residents as "the staid dissipation of a serious minded people.... Most of the faces are of a grave, severe type, plain and good, of the sort of people ready to die for a notion." Yet for Protestants who did not live in gathered communities, the institution of a summer retreat that temporarily joined religion and leisure was a significant innovation. Methodists built another famous vacation retreat at Ocean Grove on the Jersey shore. Its annual reports covered all the concerns of a settled community—transportation, sewage disposal, parks, street repair, police and fire departments, and bathing houses. It was a Protestant genius of sorts that discovered so close a parallel between the enhancement of property values and the enhancement of religious values.
If it was not feasible to gather saints for the entire year, perhaps two weeks at
the beach might restore Christians in their normal enthusiasm for work and moral
discipline and leave them immune for the rest of the year to the siren call of
"wicked assemblies." Christian camps at least provided a context where Protestant
moralists imagined for the first time in industrializing America that it was all right
to do absolutely nothing. This was indeed a pathbreaking thought. As we have seen,
Protestants in their tentative efforts to embrace leisure moved forward most boldly
when they could assign leisure a productive or useful purpose that made it the
moral equivalent of work. Reading history or biography, helping a neighbor put
up jam, writing instructive letters to one's children—these had always been un-
problematic Protestant pleasures. But to lie on the beach and let the mind go blank
and forget responsibilities—once it had seemed that only Satan would encourage
such behavior.

The Chautauqua Association, which was organized in the 1870s, stayed more
carefully within the boundaries of utility. At least at the outset, its purpose was to
combine recreation with a fixed program of mental training for Sunday School
teachers of all denominations. Chautauqua also began under the sponsorship of
Methodists—John Vincent, who was later to become a bishop in the church, and
Lewis Miller, a wealthy Methodist layperson. Vincent wanted to carve from a splendid
natural setting a human space where people would feel no break between the
sacred and the secular, would sense no tension between the religious and the
worldly. "Every day," he said, "should be sacred.... There should be no break
between sabbaths. The cable of divine motion should stretch through seven
days.... Kitchen work, farm work, shop work, as well as school work, are divine."25

One might say that this notion was what had always stood at the heart of the
Protestant Reformation. It held that the Catholic Church had corrupted the practices
of the first Christians by ritualizing an unscriptural separation between the sacred
and the profane. In doing so, the Church had forced men and women to depend
on its institutionalized power to dispense God's grace. Catholics had obligations
to partake of the sacraments, their regular but interrupted connection to the sacred,
and spent the rest of their time becoming corrupted by the worldly. Protestants
had rejected this sort of cyclical movement between the secular and the sacred
and had insisted on linear moral progression through a world where Christians
recognized God's steady judgment in everything they did. Certainly New England's
first Protestants had to an extraordinary degree treated space and time as uniform.
However, a changed society in the nineteenth century forced the re-creation of
that ideal, not in the everyday lives of Protestant Christians, where sacred and
secular too often seemed distinct, but in a retreat that gave them the leisure to
remember a world of more harmonious meanings.

The original Chautauqua Sunday School Institutes lasted for two weeks and
were organized around lessons, sermons, devotional meetings, and such recreations
as concerts, fireworks, bonfires, humorous lectures, and music in all forms. The
"Department of Entertainment" was not peripheral to the enterprise but essential.
Vincent insisted: "Away with the heresy that man is stepping aside from his legitimate
work as a Christian minister when he is trying to turn all secular nature into an
altar for the glory of God.26 Once this was said by way of justification, the possible range of material to nurture the skills of Sunday School teachers expanded enormously. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, which was launched in 1878, aimed to promote valuable reading of all sorts. Every year, people who had in their homes stuck with a correspondence course in reading, journeyed to the now-famous lake in western New York for “Recognition Day,” “the great day of the annual gathering.”27 The ceremony to honor them took place in the “Hall in the Grove,” an open-sided structure that permitted the participants to look beyond the busts of Plato, Socrates, Homer, Virgil, Goethe, and Shakespeare, which lined the space, to the splendor of their wooded setting.

By the turn of the century, those who visited Chautauqua to hear lectures by Distinguished Preachers, College Presidents, Authors and Editors, Leaders in Social Reform, Political Leaders, and Distinguished Foreigners (as well as to play golf and tennis) were no longer primarily Sunday School teachers. One can argue that what had begun as an attempt to reunite the secular under the sponsorship of the religious had become merely secular, thus confirming what some Protestant clergy still feared as the corrupting allure of play. Perhaps that was so, but there is a counter-argument. The growth of Chautauqua’s popularity, which was evidenced in part by the spread of imitative institutions around the country, served the original vision of its founders quite well. It was one of the ways Protestant piety transcribed itself into other cultural forms and maintained religion as an important element in American public life.

The trouble with Chautauqua from the standpoint of its founders was not that it surrendered to the secular world but that it could reach, affect, and change the habits of only those people who were already safely and securely Protestant. It succeeded to the degree that it could establish a temporary community of face-to-face relations between people who did not initially know one another. On the other hand, through a process of self-selection, they were already very much alike when they arrived at Lake Chautauqua. Establishing friendly accords when nothing was demanded of the relationship was easy. The experience served to reassure middle-class Protestants that back home they could use environmental planning to adjust to new patterns of life. They could engineer playtime as part of their lives without endangering their souls. Chautauqua, however, was not a spiritual answer to impersonal social distance that diverse Americans in urban areas normally set between themselves in their everyday affairs.

Another institution, in the long run perhaps more important than Chautauqua, helped legitimate the idea of the Protestant-sponsored play among urban populations. This was the YMCA, a movement that began in England and organized its first American branches in Boston and New York City in the early 1850s.28 The controlling or voting members of YMCA chapters formed in the nineteenth century were men who belonged to evangelical Protestant churches. That excluded Unitarians, Universalists, and, of course, Mormons. However, the YMCA movement sought to serve all young men, including those who were not church members or regular attenders of any religious meeting. Once again, the question was how.

By the end of the nineteenth century, local “Y” chapters had tried any number
of means, most of them more successful among young men of the middle class
than among factory workers or common laborers. In Chicago, the “Y” was domi-
nated by one of its first members, Dwight Moody. As the most famous revival
preacher of his time, Moody tended to stick with the old notions that the best way
to deal with sinners was to preach to them and to organize Bible study programs.
In other cities, the original emphasis upon religious meetings grew less pro-
nounced. Almost always led by lay persons rather than clergy, many YMCA locals
sought more indirect ways to exert influence, ways that paid less attention to dramatic
conversion experiences and more attention to the unconscious influences that Hor-
ace Bushnell had said were essential to successful “Christian Nurture.” The goal
was to attract young men into a Christian environment, an association that promoted
affective ties among its members through Christian patterns of work and play.

More and more, the lure was sports that were at first cautiously and then
enthusiastically promoted under the rubric of Muscular Christianity. What most
YMCA locals learned to promote was the idea “that physical exercise in all forms can
become a mighty factor in the development of the highest type of Christian
character.”29 Insofar as athletics instilled obedience, self-discipline, self-sacrifice,
honor, and truth, they were a useful surrogate for church attendance until the latter
habit could be developed. The cause of Christian sports, of course, benefited from
plausible associations made between them and work. Both encouraged the same
virtues and left the body too exhausted to cause trouble for the soul.

The first YMCA gymnasiums were constructed in 1869 in New York City (the
homebase of the moral crusader, Anthony Comstock) and in San Francisco. Gym-
nastic training had already established itself as necessary to the proper formation
of young men and women in the city. The German Turnvereine had done much
to popularize the idea, but it independently established itself in colleges and elite
boarding schools. Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and Williams were among the many
American colleges to have constructed gymnasiums by the end of the 1850s. And
Dio Lewis had in 1861 in Boston opened the first normal school to train teachers
of physical education.30

The gymnasiums associated with the YMCA movement were part of a general
trend, but they greatly expanded the number of gymnastic and sports facilities that
were available to the young men who comprised the general public. By 1900, there
were approximately fifteen hundred local YMCA chapters in the United States. The
Association counted 507 Gymnasiums and 294 paid directors. To train those di-
rectors, the YMCA had founded in 1894 a college in Springfield, Massachusetts,
with an innovative Physical Education Department. The president of Springfield
College, Laurence Doggett, likened physical education directors to “medical mis-
sionaries in foreign lands—to extend Christ’s Kingdom among young men.”31 How
many souls were eventually won by these missionaries is uncertain. But they did
invent two sports that we might liken to the “new” measures introduced by revival
preachers in the first part of the nineteenth century—basketball in 1891 and vol-
leyball in 1894.

“New” measures always have their critics, and the innovations sponsored by
the YMCA movement were no exception. Even more strongly than with the Chau-
tauqua movement, the ministers of many Protestant churches wondered whether they should cooperate with a movement that they feared was compromising with forces that, if not directly imimical to religion, certainly diluted popular interest in regular churches. If sports were so good for the soul, then it followed that Protestant churches should look favorably on sporting events held on Sunday. And that, for a long time, they were not prepared to do.

It was, of course, predictable that the sponsors of the YMCA would have their troubles with many leaders of Protestant denominations. To play was one thing. Letting play crowd out everything that resembled religious devotion was another. Moreover, it seemed fair to ask how local YMCA chapters could guarantee a Christian environment when their facilities were open to virtually anyone and when people passed in and out of their doors without hearing so much as a prayer. The national YMCA convention was able as late as 1913 to reaffirm that its supreme aim was to lead boys and men to become disciples of Christ, pointing them toward church membership. It also, and this provision did not change until the 1930s, continued to limit voting rights to members who also belonged to evangelical churches.

However, if the original sponsorship of gymnasiums was largely intended to find something to substitute for formal religious services, that emphasis was more likely to grow stronger rather than weaker. In any case, that is what happened. The fate of the YMCA bureaucracy in the twentieth century was to develop a professional paid staff who were less noted for their Christian commitment than for their talents in providing well-run facilities to people who paid a fee. In the 1920s, the national YMCA found itself caught in a debate about whether to participate in the newly formed Community Chest. At stake was an issue of identification. To join was arguably to remove the YMCA from the Protestant church network and move it into the world of more general charitable and social services.32

The cultural meaning of these developments, and many others like them, remains elusive. By the first decade of the twentieth century, most Protestants had learned to play, but not simply because their religious values had proved a poor defense against the pleasures of commercialized popular culture. We treat Protestant church-goers with too little respect if we imagine that they had learned to play merely by learning to devalue a clear conscience. Rather, they had learned to think of play as virtuous. The connection between play and virtue had not been a natural one to make, nor one that was possible with all forms of play. Many things simply got out of hand. Thomas Edison, the inventor of both the phonograph and important processes that made the movies possible, hated the thought that what he created would become mere amusements rather than means to promote education in the schools and business efficiency.33 Things did not go the way Edison had wished. Nonetheless, most Protestant clerics, however much they had kicked and screamed, had learned, or thought they had learned, that all forms of mass media can effectively carry a moral message. They had also learned that organized leisure did not necessarily create unwholesome environments. Wholesome environments in fact created wholesome leisure.

Standards varied, of course. The strictest Protestant denominations still deplore
many forms of popular entertainments—dancing, the theater, the movies—and discipline members who defy religious censorship. All Protestant denominations, with varying degrees of rigor, discourage drinking. Moreover, even the most indulgent and liberal clerics on the subject of commercial entertainments have not stopped worrying. They have pledged themselves to determined efforts to insure moral wholesomeness in all public activities associated with recreation. Until very recently, the various censorship boards that have been formed in this country to combat immorality in books, in theatrical productions, in movies, in television programming have had the strong support of Protestant clergy.

This brings us back to the Mormons and their largely forgotten pioneering efforts to legitimate many forms of entertainment once banned as inappropriate for a Christian people. This historical amnesia is ironic since, as we have seen, American Protestants worked initially toward a more liberal position with respect to play by trying to follow the Mormon example. That is, they sponsored leisure in places specially designed to create a Christian atmosphere, thus trying to bring new forms of recreation within the boundaries of religious life. These experiments worked after a fashion, and they have been continued. No sizable church in the country is without its recreation facilities and its sponsored social activities.

What changed was not so much the Mormons or the significance of what they had done. It was the context for judging their success in maintaining play as something inextricably connected to religious life that had changed. Most Protestant denominations have long since abandoned the hope of duplicating the interconnected environment that Mormons maintain at least in the basin of the Salt Lake. In the twentieth century, if not before, it was clear that they could not, despite feverish and often effective activity, fully control what they had begun to permit. This failure, as well as the impossibility of recovering a credible voice to condemn, was reinterpreted as a great liberation by many twentieth-century Americans who had now learned to legitimate both work and play in ways that no longer concerned themselves with religious controversy. To those Americans, the gathered community of the Latter-day Saints, which had once sheltered what other Protestants regarded as dangerously permissive activities, began to look restrictive, even repressive. In this way, as in so many others, the rebellious, oppositional force of nineteenth-century Mormon culture has been transformed, by a trick that only passing time can perform, into something very like its opposite. Whether this means that the rest of the country has caught up with the Latter-day Saints and gone beyond, or is still lagging behind, is a dispute that prudent historians don't try to settle.

NOTES


6. In addition to Skidmore, see Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (New York, 1985); George D. Pyper, The Romance of an Old Playhouse (Salt Lake City, 1928); Myrtle E. Henderson, A History of the Theatre in Salt Lake City from 1850-1870 (Evans, 1934); John S. Lindsay, The Mormons and the Theatre (Salt Lake City, 1905).


11. Henry Ward Beecher, Lectures to Young Men, on Various Important Subjects (Salem, 1846) p. 122 and passim.


13. Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation (London, 1842); Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (London, 1832), esp. chapters 8, 11, 15.


22. Gorham, Camp Meeting, p. 32.


27. Vincent, Chautauqua Movement, p. 79.


30. Fred Eugene Leonard, A Guide to the History of Physical Education (Philadelphia, 1923); C.


Mormon History Association Endowment Fund

The Mormon History Association invites contributions to a special endowment fund to further the Association's goal of promoting the understanding of Mormon history and scholarly research and publication in the field. Tax-deductible donations to the fund are invested in a trust fund established at Zion's First National Bank in Salt Lake City. Interest from the account helps defray publication costs of the *Journal of Mormon History*. For further information, contact Susan L. Fales, executive secretary of MHA.
Future Conferences of MHA

The 1991 conference will be held in Claremont, California, from May 30 to June 2 in commemoration of Mormon arrivals in California coincident with the gold rush. Paper proposals are due on or before August 12, 1990, to Paul M. Edwards, Program Committee Chair, P.O. Box 456, Independence MO 64051.

The 1992 conference will be held in St. George, Utah.

The 1993 conference will be held in Lamoni, Iowa.
Officers of the Mormon History Association, 1989-90

President: Carol Cornwall Madsen, Salt Lake City, Utah
President-elect: Richard P. Howard, Independence, Missouri
Executive Secretary: Susan L. Fales, Brigham Young University

Council Members
Sherilyn Bennion (1990), Humboldt State University
Grant Underwood (1990), Claremont, California
Eugene England (1991), Provo, Utah
M. Guy Bishop (1991), Los Angeles County Museum
Paul L. Anderson (1992), Salt Lake City, Utah
Mario De Pillis (1992), University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Stanley Kimball (immediate past president), Southern Illinois University

Awards Committee
Howard C. Searle, Chair

MHA Newsletter
Jessie L. Embry, Editor

Nominating Committee
Richard Sadler, Chair

Committee on Adjunct Sessions
M. Guy Bishop, Chair

Membership Committee
Stephen L. Eccles, Chair

Archives
Jeffrey O. Johnson