## Table of Contents

### CONTENTS

#### ARTICLES

- "The Mormon Hierarchy and the MX" *Jacob W. Olmstead*, 1
- "What E'er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part: John Allan's Albany Crescent Stone" *Matthew O. Richardson*, 31
- "A Mormon Bigfoot: David Patten's Cain and the Concept of Evil in LDS Folklore" *Matthew Bowman*, 62
- "Howard and Martha Coray: Chroniclers of the Words and Life of the Prophet Joseph Smith" *Elizabeth Ann Anderson*, 83
- "In Harmony? Perceptions of Mormonism in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania" *Stanley James Thayne*, 114
- "The Spirit of the Place": The Clifford Family and the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm *Susan L. Fales*, 152

#### REVIEWS

- Richard Lyman Bushman. *On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author's Diary* Gary James Bergera, 195
- Hugh Nibley and Alex Nibley. *Sergeant Nibley PhD: Memories of an Unlikely Screaming Eagle* Robert M. Hogge, 204

---

This full issue is available in Journal of Mormon History: [https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/mormonhistory/vol33/iss3/1](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/mormonhistory/vol33/iss3/1)
--Sweetwater Rescue: The Willie and Martin Handcart Story Michael Van Wagenen, 227

--Pioneer Memorial Museum Samplers and Carol Holindrake Nielson, The Salt Lake City 14th Ward Album Quilt, 1857: Stories of the Relief Society Women and Their Quilt Lavina Fielding Anderson, 231


--Violet T. Kimball. Stories of Young Pioneers: In Their Own Words. Joe Geisner, 246

--Violet T. Kimball. Stories of Young Pioneers: In Their Own Words Neal Chandler, 248

BOOK NOTICES

--R. Kent Tipton. Kid Posse and the Phantom Robber, 255

--William A. Morton. From Plowboy to Prophet: Being a Short History of Joseph Smith for Children, 256

--Dory J. Peters. The Warrior's Code, 256

--R. Wayne Shute. Under a Bright Samoan Sun: Stories of the Remarkable History of the Church in Samoa, 257

--Bruce E. Dana. Glad Tidings near Cumorah: Firsthand Accounts of Sacred Places, Angelic Visitations, and Ancient Relics, 258

--Steven L. Olsen. The Mormon Ideology of Place: Cosmic Symbolism of the City of Zion, 1830–1846, 259

--John H. Groner. Anytime, Anywhere, 260

--Werner Klein. Under the Eye of the Shepherd, 261


--Hartt Wixom, Critiquing the Critics of Joseph Smith, 263

--Claudia Lauper Bushman and Richard Lyman Bushman. Building the Kingdom: A History of the Mormons in America, 264


--Gary Topping, ed. Great Salt Lake: An Anthology, 266

--Carol Cornwall Madsen and Cherry B. Silver, eds., New Scholarship on Latter-day Saint Women in the Twentieth Century, 268

--Fred C. Collier, The Nauvoo High Council Minute Books of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 270

--Fragments of Experience: [Sixth Book] from the Faith-Promising Series, 270


This full issue is available in Journal of Mormon History: https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/mormonhistory/vol33/iss3/1
CONTENTS

Staff of the Journal of Mormon History

Editor: Lavina Fielding Anderson
Executive Committee: Lavina Fielding Anderson, Sherilyn Cox Bennion, Breck England, G. Kevin Jones, Jennifer L. Lund, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kahlile B. Mehr, Patricia Lyn Scott
Editorial Staff: Elizabeth Ann Anderson, Robert Briggs, Barry C. Cleveland, Linda Wilcox DeSimone, John S. Dinger, Sherman Feher, John Hatch, Scarlett M. Lindsay, Linda Lindstrom, Craig Livingston, H. Michael Marquardt, Murphy S. Mathews, Stephen R. Moss, Jerilyn Wakefield
Editorial Manager: Patricia Lyn Scott
Book Review Editor: Tom Kimball
Assistant Review Editor: Linda Wilcox DeSimone
Indexer: Marjorie Newton
Designer: Warren Archer

Board of Editors
Polly Aird, Seattle, Washington
Douglas D. Alder, St. George, Utah
Todd Compton, Cupertino, California
Ken Driggs, Decatur, Georgia
Paul M. Edwards, Independence, Missouri
B. Carmon Hardy, Orange, California
Janet Burton Seegmiller, Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah
John C. Thomas, BYU—Idaho, Rexburg, Idaho

The Journal of Mormon History is published three times a year by the Mormon History Association, 581 S. 630 East, Orem, UT 84097, 1-888-642-3678, {klarry@comcast.net}. It is distributed to members upon payment of annual dues: regular membership: $35; joint/spouse membership: $45; emeritus/retired membership: $30; student membership: $20; institutional membership: $45; sustaining membership: $100; patron membership: $500. For subscriptions outside the United States, please add $10 for postage, in U.S. currency, VISA, or Mastercard. Single copies $15. Prices on back issues vary; contact Larry and Alene King, executive directors, at the address above. Also a fully digitized copy of all back issues up through 2003 is available on DVD for $40. Contact the Kings or order online at www.mhahome.org.

The Journal of Mormon History exists to foster scholarly research and publication in the field of Mormon history. Manuscripts dealing with all aspects of Mormon history are welcome, including twentieth-century history, regional and local history, folklore, historiography, women’s history, and ethnic/minorities history. First consideration will be given to those that make a strong contribution to knowledge through new interpretations and/or new information. The Board of Editors will also consider the paper’s general interest, accuracy, level of interpretation, and literary quality. The Journal does not consider reprints or simultaneous submissions.

Papers for consideration must be submitted in triplicate, with the text typed and double-spaced, including all quotations. Authors should follow the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition (the Journal’s style guide is available on the Mormon History Association’s website [www.mhahome.org]) and be prepared to submit accepted manuscripts on computer diskette, IBM-PC format preferred. Send manuscripts to the Journal of Mormon History, P.O. Box 581068, Salt Lake City, UT 84158-1068.
CONTENTS

ARTICLES

The Mormon Hierarchy and the MX  Jacob W. Olmstead  1

What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part: John Allan’s Albany Crescent Stone  Matthew O. Richardson  31

A Mormon Bigfoot: David Patten’s Cain and the Concept of Evil in LDS Folklore  Matthew Bowman  62

Howard and Martha Coray: Chroniclers of the Words and Life of the Prophet Joseph Smith  Elizabeth Ann Anderson  83

In Harmony? Perceptions of Mormonism in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania  Stanley James Thayne  114

“The Spirit of the Place”: The Clifford Family and the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm  Susan L. Fales  152

REVIEWS

Todd M. Kerstetter. God’s Country, Uncle Sam’s Land: Faith and Conflict in the American West  C. Bríd Nicholson  187


Edward L. Kimball. Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball  D. Michael Quinn  193
CONTENTS

Richard Lyman Bushman. On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author’s Diary  Gary James Bergera  195

Hugh Nibley and Alex Nibley. Sergeant Nibley PhD: Memories of an Unlikely Screaming Eagle  Robert M. Hogge  204


William Whitridge Hatch. When Push Came to Shove: Mormon Martyrs in an Unrelenting Bible Belt, 1831–1923  Jad Allen Mills  212


John W. Welch, with Erick B. Carlson, eds. Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844  Daniel P. Dwyer  224

Sweetwater Rescue: The Willie and Martin Handcart Story  Michael Van Wagenen  227

Pioneer Memorial Museum Samplers and Carol Holindrake Nielson, The Salt Lake City 14th Ward Album Quilt, 1857: Stories of the Relief Society Women and Their Quilt  Lavina Fielding Anderson  231

The Journal of Mormon History

Violet T. Kimball. *Stories of Young Pioneers: In Their Own Words.*

Joe Geisner 246

Violet T. Kimball. *Stories of Young Pioneers: In Their Own Words*

Neal Chandler 248

BOOK NOTICES

R. Kent Tipton. *Kid Posse and the Phantom Robber* 255

William A. Morton. *From Plowboy to Prophet: Being a Short History of Joseph Smith for Children* 256


R. Wayne Shute. *Under a Bright Samoan Sun: Stories of the Remarkable History of the Church in Samoa* 257

Bruce E. Dana. *Glad Tidings near Cumorah: Firsthand Accounts of Sacred Places, Angelic Visitations, and Ancient Relics* 258

Steven L. Olsen. *The Mormon Ideology of Place: Cosmic Symbolism of the City of Zion, 1830–1846* 259

John H. Gronerg. *Anytime, Anywhere* 260

Werner Klein. *Under the Eye of the Shepherd* 261


Hartt Wixom, *Critiquing the Critics of Joseph Smith* 263

Claudia Lauper Bushman and Richard Lyman Bushman. *Building the Kingdom: A History of the Mormons in America* 264

W. Jeffrey Narsh with Jennifer Johnson and Celeste Pittman.
CONTENTS

The Eyewitness History of the Church. Volume 1: The Restoration, 1800–1833 265

Gary Topping, ed. Great Salt Lake: An Anthology 266

Carol Cornwall Madsen and Cherry B. Silver, eds., New Scholarship on Latter-day Saint Women in the Twentieth Century 268

Fred C. Collier, The Nauvoo High Council Minute Books of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 270

Fragments of Experience: [Sixth Book] from the Faith-Promising Series 270


comp. note: There will have to be a blank verso after this page unless we condense the TOC to end on a recto. In earlier corrections I had set Jad Allen Mills Book Notice twice. Now, we have five extra pages (already counting the ads. Does it never stop? Say at 283 pp.? pretty please. But Oh! & Wo! Those blank three!
ON MAY 5, 1981, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a strongly worded statement opposing the construction of a massive base for the MX (Missile Experimental) missile system in the western Utah and eastern Nevada deserts.\(^1\) Proposed by the Carter administration in the fall of 1979, the base proposed to house 200 newly developed MX missiles. A new and frightening breed of nuclear weaponry, the MX missile, containing ten nuclear warheads, was designed to carry five times the destructive power of the Minuteman III, then America’s most deadly nuclear weapon. According to the proposal, the base would contain 9,000 miles of “racetrack” on which the missiles could be constantly moved among 4,200 protective shelters from which the missiles could be launched. The multiple protective shelters (MPS) basing scheme was estimated by some to be the largest construction project undertaken by man, requiring, as a conservative estimate, $54 billion to build, with other estimates ranging as high as $100 billion. The MX/MPS’s goal, as proposed by the Carter administration, was to discourage the Soviet Union from launching a

---

JACOB B. OLMSTEAD (Jacob.Olmstead@tcu.edu) is a doctoral student in American history and book review editor for *Mormon Historical Studies*. He thanks Edward L. Kimball and Brian Q. Cannon.

\(^1\)At the time Spencer W. Kimball was president, with Marion G. Romney and N. Eldon Tanner serving as his counselors.
first strike while adhering to nuclear arms agreements. Although Carter claimed the MPS basing was necessary to strengthen the land portion of America’s strategic triad, which included water-, air- and land-based nuclear weapons to deter the Soviets, he argued it was affordable and would have a minimal impact on the environment. Shortly after the announcement, many special interest groups found the president’s arguments unconvincing and began an effective and broad-based campaign to squelch the MX/MPS project and prevent it from coming to Utah and Nevada.

Not surprisingly, many individuals and organizations attempted to draw the Church into the debate because they believed the regional protest against the MX/MPS would succeed only if it obtained the support of the Church, whose membership represented significant percentages of the populations of both Utah and Nevada. Church opposition, however, did not come readily. Some believed that the Church’s belated opposition, publicly announced more than eighteen months after Carter’s proposal, indicated that Church leaders were squeamish about taking a position on a subject which appeared overtly political, particularly one with overwhelming conservative support. Since 1981, few studies have attempted to deduce why and how the Church decided to oppose the MX/MPS, primarily due to a lack of source material. Although many individuals interacted with members of the Church’s hierarchy over the basing of the MX in Utah and Nevada, few have recounted or published their experiences. Because of this lack of documentation, the widely published experiences of anti-MX advocate Edwin B. Firmage, a Constitutional attorney at the University of Utah Law School, and his perceived role in the preparations of the First Presidency’s statement have dominated the historical discussion of the Church and the MX.3

Drawing largely on oral history interviews, this article surpasses

---


3 The three most extensive discussions offering insights into the development of the First Presidency’s MX/MPS stance are based largely on interviews with Firmage: Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency*
previous works based solely upon the experiences of Firmage by attempting a more detailed reconstruction of how the First Presidency’s statement developed within the Church’s highest quorums. Moreover, this narrative corrects many misconceptions regarding who was involved in developing the statement, who authored the statement, and why. Perhaps its most significant contribution is that it provides a glimpse into the processes by which the Mormon hierarchy created political policies in the late twentieth century.

Before the Carter administration announced that the Great Basin was the targeted construction zone for the MX system, Air Force officials contacted the First Presidency as part of their campaign to generate favorable opinions among local constituencies that would offset the foreseen socioeconomic and environmental impact that MX/MPS basing would have on the region. The Air Force also worked to build support for the base by courting Utah’s and Nevada’s congressional delegations, local authorities, and local chambers of commerce during the summer and fall of 1979. Naturally, obtaining the support of the First Presidency and, by extrapolation, the 2.1 mil-
lion Mormons who lived in Utah and Nevada, would help ensure sufficient local approval for the Air Force’s plans to deploy the MX in the Great Basin.4

On March 28, 1979, a small group of high-ranking Air Force personnel met with the First Presidency. The group included General Thomas P. Stafford, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff; General Guy L. Hecker, the leading public relations figure for the MX; General John J. Murphy, commanding general of Ogden Air Logistics Center; and civilian Richard G. McKenzie, Murphy’s executive assistant.5 Through Arthur Haycock, President Kimball’s personal secretary, McKenzie, a Mormon, had arranged for this meeting attended by the Air Force personnel and the members of the First Presidency only. The Air Force officials had a dual purpose for this meeting. First, they wanted to brief the First Presidency on the scheme for basing the MX system in the deserts of Utah and Nevada, but perhaps more important, they wanted to ascertain whether the Church would support the proposed plans.

The forty-five-minute meeting began with a presentation on missile throw-weight using model rockets, illustrating how the United States lagged behind the Soviet Union in the nuclear arms race. The Air Force officials argued that the Soviets had a greater degree of accuracy, making American silos vulnerable to attack. Thus, the Soviets were in a position to immobilize the American nuclear arsenal by launching a first strike, leaving the entire country assailable.6 This information had the desired effect. McKenzie recalled, “President Romney was alarmed to find that we were behind and wanted to know how [the Air Force] let that happen, very vocif-

4Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 6, 187; Glass, *Citizens against the MX*, 101.

5There is a discrepancy as to whether General Murphy attended this meeting. Kimball noted in his journal the four individuals mentioned above. However, in an interview, Richard G. McKenzie claimed that only Stafford, Hecker, and he attended the meeting. Spencer W. Kimball, Journal, March 28, 1979, transcribed by Edward L. Kimball, photocopy in my possession; Richard G. McKenzie, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, April 28, 2004; unless otherwise noted, tapes and transcripts of all interviews are in my possession.

6Janice Maureen Kroll, “Arms Control and the MX” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1985), 1–2. Throw-weight is the maximum
erously. And . . . what was going to be done about it.” Presidents Kimball and Tanner apparently sat just nodding in tacit agreement, as Romney harangued the generals. This was perhaps the response the Air Force hoped for, as they moved to their solution: the MX missile, which would be replacing the Minuteman III and, more important, its proposed MPS basing system. During the remainder of the meeting, the generals presented the Air Force’s plan for placing the MPS in Utah and Nevada. This base was described as a set of looping roads, which they referred to as “racetracks,” that would guide continually moving launch vehicles carrying both MX missiles and missile dummies. If needed, the MX could be launched from many launch locations on the track. It was hoped that, through satellite images, the Soviets could see America’s nuclear strength. Because both the dummies and missiles were mobile, the Soviets could not possibly eliminate the American nuclear arsenal in a first strike and therefore would be “deterred” from attacking the United States.8 The First Presidency posed no questions, and the only comment, made as the meeting concluded, came from President Kimball. According to McKenzie, he said, “Brethren, I suppose you know that we spend our lives in different pursuits than this, but we have always supported and sustained the nation in what they felt was necessary to do, and we will continue to do so.”9

Although President Kimball’s comments would later be turned against him by the Air Force, it is not surprising that the First

tested flight weight of a ballistic missile’s payload, specifically its warhead or sets of warheads and reentry vehicles. Inaccuracy could be countered by increasing throw-weight, or the number of warheads. Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 282.

7McKenzie, interview.


9McKenzie, interview.
Presidency would initially support the Air Force in its operations. Since the Spanish-American War (1898), the Church, albeit generally pacifistic and never openly promoting any military aggression as the solution to the nation’s problems, has nevertheless been patriotic and supportive of the actions of the federal government—and by extension the military.\textsuperscript{10} In addition, the generals couched their message in very positive terms, claiming that there would not “be any significant impact of any kind” to the region in which the basing racetracks would be located.\textsuperscript{11}

The generals walked away from their meeting with the First Presidency “elated,” as they had most likely done after many other meetings with state officials in Utah and Nevada.\textsuperscript{12} Later, during the scoping hearings, General Hecker drew upon the First Presidency’s initial response to gain support in rural Utah, using it as evidence of Church support. Interested in the pork-barrel benefits that would result from the large military contracts, Utah’s and Nevada’s governors and nearly all the congressional delegates were eager and even lobbied for the construction of the MX base in their states. Moreover, for similar reasons, the public sentiment of these states also suggested


\textsuperscript{11}McKenzie, interview. It is also possible that the Air Force representatives may have mollified the First Presidency by presenting an intentionally limited version of the MX/MPS’s potential environmental impact. Later, this charge was leveled against the Air Force when its environmental impact statement was released to the public; some found the facts concerning the adverse environmental effects of the MX/MPS buried in the voluminous report. Glass, \textit{Citizens against the MX}, 54–55.

\textsuperscript{12}McKenzie, interview.
This attitude began to change shortly after Carter’s September 1979 official announcement that the development of the MX/MPS would proceed in the “Western deserts.” Almost immediately, a host of special interest groups such as local chapters of the Sierra Club, the Nevada Cattlemen’s Association, and the Western Shoshone, and national groups such as Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), opposed MX deployment in the Great Basin. They countered by exploiting the numerous environmental, economic, social, moral, and strategic weaknesses of the MX and the MPS basing scheme, thus increasing local opposition. Eventually both Utah and Nevada governors came out in full opposition.

Shortly after the Air Force generals met with the First Presidency, the Church’s Special Affairs Committee (SAC) began monitoring the progress of the MX/MPS. This committee, which reported directly to the First Presidency, had the assignment of monitoring developments in local and national politics. At the time, it consisted of members of the Twelve and Seventy, with Gordon B. Hinckley, then an apostle, as its chair. As opposition to the MX increased, the Church was flooded with information and letters from

14“Press Announcement by the President on the MX Basing,” Firmage Papers.
15For a good discussion of the grass-roots opposition to the MX and major objections, see Glass, Citizens against the MX, 1–20.
16Holland and Hoover, The MX Decision, 187; Matheson, Out of Balance, 73.
17Richard P. Lindsay, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, August 23, 2004. The Special Affairs Committee’s investigation of the MX/MPS might have resulted from a directive given by the First Presidency after the visit from the Air Force representatives. However, it more likely started as a result of the MX becoming a national issue during the summer of 1979, a natural development for the Special Affairs Committee to assess.
18In addition to Gordon B. Hinckley, the members of the Special Affairs Committee included Apostles James E. Faust and David B. Haight, and Neal A. Maxwell, then a member of the presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy; and executive secretary Richard P. Lindsay. The Quorum of the Twelve and the First Quorum of the Seventy constitute the second and third highest ecclesiastical and administrative authority in the Church. For a brief discussion of the Special Affairs Committee, see Robert Gottlieb
individuals representing a wide array of special interest groups urging the Church to take a stand. Some individuals of distinguished political standing gained a direct audience with members of the First Presidency; however, most visiting individuals met with the members of the Special Affairs Committee, who collected and collated the information for the First Presidency’s use, if requested. In addition, members of the Special Affairs Committee were briefed on several occasions by Kenneth C. Olson who coordinated the efforts of Utah Governor Scott M. Matheson’s formal investigation into the MX (the MX Task Force).

During the fall of 1980, Edwin B. Firmage, a professor of law and a particularly strong and vocal anti-MX advocate, began meeting regularly with members of the Church’s Special Affairs Committee, primarily with Gordon B. Hinckley, in an effort to convince the Church to join the anti-MX crusade. He also had moderate success in meeting with members of the Special Affairs Committee and initiating meetings between the Special Affairs Committee and leaders from Salt Lake City’s religious community. On November 19, Firmage met with N. Eldon Tanner, a relative, as a back door to the First Presidency to encourage the Church to take a direct and public stance against the MX.

At their next meeting, on November 26 Hinckley briefed the

---


19 For a detailed discussion of the efforts of anti-MX individuals and special interest groups to lobby the Church to oppose the construction of the MX/MPS, see Jacob W. Olmstead, “A Diabolical Disneyland in Zion: The Mormons and the MX” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 2005), 15–47.

20 Kenneth C. Olson, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, February 4, 2005. See also Matheson, Out of Balance, 83–84.

21 Edwin B. Firmage, interviewed by Edward L. Kimball, June 6, 1986, photocopy of transcript in my possession. As early as March 1980, Richard P. Lindsay, Special Affairs Committee executive secretary, asked Firmage to evaluate and comment on anti-MX materials that the First Presidency had received from a special interest group. Edwin B. Firmage, Letter to Richard P. Lindsay, March 17, 1980, Box 9, fd. 2, Firmage Papers.

22 Firmage, interviewed by Edward Kimball, June 6. 1986. Firmage is also the grandson of the late Hugh B. Brown, former member of the First
First Presidency, summarizing the information that the Special Affairs Committee had collected, including major technical and moral issues that the committee believed the First Presidency should consider. Though Hinckley personally believed that the MX/MPS was a foolish venture and a danger to the environment, it is unclear how his opinion affected the objectivity or direction of the presentation.23+++

During this meeting, Tanner also presented a letter from Firmage listing several reasons why the First Presidency should oppose the MX. Among other arguments, Firmage noted the massive expense of the MPS base and the inevitable devastation that the region would experience if the Soviets attacked. The First Presidency found Firmage’s allegations and the Special Affairs Committee briefing disquieting. Since the visit of the Air Force generals, the MX/MPS had been only a topic of interest; but at this meeting, for the first time, the First Presidency weighed the possibility of speaking out against the proposed base.24++++

In the following weeks after additional briefings, the First Presidency.

23Olmstead, “A Diabolical Disneyland in Zion,” 44–46. As Special Affairs Committee executive secretary, Richard P. Lindsay collected extensive files on the committee’s deliberations regarding the MX. Lindsay, interview, August 27, 2004. These files are currently held by the First Presidency and unavailable for research. It is therefore difficult to identify and document the specific issues that Hinckley presented. Hinckley, as president and chairman of the executive committee of Deseret News Publishing Company, conveyed his concerns over the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada to William B. Smart, then the Deseret News editor. William B. Smart, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, December 2, 2004.

24Individual speaking on conditions of confidentiality, due to the sensitive nature of the information provided; interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, March 30, 2004; hereafter cited as “confidential interview.” In addition to offering his/her recollections, during the interview this individual also generously read detailed passages from his/her daily journal. Thus, the information obtained during this interview is far more detailed than traditional oral history and is particularly reliable on names, events, and dates. The information obtained during this interview represents the backbone of this study. Where possible, I corroborated the information provided by this interviewee; but a search of Firmage’s archived papers failed to turn up a copy of his memo which Tanner presented at this meeting.
dency appear to have become unanimously convinced that the Church should oppose the MX/MPS. 25  Given President Kimball’s track record for speaking out on issues with significant moral overtones, opposing the MX fit easily within the larger themes of his administration. 26  Indeed, he had already proclaimed his reservations about relying too heavily upon nuclear weapons as a means of preserving peace in his First Presidency message, “The False Gods We Worship,” which was published in June 1976 as part of a major bicentennial focus in the Church’s official magazine for adults. The key paragraph was:

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become antienemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan’s counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior’s teaching: “Love your enemies. . . .” 27

As the First Presidency and later the Twelve discussed the MX/MPS it is likely that Kimball’s views, though unimposed, were an important factor in the decision-making process.

25 Although President Kimball’s journal indicates that he attended a “briefing meeting on the MX missile system” on December 3, 1980, it is unclear who presented the briefing and whether Kimball’s counselors or members of the Twelve were present. The confidential interviewee indicated that no such meeting occurred for the First Presidency and Twelve. See also Firmage, interviewed by Edward Kimball, June 6, 1986. Ultimately, it is unclear what impact this briefing had on solidifying the First Presidency’s stance toward the MX.


By December 16, the First Presidency had settled on two courses of action. They invited Gordon B. Hinckley, chairman of the Special Affairs Committee, to read a letter he had drafted for their approval addressed to recently elected U.S. President Ronald Reagan. It is unlikely that the First Presidency had any intentions of influencing Reagan, who had already expressed some doubts about the necessity of building the base in the Great Basin. Likely they wanted, as a matter of courtesy, to inform Reagan of their recent deliberations in case the Church took an official stance. Acknowledging their limited knowledge of MX details and national defense but expressing unqualified patriotism, the First Presidency questioned the wisdom of placing the proposed MPS base in the Great Basin. More specifically, they noted its probable detrimental impact on the desert environment, social patterns, and regional culture. This, they argued, was too great a burden to place upon one region and pointed to other basing schemes, such as submarines and existing silos, which some MX opponents had argued would be just as effective. The First Presidency apparently approved this draft, then asked Richard B. Wirthlin, a Latter-day Saint who was Reagan’s deputy director of strategy and planning during the 1980 campaign and later his pollster, to convey their letter to Reagan.

The second action originating at this meeting was the decision to address the growing nuclear arms race publicly, using the First

---

28While in Salt Lake City on the campaign trail, at the behest of his campaign manager, Nevada Senator Paul Laxalt, Reagan pledged his support for the MX missile while expressing skepticism of the MPS basing method. Edwards, *Superweapon*, 210. Kenneth C. Olson, the manager of Matheson’s MX Office and coordinator of the administration’s MX Task Force, claimed that Reagan met with the First Presidency during his stop in Salt Lake and speculated that they expressed reservations about the MX/MPS. Kenneth C. Olson, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, February 4, 2005. Attempting to directly influence politicians, even in Utah, was not the First Presidency’s typical *modus operandi* during the second half of the twentieth century. Q. Michael Croft, “Influence of the L.D.S. Church on Utah Politics, 1945–1985” (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1985), 180–82.

Presidency’s Christmas message as the venue. It is unclear who authored the message; but Hinckley is a likely candidate, considering that he was asked to write the Reagan letter and in view of MX-related assignments he subsequently received from the First Presidency and the Twelve. Released on December 19 and signed by all three members of the First Presidency, the short message gave only a brief nod to the Christmas season and Christ’s birth, while the balance of the text expressed consternation over the continued building up of “huge and threatening nuclear weaponry,” which if deployed “spares no living thing within the perimeter of its initial destructive force.”

These efforts seemed to have had a limited impact on decision-makers in Washington and produced no tangible results. Reagan received the First Presidency’s letter; but despite his admiration for the Church, it likely had little impact on his already negative position. In the first months of 1981, the Reagan administration continued to stall, saying only that it strongly supported the MX but remained undecided about the feasibility of the MPS basing system. Because the Christmas message did not specifically name the MX, it seemed to have little news appeal outside the membership of the Church. Moreover, although the First Presidency’s Christmas message was not a typical encyclical for Church policy, its denuncia-

---

**Notes**

30 Firmage claims that on December 3, the First Presidency and the Twelve discussed both the MX and the First Presidency’s Christmas message, traditionally a brief statement published in the Church News and other local papers, at their weekly meeting, but there is no supporting evidence for this agenda. It is not likely that the Christmas message would be discussed this early or with the Quorum of the Twelve. Firmage, Interviewed by Edward Kimball, June 6, 1986. The recently published presidential diaries of Ronald Reagan make no mention of this letter and provide no additional insight into the MX/MPS. Moreover, there is no mention of the Mormons in any of his entries during 1981. See Douglas Brinkley, ed., *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2007).


32 Richard Wirthlin was unwilling to divulge Reagan’s response or subsequent discussions he might have had with Reagan regarding the First Presidency’s letter. Wirthlin, interview.

33 The First Presidency’s Christmas message was not considered front-page news in Utah. Moreover, the major dailies in Salt Lake City and
tion of the nuclear arms race was so general that its contents simply blended with previous statements made by President Kimball and others.  

The *Ogden Standard-Examiner* did, however, link the message to the MX/MPS, noting that it was issued the day after the Air Force released its draft of the environmental impact statement. This release marked the beginning of the federally required review period, during which citizens of the region who would be affected by the MX/MPS could express concerns with its projected impact on the local culture and environment. The juxtaposition of the environmental impact statement and the First Presidency’s Christmas message, however, was purely coincidental. At that point, despite the apparent lack of influence, the First Presidency was apparently not prepared to go further without consulting the Quorum of the Twelve and obtaining their unanimous consent on a course of action.

Over the next few months, the First Presidency apparently had little discussion regarding the MX basing, although they seem to have followed national developments and maneuvering. In addition, the Special Affairs Committee and the individual members of the First Presidency apparently received a number of visits from politicians and members of the scientific and religious communities, urging them to oppose the MX. One of these visiting dignitaries was Ronald V. Dellums, California Congressman and prominent member of the Armed Services Committee. In December 1980, Chad Dobson, a central figure in the Utah-based MX opposition, had gone to Washington-

---

Footnotes:

34For example, see Kimball, “The False Gods We Worship,” 3–6.


36Holland and Hoover, *The MX Decision*, 109–10; confidential interview.

37For example, on March 9, 1981, the First Presidency discussed recent statements of Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger regarding possible alternatives for MX basing and theories about national defense. Confidential interview.
ton, D.C., to head the office of the National Campaign to Stop MX.\footnote{38Frances Farley, Letter to Maya Miller, April 13, 1981, Frances Farley Collection, Box 8, fd. 3, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah (hereafter Farley Collection); Chad Dobson, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, December 23, 2004.}

In Washington, Dobson became acquainted with Dellums, a maverick who had been trying to build an anti-MX coalition in Congress and pass anti-MX legislation with little success. Dobson convinced Dellums of the significance of Mormon opposition to the outcome of the MX/MPS in the Great Basin, and Dellums agreed to meet with Mormon officials.\footnote{39Holland and Hoover, \textit{The MX Decision}, 162, 176; Dobson, interview.}

On February 27, Dellums was granted an audience with President Kimball. Dellums urged the Church to take an official stance, arguing that the MX/MPS was unnecessary because the “synergy” of the air- and maritime-based weapons in the American nuclear triad was sufficient to deter any Soviet first strike. He also suggested that the MX/MPS might be viewed as a first-strike weapon, which could tempt the Soviet Union to launch a preemptive strike. Bringing the argument closer to home, Dellums claimed, “The Soviets will know that it is in Utah—but maybe not exactly where—and any attack they make on the country will surely target the state.” In response, President Kimball, who had visited Hiroshima, agreed, “I know the awful devastation that nuclear weapons can inflict.” Kimball thanked Dellums for coming and said, “I’m impressed by the arguments you’ve made; you’ve brought me a lot of important information today, a lot of food for thought.”\footnote{40Stanley Holmes, Appointment Calendar, 1981, photocopy in my possession; Dellums, \textit{Lying Down with the Lions}, 86–87; Ronald V. Dellums, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, January 6, 2005.}

On March 13, Gordon B. Hinckley met Spencer W. Kimball in Washington, D.C., where President Kimball was to make a courtesy call on President Reagan. Although the ostensible purpose was to present Reagan with a book containing his genealogy, it seems likely that they discussed placing the MX in the Great Basin.\footnote{41Confidential interview; Sheri L. Dew, \textit{Gordon B. Hinckley: Go Forward with Faith} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 378.} Perhaps the combination of Dellums’s visit and Kimball’s recent trip to Washington, D.C., accounts for the fact that, for the first time on March 26, the
First Presidency and the Twelve discussed the MX/MPS issue in their joint weekly meeting in the Salt Lake Temple. No doubt members of the Twelve were aware of the actions taken by the First Presidency, especially since some were members of the Special Affairs Committee; however, because the Special Affairs Committee reported directly to the First Presidency, the Twelve did not apparently discuss the MX/MPS officially in any of their meetings. At this March 26 meeting, the possibility of issuing a direct statement of opposition was weighed.42

The MX issue was discussed the following week at the April 2 temple meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve. Although it was just before April general conference, the debate intensified and occupied the entire meeting. The opinions appear to have fallen into three camps. The first group, led by Tanner, expressed concern that constructing the MX/MPS would result in a flood of men, money, and materials that he believed would damage the environment and change the character of the nearby Mormon communities, destroying Mormon culture in those areas. A second group believed that the MX/MPS as a weapon capable of monumental destructive power represented a clear moral issue, wherever it might be located. In contrast, a third group argued there was nothing inherently immoral in its construction but found it objectionable only if it were used in a first strike. Having failed to reach a consensus, the group decided on holding a “special fast” for “imploring God for direction of what they should do.”44

On the day of the fast, April 9, 1981, the First Presidency and the Twelve met again in the temple. Once again the entire meeting was devoted to the discussion of the MX. And again individual members expressed their views with little or no change. On this occasion, Richard P. Lindsay, executive secretary of the Special Affairs Committee, and his assistant, Bill Evans, were also present to brief both the First

42Rulen G. Craven, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, August 24, 2004. Craven, who was the secretary to the Twelve, did not recall any meetings in which the MX missile was a major topic of discussion. Beyond their regular meetings, the Twelve might have attended the December 3, 1980, “briefing” on the MX.

43Confidential interview.

44Ibid. The interviewee declined to disclose which individuals championed each position.
Presidency and the Twelve on the Special Affairs Committee’s findings regarding the MX/MPS issues. In addition, Hinckley was asked, most likely by a member of the First Presidency, to read a memorandum that he and another member of the Special Affairs Committee had prepared outlining the major issues. He also read the letter sent to President Reagan. Perhaps the purpose of both documents was to illustrate what a possible statement might say.

Despite these efforts and the fast, the Twelve and the First Presidency did not arrive at a consensus. Continued resistance might have come from a member of the Twelve who was on the Church’s Military Relations Committee and was concerned that antagonizing the military through a statement might result in a loss of military deferrals for missionaries, although there was no active draft at the time.45 The outcome of this meeting, however, was an agreement that the Church would more strongly oppose the nuclear arms race and, by implication, the MX/MPS. The venue would be the First Presidency’s annual Easter Message, which Hinckley was assigned to draft.46

A week later, at the April 16 meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve, Hinckley’s draft was presented and approved for publication. The next day excerpts from this Easter message were printed on the front page of the Deseret News and, in following days, by other Utah

45 Hinckley implied that there was a hold-up in the Twelve, and Firmage inferred that it came from an apostle who was on the Military Relations Committee. Firmage, interviewed by Edward Kimball, May 23, 1986. See also Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 38. (Firmage incorrectly referred to this group as the Military Affairs Committee.) This organization, originally called the Servicemen’s Committee, was formed in 1941 with Hugh B. Brown as coordinator and reported directly to the First Presidency. In 1969 the name was changed to Military Relations Committee. The committee was comprised mostly of members of the Twelve until 1976 when it came under the direction of the Melchizedek Priesthood Department. Except for David B. Haight, who served as the committee’s managing director, it is unclear what members of the Twelve, if any, were still on this committee in 1980–81. Military Relations Committee, “Administrative History,” unpublished manuscript, 2003, photocopy of typescript in my possession; Lucile C. Tate, David B. Haight: The Life Story of a Disciple (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 240.

46 Confidential interview.
The message’s central theme was a declaration that it is only through adhering to the teachings of Jesus Christ that lasting peace would be achieved. Moving from a general admonition, it then narrowed in scope to address the leadership of all nations—especially those in the United States—adjudging them that obedience to the Lord, not the creation of nuclear weaponry, was the only true means of securing international peace. While acknowledging the need for strength in national defense, the message claimed that the First Presidency “[felt] a deep and growing concern” for the “building of huge arsenals of nuclear weaponry in our own land.” They concluded with a prayer that the “leaders of America and all nations” would “be granted divine wisdom as they seek inspiration from Almighty God” so that they would “reason together” while seeking solutions to their impasses.

Beyond expressing the Church’s continued opposition to the escalation of the nuclear arms build-up, the message was intentionally unclear in relation to its stance on the MX/MPS. Although the reference to the “building of huge arsenals of nuclear weaponry in our own land” might have been an allusion to the construction of the MX base in the Great Basin, the “name” of MX was missing from the text. This move was calculated to firmly place the Church in open opposition to the build-up of any kind of nuclear weaponry but to only imply disapproval of the MX/MPS in Utah and Nevada. Though the message signified a step forward in the development of Church policy toward the base, this minor evolution was likely not evident to either members or nonmembers.

On the day that his draft of the Easter message was approved, Hinckley met with Firmage to discuss its content. Undoubtedly frustrated, as he had been with the Christmas message, Firmage told Hinckley that, while he was generally pleased with its contents, in his opinion the announcement was made politically impotent because it did not target the MX by name. Hinckley explained, “We’ve said as

---

48 Confidential interview.
49 According to an anonymous interviewee, “Various discrete [sic] inquiries were made to Washington D.C.” in an effort to assess how both the Christmas and the Easter messages were received. Quoted in Hildreth, “Mormon Concern over MX,” 248.
much as we could,” implying that there was still some opposition among the Twelve to the Church’s officially offering definite criticism of the MX/MPS proposal.50

Now more than ever, Firmage believed the Church was in a position to influence the MX debate. President Reagan was in a difficult position over the MX/MPS issue. The Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and several key senators respected for their opinions on strategic issues agreed that the MX and multiple shelter scheme were essential to national security, but opposition was growing in Congress. Among the senators opposed to the MX/MPS was Paul Laxalt (R-Nevada), a close and trusted friend of the president. To gain a fresh perspective regarding the MX base, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger appointed Charles Townes, professor of physics at Berkeley, to head a “blue ribbon” panel to reevaluate the MPS-basing scheme and its necessity to national security. In March Weinberger and Townes began assembling the panel, which consisted of academics, former defense officials, and generals who were well acquainted with the issues of nuclear defense. Townes planned to have an evaluation for Reagan by the end of July 1981.51

Perhaps both from a hope that an official Mormon statement could influence the Townes panel and a belief that Hinckley was not passing along the problem’s true gravity to the First Presidency, the day after Firmage’s meeting with Hinckley, he once again contacted Tanner in an attempt to generate a sense of urgency within the First Presidency. Firmage produced a lengthy, scripture-laden memorandum beseeching Tanner to urge the First Presidency to take a stand on MX, “formally, publicly, unequivocally, and immediately.”52 Calculated to goad the First Presidency into action, it identified three characteristics of the MX which, he believed, the Church should find objectionable and therefore should feel obligated to oppose. First, he argued that the sheer destructive power of the MX missile itself ran contrary to Christian ethics of war and, by extension, to the Mormon

50 Firmage, interviewed by Edward Kimball, May 23, and June 6, 1986.
52 Edwin B. Firmage, Memorandum to N. Eldon Tanner, April 17, 1981, 1, Box 9, fd. 41, Firmage Papers; emphasis his. This memorandum presented many of the same quotations and arguments that Firmage had sent to Richard P. Lindsay in his memorandum nearly a year earlier.
doctrine on war. Second, he claimed that the escalation in the arms race, if unbridled, would result in nuclear war. And finally addressing the location of the base, he predicted that the base would become a primary target for the Soviets and that the damage its construction would pose to the environment and society was morally objectionable.

Firmage strengthened his position by incorporating the comments of Brigham Young, J. Reuben Clark, and other Church leaders who took vocal positions against matters of war, in spite of possible negative repercussions. Firmage also quoted lengthy sections of Kimball’s June 1976 First Presidency message decrying American reliance on the nuclear arsenal for protection. Claiming that the Church was in a unique position to influence Reagan and the Townes committee, Firmage warned that making no public statement specifically opposing the MX could be seen as a position of indifference or even support. Firmage concluded by asking Tanner “if you consider it appropriate, to put this case before the First Presidency and . . . before the Twelve.”

The memo had the desired result; and Hinckley, acting at Tanner’s behest, invited Firmage to the April 22 morning meeting of the First Presidency. They invited Firmage to explain why he believed the Church should issue a stronger statement. He distributed copies of the lengthy memo he had prepared for Tanner and began reading it but switched to an unscripted presentation because of the diminished sight of the First Presidency members and Kimball’s frequent inquiries and lively participation. According to Firmage, Kimball was sitting next to him and “seemed to be on the edge of his seat.” In response to portions of his presentation, Firmage claimed that Kimball said, “Eddie, you’ve got to convince them of that.” If Firmage’s description of this meeting is correct, Kimball’s demeanor was markedly different from other meetings on the MX, during which Kimball

54Firmage, Memorandum to Tanner, April 17, 1981. When Firmage gave this memo to Tanner, he likely asked if he could address the First Presidency personally. Firmage, interview, May 23, 1986.
was mostly silent while his counselors dominated the discussion. Firmage’s presentation was undoubtedly passionate, reflecting his feeling that the MX would destabilize the already tenuous relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, whom he saw as teetering on the brink of nuclear war. Moreover, Firmage was a convincing and charismatic orator who had given many speeches on the subject and whose ideas were well developed and polished. Firmage’s presentation most likely strongly resonated with the members of the First Presidency.

And it was probably the passion of his presentation and not the content which President Kimball believed could ultimately convince the dissenting members of the Twelve of the need to oppose the MX/MPS.

At some point during this eighty-minute meeting, Firmage presented a statement he had drafted suggesting possible elements that he believed should appear in a statement endorsed by the First Presidency. According to one source, Firmage suggested that they sign the statement. “We call upon the President and the Congress of the United States,” it boldly declared, “to terminate the development of the MX.” It argued that because its “capacity to destroy entire nations of our Heavenly Father’s children,” the missile could not be catego-

56One individual who worked closely with Kimball on a daily basis claimed it was not his style to carry the discussion on any topic. Rather, he described Kimball as a “sphinx” who typically looked to his counselors to make inquiries and debate the issues. Confidential interview. See also McKenzie, interview. Recently, describing this meeting, Firmage claimed that President Kimball said, “Take whatever time was necessary to explain these issues to them [the First Presidency].” Considering the many briefings and meetings which members of the First Presidency had attended with the Twelve, the Special Affairs Committee, and others outside the Mormon bureaucracy, it is not likely that they needed to have the issues explained again; I posit that they were simply graciously accommodating Firmage’s zealous presentation. Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 43. Commenting on his meeting with Kimball, Ronald V. Dellums, interview, claimed that Kimball had a good grasp of the issues and did not need a tutorial on MX/MPS.

57Kimball, Journal, April 22, 1981, noted Firmage’s presentation to the First Presidency and, later, the Twelve.

rized as a weapon of self-defense. Moreover, Firmage’s draft called for “all nations to join in demanding of governments that weapons of mass destruction be limited, and then eliminated, from earth.” Though it asserted that the MPS basing scheme for the MX was unacceptable, the draft focused on the destructive power of the MX and other weapons of mass destruction and the escalation of the arms race. “The arms race, if allowed to continue,” it warned, “will surely end with war, carnage and death beyond anything the world has ever seen.” Perhaps the most defining feature of the document was its reference to many Old and New Testament passages buttressing the statement’s authority and message of peace, particularly the teachings of Jesus.59

Immediately after Firmage left the meeting, the First Presidency asked Hinckley, who had not been present earlier, to meet with them to discuss Firmage’s proposed statement. Hinckley pointed out that he and the members of the Special Affairs Committee were well aware of the MX/MPS issues. Indeed, the Special Affairs Committee had already delivered two presentations about the MX/MPS to the First Presidency in previous weeks; and the First Presidency and several members of the Twelve, not just those in the Special Affairs Committee, had met with scientists and politicians who were lobbying against the MX.60 Furthermore, Hinckley, who strongly opposed the construction of the MX/MPS in Utah, was most likely working behind the scenes with the First Presidency and Twelve to make information concerning the MX/MPS issues available.61 From this perspective, Firmage’s actions were most likely viewed as more a hindrance than a help. Having been a member of the Twelve for many years, Hinckley was not only in a better

59Edwin B. Firmage, Draft of First Presidency Statement on the MX, Box 9, fd. 4, Firmage Papers, included excerpts from Exod. 20:3, 13; Deut, 4:28; Isa., 52:7; Matt. 5:44, 7:2; 26:52; John 13:34–35, 15:9–10, 12; Rom. 10:15.

60For example, Bruce R. McConkie met with Utah State Senator Frances Farley and Herbert ("Pete") Scoville Jr., an arms control specialist and former deputy director of research and technology in the Central Intelligence Agency. Frances Farley, Letter to Bruce R. McConkie, November 2, 1979, Farley Collection, Box 5, fd. 10.

61William B. Smart, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, December 2, 2004. There is no documentary evidence that Gordon B. Hinckley was working behind the scenes to produce unanimity among the Twelve. How-
position to develop the Church’s anti-MX position but was far more aware of the complex processes of collegiality and establishing consensus within the Twelve.62

Despite Hinckley’s confidence in the Special Affairs Committee’s expertise on the MX issues, later that day Tanner asked Firmage to postpone a flight to Washington so that he could make a presentation to a joint meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve. According to Firmage, this invitation was at President Kimball’s behest.63 But evidently, the invitation to return contained a caveat. Firmage’s proposed draft had been found presumptuous, and Tanner passed along the First Presidency’s suggestion not to mention his draft to the Twelve.64

That afternoon Firmage met with the First Presidency and the Twelve in the Twelve’s meeting room in the Church Administration Building. After being introduced by Gordon B. Hinckley, Firmage formally presented his views about the MX for forty-five minutes, never alluding to his proposed statement. Apparently there was no reaction from the Twelve and no questions at the conclusion of his presentation. As Firmage left the meeting, Ezra Taft Benson, a staunch conservative and the quorum president, told him, “Brother Firmage, the Lord will bless you in this important work.”65 Although it is not known how members of the Twelve collectively responded to Firmage’s presentation after his departure, apparently it resulted in a greater consensus toward open opposition of the MX/MPS, regardless of location.66 There is no doubt that the Twelve were well acquainted with the issues Firmage presented, but perhaps his impassioned eloquence convinced them that taking a stand was both neces-

---

62 For a good discussion of the requirement of unanimity and examples of past tensions in the First Presidency and the Twelve over the development of Church policy, see Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy, 6–65.


64 Confidential interview.


66 Confidential interview.
sary and urgent. Unity within the Twelve on the MX/MPS issue, however, might have also resulted from Hinckley’s behind-the-scenes efforts.

During the next week, the Twelve drafted a statement opposing the MX/MPS, by assignment from the First Presidency. Although the statement’s author is not known, Hinckley is the likely candidate.67 Hinckley had become a respected and trusted confidant to the First Presidency on the MX/MPS.68 As head of the Special Affairs Committee, he was the apostle most intimately acquainted with the issues and controversy surrounding the MX/MPS. Moreover, he had already been entrusted with writing the letter to President Reagan, the First Presidency’s Easter message, and most likely the Christmas message.69 And as will be discussed later, Hinckley attended the First Presidency’s meeting when the MX/MPS statement was ultimately approved.

67Confidential interview. Francis M. Gibbons, Dynamic Disciples, Prophets of God: Life Stories of the Presidents of the Church (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 334, wrote a short biographical sketch of Hinckley in which he also claimed that Hinckley and unspecified members of the Special Affairs Committee authored the statement. At the time of the MX episode, Gibbons was then the First Presidency’s executive secretary.

68In July 1981, two months following the MX episode, President Kimball asked Hinckley to become a third member of the First Presidency, bypassing four senior members of the Twelve. Dew, Gordon B. Hinckley, 381, 384. In his biographical sketch of President Hinckley, Gibbons argues that four events “foreshadow[ed]” Hinckley’s call to the First Presidency, two of which were directly related to the MX: the March 1981 “interview” with President Ronald Reagan and Hinckley’s involvement in crafting the First President’s MX statement. Gibbons, Dynamic Disciples, Prophets of God, 334.

69Heinerman and Shupe, The Mormon Corporate Empire, 175–76, offer some dubious insight into the authorship of the statement through information from an anonymous “high-ranking member in the Department of Defense” who was also a Regional Representative. This informant claimed he was invited to Salt Lake City to be informed about the Church’s position regarding the MX/MPS because of his perceived ability to influence the decision-making process on the MX in Washington. The informant claimed that he met with members of the Twelve and the First Presidency who showed him the statement and allowed him to make minor recommendations on its language. Because there is no corroborating evidence of these events, if they are correct, they did not take place within the First Presidency’s or the
At their April 30 meeting, the First Presidency was confronted with an unsettling situation regarding the MX/MPS. Though Firmage told Hinckley earlier that no one would read the Church’s opposition to the MX/MPS into the Easter message because it did not name the MX, this was apparently not the case. A letter to Spencer W. Kimball reportedly from Richard McKenzie was read in the meeting detailing the contents of their March 1979 meeting with Generals Stafford, Murphy, Hecker, and McKenzie, who represented the Air Force. McKenzie claimed that Kimball had originally offered his support for the MX. This, Kimball angrily denied. McKenzie had expressed only general support to the federal government and indi-

Twelve’s regular weekly meetings. It is also unclear at what point after the draft was written these events might have occurred.

Confidential interview. There are several discrepancies in McKenzie’s account concerning his contacting the First Presidency after the March 1979 meeting. First, according to McKenzie’s memory, he contacted Arthur Haycock, Kimball’s personal secretary by phone rather than letter after learning of the First Presidency’s opposition to the MX. Second, he took this action as a result of a newspaper report just after the original meeting in 1979. McKenzie believed that false information about the meeting had been leaked to the media. Since only the members of the First Presidency were in attendance (not Haycock), this does not seem likely. Furthermore, a thorough search of the Salt Lake City dailies turned up no such report. Since the First Presidency received McKenzie’s letter prior to the publication of the MX statement, the only two public indications of the Church’s possible stance on MX came in the form of the First Presidency’s Christmas or Easter messages. In fact, Jerry P. Cahill, LDS Public Relations spokesman, erroneously told Stephen J. Sidorak, a Methodist minister, that the Church had weighed the issue and decided not to make a statement. Stephen J. Sidorak, interviewed by Jacob W. Olmstead, March 28, 2005. Because the Easter message was the more specific of the two and because McKenzie’s letter was received following the Easter message’s publication, it was likely the trigger which caused McKenzie to write the letter. McKenzie recalled that this reversal of Church support provoked General Murphy to ridicule President Kimball, saying, “Old Spence must have really lost his mind.” However, McKenzie chastised him and told him he would take care of the problem by contacting the Church officials. Murphy objected, believing that McKenzie would be excommunicated for confronting the First Presidency regarding their position on the MX. McKenzie claimed that he discussed the matter with Arthur Haycock who “apologized . . . very pro-
cated his trust of the Air Force’s role in defending the United States. Although the Air Force representatives had offered a cogent presentation for the MX’s necessary role in national defense, they most likely had neglected to explain the numerous negative aspects of its construction which anti-MX advocates had publicly exploited since March 1979. The First Presidency’s apparent support, however, left President Kimball in an embarrassing position. Later that day, the First Presidency and the Twelve discussed McKenzie’s letter at their temple meeting. While several unnamed members of the Twelve spoke accusingly of McKenzie, others gave the impression that he might be telling the truth about the March 1979 meeting. Perhaps unsure how to respond to these attacks, President Kimball was unwilling to approve the First Presidency’s statement that the Twelve had drafted.

By the First Presidency’s next meeting on May 1, President Kimball had apparently come to terms with the McKenzie challenge; and the First Presidency finally approved and signed the MX/MPS statement. Believing that the statement would end the MX/MPS project, the First Presidency recognized it would generate both good and bad publicity for the Church. Hinckley, who was in attendance, possibly to make final adjustments to the statement at its approval, noted that arrangements had been made to publish the statement four days later on May 5. On May 5 a press release containing the statement was sent to the Reagan administration, significant military personnel, and national and local political leaders. The statement also made front-page news in all the Utah dailies and several major national papers. (See Appendix.)

The First Presidency’s MX/MPS statement was a unique blend of the opinions expressed by members of the First Presidency and the
Twelve. It warned against the continued build-up of the national nuclear arsenal, but it moved beyond the general statements of the Christmas and the Easter messages by identifying specific concerns with constructing the MX/MPS in the Utah-Nevada deserts. It warned that the massive construction required for the MX “race-tracks” would generate sociological and ecological problems, which were sure to follow the large influx of construction workers and their families. Besides damage to the environment and the economy after the completion of the base, the message argued that the project would be a substantial drain on the region’s already “woefully short” water and power supplies and generate “serious long term consequences” in the West.

The statement also asserted that, should a nuclear war ensue, the MX base would be a primary target. Thus, the First Presidency argued, “One segment of the population would bear a highly disproportionate share of the burden, in lives and property.” The First Presidency noted the irony that Mormon pioneers had established a center in Utah from which to disseminate the gospel of peace; if the MX base were built, it would become a center “capable of destroying much of civilization.” In conclusion, the First Presidency hoped the “genius of the nation” would find “viable alternatives” to defend the country against the threat of nuclear war.75

At the time the statement was released, Firmage was on a national speaking tour sponsored by two anti-MX groups: Clergy and Laity Concerned and the Great Basin MX Alliance. During the month of May, Firmage spoke on a panel with three other individuals, each representing interest groups in the West including the Mormon, Native American, ranching, and military points of view. During this tour, Firmage made several television and radio appearances and gave a number of interviews with local media throughout the United States.76 Advertised as an LDS authority and labeled variously as former bishop, high priest, fifth-generation Mormon, and great-great-grandson of Brigham Young, Firmage used the tour to take upon him-

76Firmage, “MX: Democracy, Religion, and the Rule of Law,” 44. For a lengthier discussion of the speaking tour, see Glass, Citizens against the
self the role of unofficial spokesman for the Church, publicizing and interpreting the First Presidency’s statement. It is perhaps at this time that Firmage’s name became permanently linked to the First Presidency’s statement, a connection that has been strengthened by his many interviews and published accounts of his dealings with the Mormon hierarchy on this issue. Firmage’s association with the Church’s opposition to the MX/MPS was so firm that, after the statement was released, he was apparently bombarded with media inquiries asking if he was in fact the statement’s author. He consistently denied that he was. Still, because Firmage had been granted a lion’s share of the credit for spurring the Church toward its eventual position on the MX/MPS, some have wondered if future issues on which the Church might take a stand would rest largely upon those “who have been able to gain the ear and confidence of the [Mormon] leadership.”

As detailed in the above narrative, Firmage’s efforts definitely factored into the development of the First Presidency’s statement, though his significance was not as essential or as influential as histories discussing the First Presidency’s MX statement or Firmage’s own published accounts have suggested. Probably verging toward the inaccurate are the claims that the Church courted his views and that his opinions played an appreciable role in shaping the contents of the First Presidency’s statement. As this study illustrates, this was not the case. First, as with other special interest groups, the First Presidency,

\[MX, 68–72.\]

77 In some instances, he was mar queed as a “Mormon leader,” and “one who had advised the Mormon Church on MX.” It appears that Firm age was aware of the inaccurate images of authority these titles would conjure up in the minds of non-Mormons but believed that accepting the inaccuracy was necessary to create popular interest in the tour. Edwin B. Firmage to unknown, MX Speaking Tour: May 1–23 and June 3, 1981, Box 5, fd. 6, Firmage Papers.

78 Firmage’s place in the history of the development of the MX statement was also hardened through his speeches describing the development of the statement. For example, see “The Background of the First Presidency’s Statements on Nuclear Armament and the MX Missile,” LDS Institute announcement, January 15, 1982, Box 12, fd. 2, Firmage Papers.

the Twelve, and the Special Affairs Committee did not actively seek out Firmage’s opinion although they were hospitable about granting him a hearing. Second, many individuals including Firmage contributed to the Mormon leadership’s understanding of the MX/MPS issues. Perhaps Firmage had a unique opportunity to address both the First Presidency and the Twelve as a whole; but the First Presidency was already opposed to the MX/MPS before Firmage became directly involved, and their basic objections, which were described in the Reagan letter, were also incorporated in the official May statement. Moreover, the major objections described in the First Presidency’s statement were not the significant concerns mentioned in Firmage’s proposed draft. The First Presidency’s concern with the potential impact of the MX/MPS base far outweighed their objections to the MX missile itself, which appeared to be Firmage’s primary objection.

Though the First Presidency was unified in its opposition to the MX as early as December 1980, President Kimball was apparently unwilling to move forward in creating an encyclical specifically opposing the MX without the Twelve’s full support. In the months that followed, through a series of meetings and briefings, the Twelve was educated on the issues surrounding the MX. By the time Firmage met with the Twelve in April 1981, “convincing” the Twelve was not a matter of education but rather of creating consensus. Firmage’s presentation to this group was most likely convincing, but it cannot be known that it was his arguments that persuaded the objecting members to join MX/MPS opponents and not the efforts of Gordon B. Hinckley, who was in a greater position to advance the anti-MX debate and unanimity within the Twelve.

APPENDIX

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY’S MX STATEMENT
MAY 5, 1981

We have received many inquiries concerning our feelings on the proposed basing of the MX missile system in Utah and Nevada. After assessing in great detail information recently available, and after the most careful and prayerful consideration, we make the following statement, aware of the response our words are likely to evoke from both proponents and opponents of the system.

First, by way of general observation we repeat our warnings against the terrifying arms race in which the nations of the earth are presently engaged. We deplore in particular the building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry. We are advised that there is already enough such weaponry to de-
stroy in large measure our civilization, with consequent suffering and misery of incalculable extent.

Secondly, with reference to the presently proposed MX basing in Utah and Nevada, we are told that if this goes forward as planned, it will involve the construction of thousands of miles of heavy-duty roads, with the building of some 4600 shelters in which will be hidden some 200 missiles, each armed with ten warheads. Each one of these ten nuclear warheads will have far greater destructive potential than did the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We understand that this concept is based on the provisions of a treaty which has never been ratified, and that absent such a treaty, the proposed installation could be expanded indefinitely. Its planners state that the system is strictly defensive in concept and that the chances are extremely remote that it will ever actually be employed. However, history indicates that men have seldom created armaments that eventually were not put to use.

We are most gravely concerned over the proposed concentration in a relatively restricted area of the West. Our feelings would be the same about concentration in any part of the nation, just as we assume those in any other area so selected would have similar feelings. With such concentrations, one segment of the population would bear a highly disproportionate share of the burden, in lives lost and property destroyed, in case of an attack, particularly if such were to be a saturation attack.

Such concentration, we are informed, may even invite attack under a first-strike strategy on the part of an aggressor. If such occurred the result would be near annihilation of most of what we have striven to build since our pioneer forebears first came to the western valleys.

Furthermore, we are told that in the event of a first-strike attack, deadly fallout would be carried by prevailing winds across much of the nation, maiming and destroying wherever its pervasive cloud touched.

Inevitably so large a construction project would have an adverse impact on water resources, as well as sociological and ecological factors in the area. Water has always been woefully short in this part of the West. We might expect that in meeting this additional demand for water there could be serious long term consequences.

We are not adverse to consistent and stable population growth, but the influx of tens of thousands of temporary workers and their families, together with those involved in support services, would create grave sociological problems, particularly when coupled with an influx incident to the anticipated emphasis on energy development.

Published studies indicate that the fragile ecology of the area would likewise be adversely affected.

We may predict that with so many billions of dollars at stake we will
hear much talk designed to minimize the problems that might be expected and to maximize the economic benefits that might accrue. The reasons for such portrayals will be obvious.

Our fathers came to this western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth. It is ironic, and a denial of the very essence of that gospel, that in this same general area there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.

With the most serious concern over the pressing moral questions of possible nuclear conflict, we plead with our national leaders to marshal the genius of the nation to find viable alternatives which will secure at an earlier date and with fewer hazards the protection from possible enemy aggression which is our common concern.

Spencer W. Kimball  
Church President

N. Eldon Tanner  
First Counselor

Marion G. Romney  
Second Counselor
“WHAT E’ER THOU ART, ACT WELL THY PART”: JOHN ALLAN’S ALBANY CRESCENT STONE

Matthew O. Richardson

ON SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 1898, David O. McKay stood at the wall of Stirling Castle taking in the historic sites before him. Although he was not in the best of humor, describing his previous night as “gloomy” and his missionary companion, Peter Green Johnston, as not giving him time “to brood over anything,” McKay was nonetheless impressed by what he saw. He looked over the statue of King Robert the Bruce, the Ladies’ Rock, the field of Bannockburn, the Public Green, Wallace’s Monument, and finally the sprawling valley where the River Forth and the ruins of the Abbey of Cambuskenneth lay. McKay later recorded in his journal that these places “awaken an indescribable interest in and profound respect for the heroes and gallant chiefs of bonny Scotland!”

McKay and his companion left Stirling Castle around five o’clock to return to their newly acquired lodgings at 9 Douglas Street in Stirling. The two missionaries were walking along Back O’ Hill Road below Gowan Hill when they approached a construction site for new apartments that would be known as the Albany Crescent. From

MATTHEW O. RICHARDSON {matt_richardson@byu.edu} is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.


2Ibid., 79.
Albany Crescent buildings on Back O’Hill Road, Stirling, Scotland, 1964. Photo by Jeff Mix.

Albany Crescent marker with Allan Stone (n.d.)
the sidewalk, David O. McKay noticed something unusual about the building. He later commented, “Over the front door was a stone . . . something unusual in a residence, and what was still more unusual, I could see from the sidewalk that there was an inscription chiseled in that arch.”³ Actually, two stones were embedded in the facade. A long stone above the door was extended beyond both edges of the door frame. The building’s name, “Albany Crescent,” and an unusual symbol were carved into this stone.⁴ Centered above the door and directly above the stone bearing the name of the building was a living-room window. To the right and centered next to that window was another stone that was large enough to be visible from the street. Its markings, however, would require a closer view. It was this second stone that grabbed David O. McKay’s attention.

McKay left the street to inspect the stone more closely. According to Francis M. Gibbons, a McKay biographer, this experience was “one of the major factors in the growth and development of David O. McKay” and that he “referred to it often during his long and productive life.”⁵ Later McKay called it the “crisis stone,”⁶ meaning that it was a catalyst, of sorts, delivering him from his missionary “crisis”

³David O. McKay, Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 1956 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, semi-annual), 91 (hereafter cited as Conference Report).

⁴The meaning of the symbol over the door is unknown. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that John Allan left notes, explanations, or commentary that would help in understanding the symbols he included in most of his designs.


when he was nearly overwhelmed by discouragement and homesickness. But for those living in Stirling until Albany Crescent’s razing in 1965, the stone was just one of many unique designs left by John Allan, a local architect of some fame.

Biographers and writers have chronicled David O. McKay’s life history, published his missionary journals and letters, gathered his sermons and teachings, and even pointed out the impact on his life of the motto inscribed on the Albany Crescent stone. Such writings readily acknowledge the significance of the stone in McKay’s formative years and its lasting impression. None, however, has considered the stone’s background, the detailed meaning of its symbols and their relationship to the familiar motto: “What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part.” Likewise, little has been said about how the stone ultimately ended up in Salt Lake City in the Church’s possession, or documented the production of copies now on display in Provo, Utah; Oakley, Idaho; and Scotland. This article focuses on those untold stories, hopefully leading to a fuller understanding of how such an unusual marker came into existence and how this stone can be inspirational and enlightening, not only to a young David O. McKay but to all those who consider its message and meaning today.

JOHN ALLAN

The stone embedded in the wall of the Albany Crescent building that roused McKay’s curiosity was the creation of John Allan, a well-known local architect whose work was typically regarded as whimsical. Allan was born in 1847 in Carnock, a Fife village west of Dunfermline, which is roughly twenty miles from Stirling.\(^\text{7}\) Some speculate that Allan studied architecture with John Kinross prior to 1875;\(^\text{8}\) but it seems more likely that both Allan and Kinross were students (rather than Allan studying under Kinross) for Kinross was articled to John Hutchison as an apprentice from 1870 to 1875 in Glasgow. In 1875, Allan moved to Stirling and began his own architectural work. William Hunter McNab, another Stirling local, apprenticed

\(^7\)The date of John Allan’s birth was never recorded. His obituary, however, states that Allan was christened on May 2, 1847. “Stirling Citizen Dead: Mr. John Allan, Architect,” Stirling Observer, February 21, 1922, 5.

\(^8\)John Allan: Stirling Architect (Stirling, Scotland: Stirling Council, 2003). No authors or compilers are identified.
with Allan from 1877 to 1881; McNab then left Stirling for Glasgow.9

Allan first gained attention with his inventive work on the Wolf’s Craig Building at 42 Port Street in Stirling in 1898. This was the first building in Scotland to use a steel frame; and even more impressive—at least to the general public—this building housed its own generator and was the first in the burgh to have electricity. Trainloads of people from Glasgow and Edinburgh visited Port Street to see the electric lights both inside and outside the building.10 Allan also garnered international attention at the 1913 Glasgow International Exhibition for his innovative housing designs for working people. Allan focused on health, proper drainage and ventilation, sturdy construction, and an attractive appearance that would increase the occupants’ fondness for the house. At the exhibition, Sir John Ure Primrose, Lord Provost of Glasgow, commented that Allan’s designs “opened up endless possibilities.”11

John Allan’s interests were not limited to architecture. He was also keenly interested in archeology and was a member of the Stirling Natural History and Archeological Society. He was especially fascinated with historical buildings like the Abbey of Cambuskenneth. According to Allan’s obituary, he devoted considerable time to investigating the abbey’s ruins and even prepared a plan to reconstruct it. He also deeply investigated the customs and habits of those who dwelt in the abbey in its ancient glory. Reportedly, this was “a subject which no one could describe with more authority” than John Allan.12

Although Allan was a man of varied interests and acknowledged talents, he was remembered mostly for his unconventional architectural designs and bravura. He is credited with designing at least twenty buildings while another eight are “probables.” Frank Arneil Walker, an emeritus professor of architecture, describes Allan’s dis-


11 “Glasgow Building Exhibition,” Sterling Journal and Advertiser, October 2, 1913, 15.

12 “The Late Mr. John Allan: Death of a Notable Stirling Citizen,” Sterling Journal and Advertiser, February 23, 1922, 4.
tinctive designs as “a characteristically weird idiosyncrasy.” These idiosyncrasies were his own. There is no evidence that Allan borrowed elements of his eccentric architectural style from early mentors or peers or that McNab, his own apprentice, adopted Allan’s eccentricity either. Allan also appears unaffected by what was in vogue or accepted as the general standard by his peers or even by the public. This free-spirited approach to architectural design makes his work easily recognizable.

John Allan’s Albany Crescent was erected on the bend of Back O’Hill Road and Upper Bridge Street in Stirling. Albany Crescent was actually two buildings separated by a narrow alley. The building hugged the bend of the road and curved partially around the corner of Back O’Hill Road and onto Upper Bridge Street. Although it cannot be confirmed, perhaps this curve contributed to naming the building Albany Crescent. As the architect, Allan was responsible for placing in the building’s facade the stone that captured David O. McKay’s interest. It is somewhat ironic, however, that what McKay considered being so “unusual” was actually quite typical, since Allan often designed his buildings with “a distinctive note about them, externally and internally.” For example, tablets with inscriptions are found on other Allan buildings in Stirling, including those on Port Street, Friars Street, Baker Street, Mona Place, and Main Street in Doune, a small town north of Stirling. In fact, the second Albany Crescent building adjacent to the one bearing the “What E’er Thou Art” stone also had a tablet set into its facade. This tablet bore the image of a heraldic rampant lion symbolizing dauntless courage. It bore the inscription, “WE ARISE IN SONDRY WYSE” and wielded an axe, symbolic of executing military duty. Allan also used statues of rampant lions for his 1897–98 design of the building on 42 Port Street.

13Frank Arneil Walker is professor emeritus of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow where he taught in the Department of Architecture and Building Science for more than thirty years. He has written numerous books about architecture and architectural history. John Gifford and Frank Arneil Walker, The Buildings of Scotland: Stirling and Central Scotland (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 82.

14Albany is the historical and literary name for Scotland. Additionally, in 1490 the Duke of Albany lived in Stirling Castle, which is roughly a thousand yards from the location of Albany Crescent.

15“Stirling Citizen Dead,” 5.
John Allan stone. Photograph taken in 1964 by Jeff Mix. The date on the bottom line after John Allan’s name is 1896.
in Stirling. While McKay may have seen other Allan designs while doing missionary work in Stirling, he never mentions any in his writings or his sermons.

JOHN ALLAN’S ALBANY CRESCENT STONE

The stone that riveted David O. McKay’s curiosity was twenty-seven inches long, six wide, and thirty-five inches high. All of the edges had a 1.75 inch beveled border. It is likely made from local limestone which was so plentiful that Sterling Castle is actually constructed of limestone. John Allan’s Albany Crescent stone is still in remarkable condition considering nearly seventy years of exposure and weathering. Although the stone is nearly white, it had been darkened with soot and dirt by the time it was extracted from Albany Crescent. Some carvings on the right side of the stone are worn but are still distinguishable. Its only current significant blemishes are at the bottom of the stone. The beveled edge on the left corner is broken off and the right corner is missing as well. This damage most likely occurred when the stone was removed from the Albany Crescent building during its demolition in 1965, for photographs taken of the building prior to its demolition show the corners of the stone intact. Unfortunately, the damage to the lower-right corner makes some of the inscription indecipherable.

McKay records referring to the stone are consistent in relating that he spoke only of the inscription, “What e’er thou art, act well thy part.” As a result, those familiar with McKay’s accounts are often surprised when they see the stone for the first time, for there is more to it than just the oft-quoted phrase. The stone has four distinct parts: (1) the architect’s attribution, (2) the arrow, (3) the motto, and (4) the magic square.

Architect’s Attribution

Although the stone inset in Albany Crescent has been called the “David O. McKay stone,” it is in truth, the “John Allan stone.” Four inches from the bottom of the stone in 1½ inch upper-case letters is carved: “JOHN _ ALLAN _ ARCHITECT _ 189_.” The final digit in the year was on the lower right corner, now broken off. Photographs of the stone while it was still in place show clearly that the year is “1896.”¹⁶ Even though McKay described the Albany Crescent building as being under construction in March 1898, it is unknown when the project began or when the project was actually completed. Typi-

¹⁶What E’er Thou Art . . . photographs, ca. 1961, Archives, Family and
cally, dates associated with buildings mark the year of the project’s completion. In this case, however, the inscription date probably signifies either the year of design, the beginning year of construction, or the year the stone was carved.17 This was the case in other Allan buildings. For example, the Wolf’s Craig building on Port Street has, like Albany Crescent buildings, two granite stones set into the facade.  

17It may be argued that Allan created the stone in 1896 without any connection to the Albany Crescent building and that he, or someone else, decided to add the already created tablet to the building by 1898.
One bears John Allan’s name and the year “1897.” The *Dictionary of Scottish Architects* lists the “starting date” for the Wolf’s Craig building as 1897. Similarly, John Allan’s building on 56 Main Street in Doune also has a tablet inset in the facade bearing the year “1900.” (It does not, however, include Allan’s name.) Once again, 1900 is listed as the start date for the construction, rather than the completion date. I therefore see it as likely that Allan started the Albany Crescent project in some form—initial design or actual construction—by 1896. If this was the case, then it obviously took several years to complete.

**The Arrow**

At the very bottom of the stone, centered on the beveled edge, is an unusual 5¼ inch arrow pointing directly left with its point fully encased in a circle. Opposite the point, the shaft intersects what looks like an italicized letter “N.” This symbol was not unique to the Albany Crescent stone for similar markings are found on the front chimney-stack on an 1897 building attributed to Allan on Mona Place, the door post of 32 Albert Place, the facade of the Friars Street building and the building on 56 Main Street in Doune, and on the Wolf’s Craig building on Port Street and Dumbarton Road.

It has been suggested that the “N” stands for “north” and that the arrow is actually a compass of sorts. However, only the Mona Place building points in a northerly direction. Furthermore, the Wolf’s Craig building has two similar symbols. One is an arrow with “N” on the shaft. The other is arrow-like but ends in a circle, rather than a point, and has a letter “H” on the opposite end. Interestingly, the Albany Crescent stone combines elements of both symbols from the Wolf’s Craig building. Unfortunately, Allan failed to leave a journal or notes about these symbols, so their genesis and meaning must remain conjectural. As pointed out in a 2003 Stirling Council pamphlet commemorating notable Stirling citizens, “The symbolic references which he [Allan] fed into his architectural designs...lend an air...”

---

18“DSA Building/Design Report.”

19Jeff Mix, a missionary who helped retrieve the Albany Crescent stone in 1965, commented that building construction in Scotland at the time was very “relaxed” and took much more time to complete than one would typically expect. Jeff Mix, interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, March 27, 2006, notes in my possession.
of mystery to his work today.” The stone-carver who realized Allan’s designs is also a mystery.

The Motto

The motto that so inspired David O. McKay appears in the upper 6½ inches of the Albany Crescent stone. The two-line inscription is carved in 1½-2-inch upper-case letters: “WHAT-E’ER. THOU.ART. ACT.WELL. THY.PART.” Like the architect’s attribution, this motto is easy to understand. It is similar, though not identical, to a line from the well-known poem, “An Essay on Man” (1733–34) by English essayist and poet Alexander Pope: “Act well your part, there all the honour lies.” Whether Allan’s motto was a variation on Pope, originated by Allan himself, or inspired from another source doesn’t change its inspirational quality.

The call to “act well thy part,” seemed to be a theme of sorts for Allan for the next several years. Not more than fifteen feet from the “What E’er Thou Art” stone, the stone in the second Albany Crescent building of the axe-wielding lion had the motto: “We arise in sundry wyse,” communicating the importance of executing one’s duty with dauntless courage. It thus emphasized that one should act one’s part with execution and courage. Other “homespun precatory appeals” were included on other Allan buildings Allan. For example, the optimistic injunction “LET.JUSTICE.TRUTH.HONOR.AND.RE-SPECT.FOR.OTHERS.RIGHTS.BE.WROUGHT. INTO. EV-ERY.PART. OF.OUR. EMPIRE” was carved on the tablet in Allan’s 1900 building in Doune. In 1902, Allan inscribed: “HONOR. PRINCI.PLE” and “DO.YER.DUTY” in the tablets on the Friars Street facade. Thus, the call to duty was not unique to the Albany Crescent stone, although it seems to have been the first and was timely—at least for McKay.

After spying the stone from a distance and deciding to leave the road for a closer inspection, McKay remembered: “I was half way up the graveled walk, when there came to my eyesight a striking motto

22Gifford and Walker, The Buildings of Scotland, 739.
carved in stone.”23 David Lawrence McKay, David O. McKay’s son, said that “this message struck Father forcefully.”24 McKay described what happened next: “I repeated it [the motto] to Elder Johnston as we walked into town. . . . As we walked toward our destination, I thought about this motto, ‘What e’er Thou Art, Act Well thy Part.’”25 This motto had such a profound impact upon McKay that he took fresh courage from it as a missionary and referred to the motto in his teachings throughout his life.

Although McKay emphasized the motto, the last section of the stone should not be overlooked. In fact, it appears that John Allan included the lower portion of the stone to emphasize the motto’s meaning and application in a dramatic and peculiar fashion.

**Magic Square Symbolism**

Even though Allan may have been influenced by Pope in selecting the motto, using it with the symbolic design incised on the stone was indeed unique to Allan. Immediately below the engraved inscription is a matrix of nine symbols neatly arranged in three rows and three columns in seven-inch squares. This section is actually the largest of the stone’s four sections and takes up roughly 70 percent of its surface. It is somewhat ironic that this largest aspect of the Albany Crescent stone is the least discussed, especially since the symbols dramatically underscore the motto that is the primary focus of those most interested in the stone.

David O. McKay must have noticed the symbols on the stone since, from the street, the symbols would have been the only observable part of the stone. The inscription would have been too small to make out at that distance. Those viewing the stone for the first time immediately have their attention seized by these symbols. No doubt that is what McKay meant when he observed that the stone was “most unusual” and moved in for a closer look. McKay never spoke about the symbols and may not have grasped their meaning; but considered simultaneously, the symbols and motto deepen and punctuate the

---

meaning remarkably.

It is rumored that Allan’s designs, and especially those on the Albany stone, are associated with Masonic symbolism. The Masons had been active in both Dunfermline and Stirling since 1741, but there is no evidence that Allan was associated with the Masons and his symbols do not resemble common Masonic symbols.

The nine raised symbols are, for the most part, simple geometric shapes. Each symbol represents a number—a whole integer. Almost all of the geometric symbols can be deciphered by counting the sides of the shape displayed. For example, the triangle shape represents the number three. The diamond shape represents the number four, and so forth. In this manner, six of the nine stones can easily be assigned a specific number. The three exceptions are a hand with four fingers and the thumb extended, a large “X” carved inside a rough circle, and a nearly smooth circle enclosing two vertical parallel lines.

The hand with its five digits is enclosed in a pentagram, a five-sided shape. While a pentagram has some Masonic associations, it was most likely used here to emphasize the numerology and enhance the design aesthetically. The large “X” incised in the rough-cut circle is actually the Roman numeral X (10) in a decagram, or ten-sided shape. Thus, this symbol is a geometric representation of the number ten.

The final shape—the circle with two parallel vertical lines—may logically be interpreted as either a Roman numeral two (II) or the number eleven (11). The only way to accurately decipher it requires considering all the symbols/numbers on the stone together. The top row depicts the numbers 5, 10, and 3. The second row displays 4, 6, and 8. The third row contains 9, either 2 or 11, and 7. The sums of the

26 While modern Freemasonry is considered to have originated in England in documents such as the “Old Charges” or “Old Constitutions,” the combining of medieval legend, institutional structure organization based on lodges, and the rituals and secret procedures are thought to have originated in Scotland. David Stevenson, The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland’s Century, 1590–1710 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 5–9. For interesting historical accounts of local lodges in areas like Stirling and Dunfermline, see The Grand Lodge of Ancient Scottish Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland, http://www.grandlodgescotland.com/website/No.30.htm (accessed May 23, 2006).
first two rows is 18. If the same pattern were to hold true for the third row, then the mystery number would have to be 2, rather than 11. A cross-check is that the same pattern holds for the columns. The sum of the numbers in the first column (5, 4, and 9) is also 18—likewise the sum for the third column (3, 8, and 7). Only 2 will yield 18 as the total for the middle column (10, 6, and 2). Added diagonally in either direction, the sum is also 18. In short, this carved matrix depicts what was commonly known at the time as a mathematical magic square.

Mathematical magic squares date back as early as 2,800 B.C. in China. One of the earliest is the Loh-Shu square, containing a three by three or nine-grid pattern like the Albany Crescent stone. Similar squares have been found in India and Egypt and were often thought to have special astrological, divinatory qualities or magical powers. Although “magic” is part of this arrangement’s name, most now consider the squares as simply recreational mathematics, interesting and amusing.\(^27\) The “magic” occurs when numbers are properly arranged so that the sum in each row, column, and diagonal is iden-

\(^27\)The legend of the Loh-Shu (scroll) magical square tells of locals trying to appease a river god when the Loh River was flooding. According to the tale, a turtle emerged from the river with a curious pattern on its shell. The pattern was a three by three grid with numbers arranged so that the sum of every row, column, and diagonal would equal fifteen. Variations of
tical. For our purposes, the “magic” of the Albany Crescent stone is how the symbolism of the mathematical magic square not only underscores the motto of “What e’er thou art, act well thy part,” but how it actually gives the phrase a deeper and more meaningful context. Consider how the square is only “magic” when the numbers are in the proper place (acting their part). For example, switching 5 and 10 in the first row would prevent those rows from adding up to the correct sum. In fact, it would be impossible to replace any number with any other numeric value and still maintain the magic. In short, the proper overall outcome depends on each number “acting well” its part in relation to the greater whole. Even without the magic-square symbolism, “What e’er thou art, act well thy part” emphasizes the importance of fulfilling one’s role well or doing one’s duty diligently. But in association with the magic-square symbolism, this message still emphasizes and values individualism, but its value is derived from its contribution to the success of the greater whole. Paradoxically, both the individual and the group are simultaneously and equally emphasized. It is a symbiotic relationship at its best. Not only does the success of both parties depend on each another, but both aspects are necessarily defined by each other as well.

With this relationship in mind, it seems that Pythagorean numerology may be more relevant to the Albany Crescent stone than religious or Masonic symbolism. According to the Greek mystic and mathematician Pythagoras, numbers have a peculiar character, virtue, and property. For example, “2” was believed to represent, among other things, weakness or passivity, while “5” was thought to characterize adventure and versatility. It is not known if Allan was even aware of Pythagorean numerology, but the concept of a number with associated individual characters, virtues, and properties


28Whether eighteen has symbolic meaning is not known. Other mathematical magic squares follow the same principles but have different sums.

29Pythagoras (ca. 580–500 B.C.) was perhaps best known for the geometric theorem that bears his name, i.e., the square of a right triangle’s hy-
being placed in a magical square rubric is intriguing. Thus, the phrase, “What e’er thou art, act well thy part,” would emphasize that a “5” must act its own part or, in other words, be true to its designated virtues, character, and/or properties. In the context of the magical square, however, each virtue, character, and property of the “5”—or any other number in the matrix—does not stand alone but is appropriately defined by its relationship with the virtues, characters, and properties of the other numbers.

Allan’s combination of the motto “What e’er thou art, act well thy part” and the magic-square symbolism emphasizing the value of individual duty within the context of other parts of the greater whole is magnificently powerful. Interestingly, Alexander Pope seems to have had the same idea. The line “Act well your part,” continues: “there all the honour lies.” Near the conclusion of the lengthy poem, Pope wrote:

God loves from Whole to Parts: but human soul
Must rise from Individual to the Whole.
Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;
His country next; and next all human race;
Wide and more wide, th’ o’erflowings of the mind
Take every creature in, of every kind.30

It is particularly intriguing that Allan designed the Albany
Crescent bearing this stone as working-class housing. 31 Albany Crescent has remarkable similarities to Allan’s later designs that won acclaim at the Glasgow International Building Exhibition for providing the working man, who lacked material wealth, with comfortable housing that instilled pride and meaning. 32 John Allan felt that the working “part” was just as significant as the more elite “parts.” As such, he believed that improved housing for the working class was actually a service that extended beyond the working class to society in general. Allan arguably meant his designs to be a positive improvement to the whole community and to influence social reform of the day. 33

It is possible that David O. McKay understood this relationship. As he and Johnston walked back to their apartment, McKay gave voice to the personal applications forming within him. He told his companion about a custodian at the University of Utah who helped with the football gear and even assisted the players with their homework. “He was unassuming, unostentatious,” McKay said of the custodian, “But he did his duty well.” 34 Upon reflection, McKay concluded, “I realized then that I had just as great a respect for that man as I had for any professor in whose class I had sat. He acted well his part.” 35 I hypothesize that McKay was not only seeing the importance of a man who did his duty honorably but that he may well have been seeing the relationship between the custodian’s part, the professor’s part, and the football team’s part. Each was connected one to the other and all were connected with the greater whole—the university.

McKay then reflected upon his own “part.” He thought of his activities prior to seeing the stone. He and his companion had been sightseeing; and even though he had thrilled to the landscape, history, and courageous individuals of his Scottish heritage, he decided

31“The Late Mr. John Allan,” 4.
32“Glasgow Building Exhibition,” Sterling Journal and Advertiser, October 2, 1913, 15.
35David O. McKay, Conference Report, 83.
that his activity “was not missionary work.”  

He concluded: “Well, I am here as a missionary so I will act the part and be a good missionary!” But he also grasped the greater context of the message. During that walk home, “I thought about this motto, ‘What [E]’er Thou Art, Act Well thy Part,’ and took it as a direct message to me, and I said to myself, or the Spirit said to me, ‘You are a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; more than that—you are here in the Mission Field as a representative of the Church, and you are to act well your part as a missionary, and you get into the work with all your heart.’” Obviously McKay could see the importance of being a good missionary, but he was also seeing how that role related to the larger context of being a member of the Church. “I accepted the message given to me on that stone,” McKay reported, “and from that moment we tried to do our part as missionaries in Scotland.” McKay’s son, David Lawrence McKay, said that his father rededicated himself “completely and wholeheartedly.”

David O. McKay left Stirling in May 1898 for Glasgow. He visited Stirling again less than a year later, on April 14, 1899, with Elder John T. Edward. They toured the usual historical sites and left for Glasgow the next day. It is not known if McKay went back to view the stone during this brief visit. It wouldn’t be surprising, however, if he did. Not long after this tour, McKay received a letter of encouragement from his sweetheart, Emma Ray Riggs, who counseled him to do his work well. Emma Ray’s words apparently triggered a memory, either from the year before or one that was fresh in his mind from his recent trip to Stirling. Responding on April 25, 1899, he reminisced about the experience in Stirling with the Allan stone: “As I again read your letter now before me, a warm feeling of appreciation of your encouraging words come over me; and your advice—‘Do your work well’—will ever be remembered, though perhaps not heeded as it should be. It reminds me of a beautiful inscription carved over the door of one of the

38Prince and Wright, David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism, 7.
39McKay, quoted in Gibbons, David O. McKay, 45.
40David Lawrence McKay, My Father, David O. McKay, 24.
cottages in the east part of Stirling: ‘What e’er thou art, act well thy part.’ If one only chooses the good part and does his work well, success and happiness will certainly be his.”41 Once again, McKay was expressing the importance of doing his duty and how it relates to the greater sum which is happiness and success.

The impact of the stone for McKay extended beyond his missionary service in Scotland. In later sermons, McKay spoke of the connection between the “parts” of our lives whether missionary, friend, family, neighbor, country, human race, or any living creature. He often attributed his experience with the John Allan Albany Crescent stone, as the genesis—of sorts—to this understanding.

In a sermon about the priesthood in 1954, McKay began by quoting, “What e’er thou art, act well thy part,” then continued: “Are you a deacon, do the duties of a deacon well. Are you a teacher, do your work well. . . . Brethren, there is nothing in the world so powerful in guiding youth as to have them act well their parts in the priesthood.”42 He then talked about how these duties contribute to the success of a larger whole—the priesthood.

“Remember this as a guideline in whatever position you are called to serve,” McKay taught in a 1969 general conference, “What e’er thou art, act well thy part.” “What are you?” McKay asked rhetorically. “You are men who hold the priesthood of God, who hold divine authority to represent Deity in whatever position to which you have been assigned.”43 As such the success of the whole depends upon each part fulfilling its role.

**RECLAIMING THE STONE**

In 1955, more than fifty-five years after serving in Stirling as a missionary, David O. McKay returned to view the stone that had such an impact on him. During that trip, A. Hamer Reiser, secretary to the First Presidency, accompanied McKay and recalled driving up and down Back O’Hill Road looking for the Albany Crescent buildings. Unfortunately, President McKay didn’t recognize any of the buildings as the right one. Having driven to the end of the road without any

---

41Mary Jane Woodger, ed., *Heart Petals: The Personal Correspondence of David Oman McKay to Emma Ray McKay* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 27.


luck, Reiser recalled: “There, as we halted for a ‘Stop’ sign, I glanced up to the right and saw a two-storied, stone building which could have been nearly a hundred years old. Over the doorway were the words: ‘What e’er thou art act well thy part.’”

The stone did not remain a private memory. Missionaries serving in Scotland were well-versed with McKay’s experience at Albany Crescent and those serving in the Stirling area typically tried to locate the stone. Just as McKay discovered during his return visit in 1955, however, finding the stone was not an easy task. Albany Crescent was located on Back O’Hill Road which was a remote street with very little traffic. Although Back O’Hill Road borders Drip Road, a busy connector to Upper Bridge Street and Burghmuir Road—both leading to the center of Stirling—only those specifically interested in accessing Back O’Hill Road would make the left-hand turn off Upper Bridge Street before coming to Drip Road. In addition to the remote location, the grime and soot accumulated on the stone would make it difficult to see even for those who were looking for it.

In February 1965, Elders Richard D. Brammer and David E. Goff were teaching a Mrs. McArthur, the mother of two young children, who lived in the Albany Crescent building. In fact, the McArthurs were living in the upstairs apartment whose living-room window was adjacent to the stone. The McArthurs informed the missionaries that they would be forced to leave Albany Crescent because it was scheduled to be demolished. By 1965, the dilapidated buildings were almost seventy years old.

Later, Brammer recalled walking along Back O’Hill Road with Goff and seeing a large crane with a wrecking ball taking down the

45When I interviewed missionaries who served in Scotland during the early 1960s, they consistently reported hearing the stories of McKay as a missionary throughout their missions. Some even felt that the phrase, “What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part,” was a mission motto. David E. Goff, interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, March 15, 2006, notes in my possession; see also Christensen and Mix, interviews.
46Goff, interview.
Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Moffatt, Banknok, Scotland, stand behind the two Allan stones from the Albany Crescent. The lion stone is on the right. Photograph by Phillip D. Jensen, April 1965.
bany Crescent buildings. At that point, the stone was still in place in a part of the structure still standing. Worried that the stone would be destroyed, Brammer quickly talked with the wrecking crane operator, told him of the stone’s significance to Latter-day Saints, and asked him to spare the stone until he could contact Phillip D. Jensen, president of the North Scottish Mission. Luckily the crane operator was sympathetic to Brammer’s request and obliged. Brammer and Goff quickly telephoned the mission office in Edinburgh to inform them of the situation.47

President Jensen received Brammer’s telephone call in Edinburgh and then discussed the demolition with some of his office staff.48 President Jensen was excited about acquiring the stone, but his schedule prohibited him from leaving Edinburgh for about two weeks. On Friday, March 12, 1965, the Jensens drove to Stirling. The entire row of Albany Crescent apartments had already been razed, and the stone was gone. Noticing that other houses were also being demolished, Jensen inquired about Albany Crescent and discovered that the stone was being stored at the demolition company’s yard in Banknock, thirteen miles south of Stirling, as a “result of the request made by the missionaries.”49 The Jensens drove to Banknock and found the stone still intact at the offices of Alexander Moffatt and Sons. Moffatt had also saved the rampant lion stone from the second Albany Crescent building. Moffatt wanted the mission to have the stone and felt that £30 would be reasonable compensation for saving the stone and delivering it to Edinburgh.50 Jensen purchased the “What ‘er thou art” stone, but left the rampant lion stone in the possession of Moffatt in Banknock.

The stone arrived in Edinburgh on Thursday, March 18, 1965. Under the direction of Elder Albert Byrnes, a labor missionary and the building supervisor of the new LDS chapel being constructed adjacent to the mission home, the stone was placed on the lawn of the

47Richard D. Brammer, interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, March 15, 2006, notes in my possession.
48Ashley J. Hall was then Jensen’s assistant. Interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, December 1, 2006, notes in my possession.
mission home. According to several missionaries serving in the mission home at the time, a mold was taken of the stone and sent to Salt Lake City. Within the next few days, Byrnes and his crew built a brick encasement for the stone on the front lawn near the circular drive outside mission headquarters. The final casing was a little under five feet high and about three and one half feet wide.

mission home. According to several missionaries serving in the mission home at the time, a mold was taken of the stone and sent to Salt Lake City. Within the next few days, Byrnes and his crew built a brick encasement for the stone on the front lawn near the circular drive outside mission headquarters. The final casing was a little under five feet high and about three and one half feet wide.

52Larry Winterseen was a missionary serving in the mission home when the stone was delivered. He recalled that a “mold” was taken of the stone after it arrived in Edinburgh and before it was encased in brick. Interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, December 5, 2006, notes in my possession. John Bailey, also serving in the mission home at the time of the stone’s arrival, “vaguely recalled” workers taking a mold of the stone. Interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, December 7, 2007, notes in my possession.
53Ashley J. Hall, “The Factual History of Recovering the ‘David O. McKay Stone,’” October 25, 2002, [p. 4]; photocopy of typescript in my possession. Although mission headquarters are in the same location, the address has changed to 51 Spylaw Road.
Jensen informed President McKay on March 19, 1965, that the stone had been recovered from Albany Crescent and that he intended to keep the stone in Edinburgh unless instructed otherwise. Jensen included a photograph. Claire Middlemiss, McKay’s secretary, wrote to Jensen on April 21, 1965, that McKay was “very pleased” that the stone had been retrieved, thanked him for the photograph, and agreed that it would be best to “have the stone preserved” at mission headquarters in Scotland.54

On May 18, 1965, Jensen received a letter from the First Presidency notifying him that the North Scottish Mission and the Scottish Mission would be consolidated into one mission, named the Scottish

54Claire Middlemiss, letter to Phillip D. Jensen, April 21, 1965; photocopy in my possession.
David B. Haight, then president of the Scottish Mission, would preside over the newly consolidated mission while Jensen would become president of the California Mission. Jensen and Haight decided to complete the consolidation by June 1, 1965, locating the mission office in the building on Colinton Road in Edinburgh. Haight remained in Glasgow until some construction on the mission home was completed. He reported receiving a letter from David O. McKay relating his pivotal experience with the stone. For his part, Haight often used the stone to remind the missionaries serving in Scotland of David O. McKay’s discouragement and renewed zeal. He emphasized that the missionaries could also rise above discouragement through prayer, commitment, and hard work.

In January 1970, McKay died. In June, John E. Carr, director of Church Translation Services, scheduled a trip to visit the stake and mission presidents in Great Britain to introduce Peter Morley, newly hired as manager of the Church Distribution Center in Manchester, England. Prior to his leaving, Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Quorum of the Twelve told Carr about the Albany Crescent stone at the Scottish Mission office in Edinburgh, instructing him that the stone was the “property of the Church and . . . should be brought back to Salt Lake.” He asked Carr to make the necessary arrangements during his upcoming trip.

Carr and Morley visited F. Nephi Grigg, president of the Scotland Edinburgh Mission in June 1970. Grigg had received no notification about the stone’s removal, so the news shocked and disappointed him. Morley, who formerly made his living in the shipping container business, crated the stone and shipped the object, weighing several hundred pounds, to the Salt Lake Distribution Center on 33 Richards.

---

56Lucille Tate, David B. Haight: An Apostle of the Lord (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 203.
Mark E. Petersen was notified and arranged for the McKay family to view the stone at Richards Street. According to Carr, the McKay family was clearly surprised that the stone had been transported to the United States and felt “they had been given a challenge as to what would be best” to do with it. Since the stone was the Church’s property, it was also not clear what role they were expected to play in the decision. At one point, the family felt that the stone could be displayed at David O. McKay’s homestead in Huntsville, Utah, but opted to discuss the matter privately before making a decision. Meanwhile, the stone was stored in the welfare warehouse on Redwood Road in Salt Lake City.

A period without adequate records follows in the stone’s history. Missionaries who had returned from Scotland in 1965 had expressed an interest in having the stone moved to “the BYU,” and Phillip D. Jensen, who returned from his mission in California in 1966, recalled seeing the stone in Hotel Utah in a room that had been converted into a cafeteria for missionaries receiving instruction at the Missionary Home on North Temple in Salt Lake City. By 1976, however, the stone was on public display near the cafeteria entrance at the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City. About this time, John Carr received a telephone call from David B. Haight, ordained an apostle in January 1976, wanting to know who had authorized the stone’s removal from Edinburgh. Carr explained that “instructions had been is-

58 When the stone arrived in Edinburgh, Albert Byrne and his crew estimated that it weighed “more than 500 pounds.” Jensen, Journal, March 18, 1965. Copy of entry in my possession. Richards Street no longer exists. It was located directly across South Temple Street from the south gate on Temple Square.

59 David Lawrence McKay and his siblings arranged to have Carr show them the stone while it was stored on Richards Street. Although he couldn’t be certain, Carr thinks that McKay’s widow, Emma Ray Riggs McKay, was also in attendance. (She died November 14, 1970.) Carr, “An Interesting Sequel.”

60 Ibid.


62 Phillip D. Jensen, interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, June 1, 2006, notes in my possession.

sued to bring the stone to Salt Lake” because “it belongs to the Church and should be given wider use here than only on the lawn at the Scottish Mission Headquarters.” Haight was very disappointed and desired that the stone “be put in some location where it could do some good.”64

A few years later, in 1979 or 1980, the stone was given a more direct relationship with missionaries. Joe J. Christensen, who served as president of the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Provo, Utah, from 1979 to 1983, received word that the stone might be displayed in the foyer of the MTC’s Administration Building. Shortly afterward, the decision was finalized, and the stone was sent to the MTC.65

In August 1980, Spencer W. Kimball announced the construction of the new Museum of Church History and Art on West Temple Street in Salt Lake City.66 President Christensen recalls receiving a telephone call from G. Homer Durham, the Church Historian and managing director of the Department of Church History, informing him that the stone would be removed from the MTC and made part of a planned exhibit on Church presidents in the new museum. A copy of the original stone would be made and sent to the MTC.67 The copy did not arrive before Christensen was released in 1983. The Museum of Church History and Art was dedicated on April 4, 1984, and opened to the public the following day.68 The original stone is still part of the McKay exhibit.

Between 1988 and 1990, Ed Pinegar, president of the Missionary Training Center received a telephone call from Salt Lake City asking if the MTC would be interested in having a copy of the stone.

64 Carr, “An Interesting Sequel.”
65 Joe J. Christensen was not certain when the stone actually arrived at the MTC, but it was probably around 1980. Joe J. Christensen, interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, May 31, 2006, notes in my possession.
67 Interestingly enough, President McKay had suggested that a “duplicate of the stone could be made and erected at the BYU with the story connected with it” in 1965. He felt that having a stone at BYU “would be inspiring to the missionaries leaving for the mission field.” Middlemiss, Letter to Jensen, April 21, 1965.
Pinegar enthusiastically accepted, and in due course, a fiberglass copy of the stone arrived. Apparently Elder David B. Haight, during a visit to the MTC, saw the stone displayed in the foyer and rapped on its surface. He was surprised at the hollow echo and even more surprised to learn that the stone was actually a fiberglass copy. Haight expressed that a fiberglass model was unacceptable for the setting and should be replaced. As a result, another copy was made out of stone by Hans Monuments in Salt Lake City and installed. The fiberglass copy it replaced was, at Elder Haight’s direction, sent to Edinburgh in 1997.

The original Allan stone on display in Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City, with other McKay memorabilia. His saddle is on the left and a carved kava bowl is on the right. Photograph by Matthew O. Richardson, 2006.

---

69 Ed Pinegar felt that the fiberglass stone arrived in 1989 although he could not be certain. Ed J. Pinegar, interviewed by Matthew O. Richardson, May 31, 2006. A mold of the original stone was taken and the fiberglass copy was most likely made by 3-D Art in Kearns, Utah. This company also created fiberglass copies of Thorvaldsen’s Christus for the Church. Stacey Goodliffe, interviewed May 30, 2006 by Matthew O. Richardson, notes in my possession.

70 Stacey Goodliffe, Missionary Department Display and Exhibits, was
Gordon Williams, the newly called president of the Scotland Edinburgh Mission, was directed to wait for Haight’s instructions about placing the replica. During that consultation, they decided that, because it was fiberglass, it should not be displayed outdoors. However, Haight wanted the stone to remain at the mission office in Edinburgh, so it was hung on the wall in the mission office entrance, where it is still displayed.  

Using styrofoam and tile grout, Richard W. Featherstone, a former missionary in Scotland, duplicated the Allan stone according to the original dimensions, and the former missionaries presented it to Elder Haight at their annual reunion on March 31, 2000. Haight displayed this stone in his office in the Church Administration Building in Salt Lake City until his death in 2004. Haight’s children then donated the stone to the Church to be displayed at their father’s birthplace in Oakley, Idaho, where it stands in the Oakley Idaho Stake Center.

In June 2006, William C. Vriens, president of the Scotland Edinburgh Mission, commissioned two more fiberglass copies of the Allan stone from a mold of the 1997 fiberglass replica already at mission headquarters. One copy is on display in the Alloa Ward meetinghouse on Grange Road in Alloa (about seven miles east of Stirling) and the other copy is displayed in the Edinburgh Stake Center on Colinton Road adjacent to the mission office.

CONCLUSION

By all accounts, John Allan was a nonconformist of sorts, unaffected by those around him, a visionary contributor to his community through his unconventional and inspiring designs. Considering Allan from a different perspective, however, we may see that Allan was less idiosyncratic than just acting “well” his “part” as he perceived it. John Allan died February 22, 1922, at age seventy-five. He never married and lived with his sister for more than forty years at “Cliffbank,” a villa he had designed himself, at 32 Albert Place, in Stirling. In 2003, his life and work were celebrated in a pamphlet produced by the Stirling Council’s Planning Service. The pamphlet was the first in a series to promote notable locals and events. It is interesting that the leaflet celebrating John Allan’s work, included the impact of the Albany Crescent stone upon David O. McKay:

The remarkable story of the stone tablet bearing the inscription “WHAT-E’ER THOU ART/ ACT WELL THY PART” is worth tell-
ing. This text had brought encouragement to a downcast David Oman McKay who rose to become the Prophet President of the Mormon Church. So important was this event in McKay’s life that, when the Albany Crescent buildings which bore this inscription were demolished in 1965, the Mormon Church purchased the tablet and transported it back to Salt Lake City. It was subsequently moved to a place of honour in the Mormon Church’s Missionary Training Centre in Provo, Utah. With this exception, John Allan’s words remain upon his buildings to inspire or intrigue us today.74

In 2003, Charlie McKean, vice chair of Stirling Council’s Environmental Quality Committee, commented, “John Allan has left his mark on Stirling more than most across a wide range of buildings and he has left a fair number of architectural puzzles to unravel.”75 It is ironic that, in Stirling, both John Allan and his intriguing designs with their enigmatic markings are well known when perhaps his most frequently viewed work, the Albany Crescent stone, is no longer in Scotland; and even though his name is engraved in the stone itself, “John Allan” is not a name recognized by even those who are familiar with the stone. It is also ironic that, while those in Stirling have concluded that John Allan’s “puzzles” cannot be understood, the major symbolism on the Albany Crescent stone is decipherable but typically overlooked or unmentioned. As a result, the added richness of the inspirational motto “What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part” is forfeit.

In 1898, the Albany Crescent stone was a life-changing catalyst for young David O. McKay. This experience led to a chain of events that has made the stone the most viewed of all of Allan’s works. Besides the hundreds of missionaries that viewed the original stone or its copy in Scotland, the missionaries eating at the Hotel Utah, or the employees and visitors that saw it while it was displayed at Church headquarters, thousands of missionaries and visitors see the replica in the Provo MTC. In addition, every year more than 200,000 people from all over the world tour the Museum of Church History and Art, where the original stone is now located.76 The stone also provides exceptional inspiration to those who understand its history, message,

76The Museum of Church History and Art averages more than 200,000 visitors each year. In 2005, 437,787 people visited the museum; the
and symbolism and take David O. McKay’s urging to heart: “What e’er thou art, act well thy part. God help us to follow that motto.”

Perhaps John Allan would be pleased with that counsel.

lowest annual attendance was 1989 with just under 161,200 visitors.

77McKay, Conference Report, October 1956, 91.
and symbolism and take David O. McKay’s urging to heart: “What e’er thou art, act well thy part. God help us to follow that motto.”

Perhaps John Allan would be pleased with that counsel.

lowest annual attendance was 1989 with just under 161,200 visitors.

77McKay, Conference Report, October 1956, 91.
A Mormon Bigfoot: David Patten’s Cain and the Conception of Evil in LDS Folklore

Matthew Bowman

In the spring of 1835, Apostle David W. Patten claimed he saw Cain. He was serving a mission in Tennessee and staying with the family of Abraham O. Smoot, a future stake president and mayor of Salt Lake City and Provo. Three and a half years later, in October 1838, Patten was killed at the Battle of Crooked River in Missouri. A 1900 biography reprinted a letter Smoot sent to Joseph F. Smith in 1893, reporting Patten’s claim that, while riding his mule back to Smoot’s home he

met with a very remarkable personage who had represented himself as being Cain who had murdered his brother, Abel. . . . I suddenly noticed a very strange personage walking beside me . . . for about two miles. His head was about even with my shoulders as I sat in my saddle. He wore no clothing but was covered with hair. His skin was very dark. . . . He [said] that he had no home, that he was a wanderer in the earth. . . . He said that he was a very miserable creature, that he had earnestly sought death . . . but that he could not die, and his mission was to destroy the souls of men. . . . I rebuked him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by virtue of the Holy Priesthood, and commanded him to go hence and he immediately departed out of my sight.¹

Patten’s story has since become mildly famous, an essential

¹ MATT BOWMAN (matthewbbowman@gmail.com) is a graduate student at Georgetown University.
piece of Latter-day Saint folklore, and the inspiration for countless campfire tales and at least one full novel. Cain, the first murderer, is a powerful theological symbol of sin in the Western religious tradition. For Mormons, however, he is weighed with a host of roles beyond this. He has been, and sometimes still is, seen as a conscious ally of Satan and father of a cursed race. This second role was muted by the 1978 revelation extending priesthood ordination to all worthy male members, but Cain’s changing position in Mormon folklore is still worth examining for the insight it provides into how the Mormon mind has dealt with these issues over the course of its history.

Patten’s story persisted within Mormonism into the twentieth century. In the Fife Folklore Archives at Utah State University are numerous stories of encounters with Cain, prefaced with statements such as that offered by a Brigham Young University student in 1972, who “said that he heard this story from a religion teacher on the B.Y.U. campus. He said the teacher told it as a true story.” Another story, collected from a Salt Lake City Deseret Book employee in 1980 begins, “Several people have told me that Cain is still alive. They are actually teaching it in some Seminary classes here [in Salt Lake City].” A BYU anthropology student in the 1970s reported hearing the Patten story told as fact by his grandfather. Even Spencer W. Kimball, former president of the Church, recounted Patten’s story as fact in his *The Miracle of Forgiveness*—a book now regarded as a Mormon classic and still widely read more than thirty years after its publication. In his retelling, Kimball noted that Cain’s fate—as the cursed being himself recounted it to Patten—should serve as a warning about the plight of those whose sins are heinous enough to prove unforgivable.

Of course, many Mormons in the late twentieth century would listen to Patten’s story with skepticism; even the Deseret Book em-

---


2Seth Lester, *Clan of Cain* (Bangor, Maine: Booklocker, 2001) or online at http://www.booklocker.com/books/395.html (accessed May 2005); printout in my possession.

3Folk Collection 8a, Group 7: Box 3, 1.1.4.3.9.1, 1.1.4.3.7.1, and 1.1.4.3.5.1, Fife Folklore Archives, Special Collections, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan (hereafter Fife Archives); Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 127–28.
ployee above denied believing her seminary teacher’s tale. But that has not stopped it from circulating; new variations continued to appear in the Utah State and BYU archives into the 1990s. Clearly, the story has gripped the Latter-day Saint imagination; and its transformations—both because of and in spite of increased skepticism—can teach us something about the changing Mormon worldview. Today there is a common point to many of the stories. As a tale told by a BYU student in 1990 began, “Did you guys know that Bigfoot is really Cain?”

In a 2003 article discussing Utah folklore, the Deseret News (Salt Lake City) noted that “the Bigfoot/Cain idea originated in 1980 following apparent Bigfoot sightings in South Weber” in February of that year. Indeed, in various legends, Cain is described as being “covered in hair,” “bigger than anybody he’d ever seen before,” “a big, hairy creature” and so forth. In the most recent folklore, even if Cain is not explicitly identified as Bigfoot, the features in common are emphasized (hairiness, animal-like) rather than such supernatural characteristics as the curse or demonic intent that Patten stressed.

The conflation of these two legends is a study in the transformation of Mormon culture as reflected in its folklore. Its simplest lesson is that skepticism about the veracity of such tales can be interpreted as declining belief in physical manifestations of supernatural evil. However, the content of Cain stories reflects more subtle changes. The reidentification of Cain as Bigfoot demonstrates how Cain has come to be identified with the mainstream legendary figure; in the process, he is stripped of his spiritual status as an intelligent, malevolent agent of supernatural evil, a presence accepted, and even expected, in nineteenth-century Mormon life. Further, this dehumanization of Cain reflects the weakening grip of the “curse of Cain” folk doctrine that associated him with the stigmatized African race. In these ways the uncoupling of Cain and the demonic is indicative of a larger process of cultural assimilation and transformation.

The layering of a culturally or religiously specific element such as Mormonism’s Cain upon a more widely known folk legend such as Bigfoot is not a unique event. In his study of Three Nephites legends,

---

4 Folk Collection 8a, Group 2: Box 12, 1.8.1.21.1, Fife Archives.
6 The first is David Patten’s, in Wilson, The Life of David W. Patten, 45. The second is from Folk Collection 8a, Group 7: Box 3, 1.1.4.3.5.1, Fife Archives. The last is from Folk Collection 8, Box 73, 01-041, Fife Archives.
folklorist Hector Lee noted that new developments in the legend cycle were largely “apocryphal . . . added by the folk themselves.” Rather than emerging from Mormon-specific doctrine or culture, they were increasingly homogenous with American culture, reflecting the motifs and, most importantly, lessons of nationally popular urban legends. Lee asked rhetorically, “How much non-Mormon traditional lore can [the stories] absorb and still remain Nephite [or Mormon] stories?” The answer, as the Cain/Bigfoot stories demonstrate, is quite a lot. Lee argued that the unique aspects of Mormon legendry would wither as the line between American and LDS cultures grew increasingly blurry, as signaled by the absorption of non-Mormon motifs. Folklorist William A. Wilson, however, has demonstrated that quite the opposite has occurred. He points out that the Three Nephites legends have persisted and adapted even as the insularity of Mormon community has faded. Indeed, the story has proved strong enough to absorb in its entirety the much better-known legend of the vanishing hitchhiker, a phantom picked up on the side of the road by an unwary driver only to disappear from the backseat. When encountered by a Mormon in the tale, the phantom becomes a Nephite who utters some Mormon-specific warning. Thus, though the structure reflects generic American legendry, the content remains Mormon.7

I would argue that the assimilation of non-Mormon lore into Mormon legend demonstrates the vitality, not the stagnation, of Mormon folklore; it is a strength rather than the weakness Lee saw. As Wilson argues, these stories, even in their modern form, “tell us of a personal God concerned with our individual problems.” They teach of the continuing relevance of the spiritual in everyday life. The persistence within transformation of the supernatural figure of Cain is consistent with this argument; combined with such stories as the Nephite/hitchhiker legends, it demonstrates that Mormon folklore is strong enough to maintain a worldview in which the basic supernatural elements of the faith play an essential role. Though Cain’s nature, role, and identity have changed, placing such a biblical figure in the essentially secular Bigfoot tale is a

prime example of what Jan Brunvand calls “the Bible of the folk,” story cycles that extend the sacred territory of scripture into such seemingly secular topics as the anatomy (the male “Adam’s apple” is a piece of the forbidden fruit stuck in Adam’s throat) and botany (certain trees are cursed for providing the material of Christ’s cross). This shift—the preservation of the basic supernaturalism of Patten’s tale despite a process of adaptation—has allowed Cain’s earlier demonic and racist meanings to fade.

The easiest thing to overlook about Patten’s story, yet the most important not to forget, is that it was believed. The only written description of the event is Smoot’s letter as reprinted in Wilson’s biography. Smoot was responding to an inquiry by Joseph F. Smith, then a member of the First Presidency. Smoot fills his story with details, remembering the exact date and that it was “just twilight” when Patten returned. Clearly, Smith had heard the story and was intrigued enough to investigate, while the letter makes it clear that Smoot believed it to be fact. After receiving this letter, Smith relayed its contents to the Quorum of the Twelve. Apostle Abraham H. Cannon commented that he had “always entertained the idea that Cain was dead” but now changed his views. All three men, it appears, took the story seriously.

Even before Smoot’s letter, Eliza R. Snow wrote a poem in 1884 describing Cain:

As seen by David Patten, he was dark
When pointing at his face of glossy jet
Cain said, “You see the curse is on me yet.”
The first of murderers, now he fills his post
And reigns as king o’er all the murd’rous host.

She read this poem at a gathering of Church leaders and Snow relatives celebrating the birthday of Eliza’s brother Lorenzo, then a

---

8Jan Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore* (New York: Norton, 1968), 88. Dogwood and fig trees are both associated with the cross.

9Quoted in Wilson, *The Life of David W. Patten*, 45; “Diary Excerpts of Abraham H. Cannon,” Thursday, November 9, 1893, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

10Eliza R. Snow Smith, *The Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1884), 475.
member of the First Presidency. Her casual mention of Patten’s encounter implies that the occurrence was known—and more, accepted—by the audience for whom she wrote fifty years after Patten’s experience.

The Cain described by Patten and Eliza Snow, condemned by God, reigning in hell, and walking the earth, reflected religious assumptions of nineteenth-century Mormons. Philip L. Barlow has argued that Mormons of this period shared common Protestant assumptions of biblical literalism; Cain’s curse was therefore taken seriously and wedded with a more distinctive belief in what Brigham Young termed “spiritual warfare,” a supernatural struggle waged between good and evil over the well-trodden battleground of everyday life. As historian Paul Reeve has argued, the concept of a “spiritual battle between the forces of good and evil [was] manifest in nineteenth-century Mormon theology.” Nineteenth-century Mormon leaders embraced a Pauline conception of sin that identified evil as an external force, existing independently of God. A malignant, personified power, it threatened to grip humanity. Mormon leaders described this evil in tangible detail, moving the struggle out of the abstract and into the physical reality of everyday life. Supernatural conflict was for these men neither a metaphor nor very distant; indeed, leaders took care to bring it home to every Saint. Joseph Smith described the armies of Satan as “wicked men and angels of devils and all the infernal powers of darkness” that sought to destroy the Church, and with whom the Saints must be constantly “warring the Christian warfare.” Young claimed that “every person who desires and strives to be a Saint is closely watched by fallen spirits . . . they are visiting the human family with various manifestations.”

Moreover, these struggles were not to be understood as mere temptation to sin. Rather, they could be very physical, even involving

hand-to-hand combat. Heber C. Kimball told rapt Utah audiences about “legions of wicked spirits . . . as plain as I now see you, and they came as near to me as you now are. . . . They came to me as I was laying hands upon Brother Russell, the wicked spirits got him to the door of the room.” Kimball added that, when he shared these experiences with Joseph Smith, the Prophet “told me that he had contests with the devil, face to face. He also told me how he was handled and afflicted by the devil, and said, he had known circumstances where Elder Rigdon was pulled out of bed three times in one night.”

Jedediah Grant told listeners that Joseph Smith was given “revelations showing him the power of Lucifer, the opposite of good, that he might be aware of the strength of his opponent.” The physical nature of supernatural evil, a feature largely absent in today’s church, provided Patten’s story of Cain with an audience whose worldview was prepared to accept it.

Indeed, the leaders of the early Church seemed to revel in such spiritual battles. “When the kingdom of God is on the earth,” announced Jedediah Grant, “you may expect to see a special display or manifestation of the opposite to the Gospel. . . . Then the priesthood of the devil may be seen operating, for he has got one.” The Saints, perhaps, were pleased with the idea that they had brought Satan from hiding; it meant that the kingdom was rising as it should. Upon offering an oration over the cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple in 1853, John Young said, “I very well know that, at the commencement of the Temples that have heretofore been built in the name of the Lord, by this people, the devil has always moved his artillery with greater power and activity at that time. . . . I pray that we shall all feel nerv’d up with power to accomplish the great and glorious work we are called to perform.”

David Patten’s Cain provided the Saints with a clear and definable supernatural antagonist, thus, perhaps paradoxically, underscoring the truth of the work that Cain sought to destroy.

human action, see, for example, “Before the law was given, sin was in the world” (Rom. 5:13) and “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate to do . . . it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me” (NIV Rom. 7:15–17). See also Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 190–92.

---

14Ibid., 2:12.
Indeed, one of the most famous and best-documented encounters with Cain explicitly placed him in the role that John Young described. E. Wesley Smith, a son of Joseph F. Smith and Julina Lambson Smith, was president of the Hawaii Mission in 1921 when the temple at Laie was dedicated. The night before the dedication, Smith had a strange visitor. According to his own account:

A man came through the door. He was tall enough to have to stoop to enter. His eyes were very protruding and rather wild looking, his fingernails were thick and long. He presented a rather unkempt appearance and wore no clothing at all. . . . There suddenly appeared in [Smith’s] right hand a light which had the size and appearance of a dagger. . . . A voice said “This is your priesthood.” He commanded the person in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to depart. . . . Immediately when the light appeared the person stopped and on being commanded to leave, he backed out the door.16

A shaken Wesley contacted his brother, Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, who identified the apparition as “Cain . . . whose curse is to roam the earth seeking whom he may destroy.” Joseph Fielding then echoed John Young’s themes almost verbatim, describing Cain as a representative of “the spirit of the adversary” of which there was “always unusual evidence . . . for a period just prior to the dedication of every temple.” As a final touch, Joseph directed his brother to “a little book written by Lycurgus A. Wilson on the life of David W. Patten” for further investigation into the matter.17 Here, then, is perhaps the traditional Mormon image of Cain—a physical presence on the earth, an incarnation of supernatural evil sent by Satan, whose primary role was to undo the work of the Church.

Indeed, the motif of Cain attempting to disrupt the work of the Saints is echoed throughout the legends. One 1984 tale spoke of an unnamed apostle from the 1920s whose car had broken down while he was in Mexico “checking up on the mission there.” While walking through the desert to find help, the apostle encountered “a very large man about 7 feet tall and very dark and harry [sic] coming towards him. . . . The Apostle asked him who he was. This man said he was

16“Experiences with Cain,” n.d., MSS 5273, Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives).
17Ibid.
Caine [sic] . . . [and tried] to over power [the Apostle, but] . . . the Apostle cast him out with the authority of the Priesthood.” 18

Another story, collected in 1961, described a devout young man who had just recently been called to the office of Bishop. One evening while this man was working late into the night he began to feel as if something was wrong . . . A monstrous tall dark figure covered with black hair walked in [to his office]. . . . This figure had the appearance of what one would think Cain to have had . . . The Bishop had the feeling that its intent was to destroy him. . . . He called out “By the authority of the priesthood and the power of God I command you to leave!” 19

Both stories have very similar motifs: A dedicated servant of the Lord is pursuing his Church calling when Cain interrupts him and seeks to destroy him. And as one might expect, mission officials and missionaries seem to be the most frequent target for Cain; aside from more prominent mission workers like our unnamed apostle, E. Wesley Smith, and David Patten himself, ordinary and often unnamed missionaries have been plagued by Cain as well. One story from the 1970s tells of “two boys from the Bear River Valley who had just received their mission calls. . . . While they were riding they saw a big hairy creature. It spooked their horses. . . . They went to their stake president. . . . He then told them it was Cain.” Another story, collected in 1998, describes a giant “Cain-beast which chased two elders to their car.” 20

The ease with which E. Wesley Smith, the bishop, and the apostle dispatched Cain is a common nineteenth-century theme in stories of spiritual warfare; in these tales, God’s power in the form of the Church leader is pitted directly against Satan’s in the form of Cain, and God triumphs. Similarly, Cain presented little resistance to David

---

18Folk Collection 8a, Group 7: Box 3, 1.1.4.3.10.1, Fife Archives.
19Folk Collection 8a, Group 7: Box 3, 1.1.4.3.2.1, Fife Archives.
20Folk Collection 8, Box 73: 01–041, Lisa Larson, collector, Fife Archives; “A Night at the Canyon,” Whitney Belcher, collector, Wilson Folklore Archives 2204, Perry Special Collections. Interestingly, although the physical manifestations of evil in everyday life that Young and Smith spoke of seem to have largely departed from day-to-day Church life, the mission field remains one area in which such legends can still be found. See William A. Wilson’s examples of black horsemen and demonic possession in “On Being Human: The Folklore of Mormon Missionaries,” New York Folklore 8, nos. 3/4 (Winter 1982): 5–27.
Patten. When that apostle commanded him “in the name of Jesus Christ and by the virtue of the Holy priesthood” to leave, Cain “immediately departed out of my sight.” Both the apostle and bishop also banished Cain by invoking their priesthood authority. In these stories, Cain has an important function in Mormon culture. He is represented as a player on the distinctly Mormon battleground of Joseph Smith’s restoration and is understood through the sacred history that Mormonism wrote for itself.

These tales communicate the overt supernatural conflict between Cain and the power of God. However, other tales complicate these tidy narratives, for in Mormon folklore, Cain is not just any demon. Perhaps the single most frequent use of the word Cain in the legends and folk doctrine of the LDS Church has been his association with the “curse” of dark skin, a mark of spiritual inferiority, and, until 1978, the inability of his male presumed descendants to be ordained to the priesthood. Patten’s story, Snow’s poem, and several of the other stories discussed so far use “dark” or, less frequently, “black” to describe Cain’s physical appearance. Describing Cain as the progenitor of a cursed race is another way in which Mormon folklore has used Cain to explain evil to itself.

A case in point is the following tale, retold by folklorists William Wilson and Richard Poulson: “Missionaries tracting . . . a white section of a town in Georgia were surprised when a huge black Negro came to the door and hurled obscenities at them. His mein [sic] was hideous, and the missionaries left, much frightened. Their mission president later told them that the man had been Cain, that the town was very wicked, and that they should no longer labor there.”

This story presents a number of variants from the pattern. First, the protagonists uncharacteristically back down when confronted by “Cain.” Even the authority figure of the mission president seems to retreat. In the story of the two Bear Lake missionaries on horseback, the stake president identified the dangerous figure for them; but that earlier story ended at that point, leaving the impression that in naming Cain, the stake president has seized control of the situation. The implication is that the two missionaries fulfilled their missions despite Cain’s efforts.

---

In the Georgia tale, however, naming Cain almost seems a surrender to him. Perhaps it was meant to, given the strong racial overtones in this story. The specifics of “Negro” and “Georgia” imply race more strongly than any other tale examined for this study. Perhaps the surrender to Cain reflected the Church’s struggle during the civil rights movement when the story was collected—a period of awkward transition when the Church was confronting its own racial assumptions.

Undeniably, the association of darkness/blackness with evil has ancient roots, far older than Mormonism. In early America, the Puritans called the devil that haunted them the “Black Man.” However, it is also true that the Mormon belief system, which typically develops theology and pseudo-theology to explain virtually every practice or speculation, has produced a number of theories that not only associate a dark-skinned Cain with evil, but also with the African race, widely believed to be his descendants. John Taylor, third president of the Church, preached in 1881 that Cain’s descendants were preserved through the flood because “it was necessary that the devil should have a representation on Earth as well as God,” language


24Mark Leone, *The Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 168. Leone calls Mormonism a “do-it-yourself theology,” saying that, “Mormons create their own theology and philosophy in the literal sense, and in the context of the church they work out for themselves most of the problems faced in life.” Leone’s argument that members adapt general theology to deal with specific situations fits how Cain folklore has been adapted to changing cultural emphases.

clearly implicating Africans and African Americans.\footnote{26} Associations like Taylor’s clearly link Cain’s identity as the first black man to the traditional depiction of Cain as the adversary’s representative. Both represent a challenge to the work of God. Cain’s dark skin is a supernatural brand, a mark of the demonic.

In folk beliefs, this motif was worked out in both directions. Wilson and Poulson note, “One of the stories current among nineteenth century Mormons was that when people apostatized from the church, their skin darkened.” Conversely, “some tales tell us that when blacks join the Church their skin lightens.” This is merely David Patten banishing Cain in more generalized language; black skin in the stories described here is as much a sign of a tangible source of opposition to the work of God as is an appearance of Cain himself.\footnote{27}

The resurrection of Cain in the folklore of Mormondom, then, has been a complicating factor for a religion often unsure how to deal with converts of African descent. The presentation of Cain as being not merely the long-past forefather of a “cursed” race, but as a supernatural, demonic figure, currently present and actively hostile to the Church’s ongoing growth, has emphasized and reinforced sentiments of fear and racism, strengthening the image of Africans as not only the descendants of the first murderer but as somehow inherently evil due to that association. The Cain of the stories is often monstrous and occasionally pitiable (particularly in Patten’s account), but almost always he is presented as more demon than man, twisted by evil, unredeemably subhuman, and, as he told David Patten, “a very miserable creature . . . [who] could not die,” though he sought death. In other words, Cain is beyond salvation. It is a profoundly negative image, and one that cannot avoid damaging how the Church and its members interact with those it has associated with Cain.

Is this association changing? There is, perhaps, evidence that it is, following the social and cultural transitions that have occurred since the 1978 revocation on the priesthood ban for men of African descent. Ironically, Cain’s monstrous image may have sparked his transformation in folklore from the archetypical cursed first murderer to Bigfoot, more animal than man and lacking the theological associations with nineteenth-century Mormon demonology. Though the Cain-as-Bigfoot stories seldom rehabilitate Cain’s image (he is still

\footnote{26}{John Taylor, August 28, 1881, \textit{Journal of Discourses}, 22:304.}
\footnote{27}{Wilson and Poulson, “Curse of Cain,” 14.}
hostile), the emphasis shifts. The older stories, up through the third quarter of the twentieth century, stress Cain’s curse. He often speaks, identifying himself as Cain and describing himself as unable to die or as a vagabond. An agent of Satan, he must be driven off by priesthood power. In contrast, newer legends—those gathered in the 1980s and 1990s—deemphasize elements like the curse and supernatural evil, instead stressing the more mundane horror of a bestial but not supernatural Bigfoot. Cain now rarely speaks; his specific mission to destroy the Church has become the general hostility that one would expect from a wild animal, and the theme of supernatural confrontation has faded. In these newer tales, perhaps not coincidentally, events in American folklore in general, and in Mormon country in specific, that surrounded the 1978 revocation of the priesthood ban provided the legend cycle with a new template.

In October 1967, a man named Roger Patterson filmed thirty seconds of eight-millimeter footage near Bluff Creek in northern California. The film shows a large, heavy, hair-covered creature loping away from the camera. At one point, it turns and stares into the lens before vanishing into the forest. As prominent Bigfoot researcher John Green argues, the film “changed everything.” Older stories of Bigfoot, Green notes, spoke of “hairy wild men,” and often “don’t make a clear division between the ‘real’ and the ‘supernatural.’” Indeed, students of Bigfoot lore regularly trace the beast’s ancestry back to such beings as Grendel of Beowulf, the Green Man of medieval legends, and the Wendigo and skinwalkers of Native American lore. Thus, though the precision of Patten’s identification of Cain was unusual, Cain’s paranormal aura (monstrous, sinister, diabolical) is fully characteristic of Bigfoot stories from both the nineteenth and twentieth century.

A good example is that recounted by future president Theodore Roosevelt in his 1893 Wilderness Hunter. Roosevelt referred to it as a “goblin-story” he heard from an old hunter named Bauman, a window into the world of “spectres, and the formless evil beings that haunt the forest depths, and dog and waylay the lonely wanderer.” In Roosevelt’s recounting, Bauman and a companion, while traveling through the

---


“primeval forest” were ambushed by a huge, fanged, hair-covered “monstrous assailant” who “buried its teeth in his [the companion’s] throat. It had not eaten the body, but apparently had romped and gambolled around it in uncouth, ferocious glee, occasionally rolling over and over it; and had then fled back into the soundless depths of the woods.” Roosevelt speculated on the identity of “this half human or half devil, some great goblin-beast,” but without proposing an identity.30

Given the impact of the Patterson film, however, John Green and other observers argue that a parallel understanding of Bigfoot has emerged—scientific, rather than supernatural. Loren Coleman, who wrote the foreword to The Bigfoot Casebook Updated, maintained that the publication of Janet and Colin Bord’s The Bigfoot Casebook (1982) solidified a trend that “put hominology back on track.” “Hom-inology” is Coleman’s term for the scientific study of Bigfoot and other bipedal primates such as the yeti—a nearly forty-year trend that has reshaped the course of Bigfoot mythology in America.31

For many, Bigfoot remains what he always was—a sometimes-supernatural monster with the frightful characteristics Roosevelt described; but scientific language has begun to seep into the legends. Recent titles are revealing: Big Footprints: A Scientific Inquiry into the Reality of Sasquatch and A Field Guide to the Sasquatch.32 The quasi-scientific “Sasquatch” is gaining on the more popular term “Bigfoot.” Green enthusiastically comments that “Sasquatch” implies a more serious attitude than “Bigfoot.” He cites several conclusions about Bigfoot that can be drawn from recent study. He is, for example, nocturnal, omnivorous, and solitary. Though most sightings report “bluffing or threatening” behavior, “only a very few” describe actual injury. Most importantly, Green concludes, Bigfeet are “not some kind of

wild humans” but are animals to be studied like any other species.33*

Supporting Coleman and Green, folklorist Linda Milligan also notes a recent decline of old-style stories that associated Bigfoot (inappropriately, researchers like Green believe34**) with UFOs. Indeed, Milligan argues for the influence “of the published debate on the thinking of active bearers of the legend.” Bigfoot researchers, she claims, have drawn the popular legend toward naturalism through emphasizing the importance of evidence—footprints, pieces of hair, physical descriptions, and the like.35***

A Utah example illustrates these emerging trends in a Mormon context. On Sunday afternoon, February 3, 1980, a South Weber, Utah, a high school student named Pauline Markham glanced out of her kitchen window and saw what she identified as “a big, black creature” climbing down a mountain ridge a half-mile away. Markham, a Mormon, reported that she simply put her glass down and “went to church.” Early the next morning, her cousin, Ronald Smith, who was with his horse in a field, saw a “big dark figure.” Smith fled into the house, leaving an agitated horse in the pasture. The next morning, odd tracks in the snow had been trampled by hoofprints.36****

Jay Barker, an Ogden Standard-Examiner reporter, who claimed to have encountered Bigfoot three years earlier, followed up. Although both Markham and Barker were practicing Mormons (presumably Smith was as well), no one apparently associated Bigfoot with Cain. Indeed, all seem to have taken a completely naturalistic approach. Smith compared the sound made by the creature he encountered to a “cougar.” Barker speculated that sightings faded because Bigfoot “returned to the mountains with its young.” He spoke of the “paw prints” that it left. He initially “thought he was looking at an

34Ibid.
Three years earlier, another Ogden man, Sterling Gardner, compared what he believed to be the stench of Bigfoot, which agitated his dogs, to a “skunk.”

However, by 1990, local historian Lee D. Bell noted in retrospect that South Weber citizens had begun associating “their” Bigfoot with Cain soon after these sightings. Twenty-three years after the initial sightings, the *Deseret News* in 2004 pinpointed these South Weber sightings as the genesis of what it called “the Bigfoot/Cain idea.” Of course, it is always wise to exercise caution when speculating about turning points in legend cycles, particularly when they are so specific in time and place. However, whether the South Weber sightings did or did not, in fact, drive changes in Cain folklore, the motifs of these encounters illustrate a new path in the legend cycle. They followed the Church’s repudiation of Cain’s priesthood curse, and the naturalistic explanations that are now their dominant feature has re-visioned Cain: still a monster, perhaps, but one stripped of the supernatural qualities that defined him to Patten and storytellers of his tradition.

Stories gathered during the 1990s for the folklore archives at BYU and Utah State University stress the features that make Cain into Bigfoot rather than those that might make Bigfoot into Cain. That is, they emphasize Cain’s “big hairy” appearance, describe him in terms appropriate for animals, and make him less a tormented, cursed soul and more bestial. Encounters no longer have elements of a purposeful confrontation between the demonic and the divine and instead generally end with one or both running away. Here is a representative modern story, collected in 1997: “A group of Boy Scouts was on a camping trip when they heard strange noises. It was Cain, who chased them through the woods and into a cabin. They locked the door, but Cain tried to climb through the chimney. . . . The boys prayed, then got the idea to light a fire in the fireplace. The boy who lit the fire saw

---

37Ibid.


a big hairy man’s face in the fireplace right before it went up in flames. Later they saw Cain running across the field yelping in pain.41

This story embodies the main elements of the newer legends. Cain’s identity is a given, not a question. His activities are those of a natural predator: his seemingly motiveless pursuit, his roof-climbing, and his “yelping” as he ran off. He has stopped being a supernatural emissary of Satan. Indeed, though the prayer in the story seems to offer a ready-made doorway into the traditional confrontation between priesthood power and the forces of evil that characterizes almost every earlier story, the Scouts do not invoke priesthood but light a fire—a practical, rational defense against an animal suitable for a less demon-haunted age. Furthermore, Cain is described solely as “big [and] hairy,” without the usual third qualifier—black.

Other stories develop several of these themes. A 1998 tale tells of a giant “Cain-beast,” a phrase that emphasizes the brutish nature of this legend’s Cain, who, with no attempt at communication, simply “chased two elders to their car.” Another collected in the same year tells of Cain stalking an old man’s farmhouse late at night. It emphasizes Cain’s monstrousness, since “two horses . . . died in the night from heart attacks because they were so afraid.” For his part, Cain reacts like any other predator, fleeing when the panicked animals awaken the farmer. In another story, the teller’s grandfather looked out his window late at night and “saw a big huge hairy man looking in at him.” The grandfather immediately closed the blinds. Reopening them a few moments later, he “saw a huge hairy beast running across his fields. He believed this man to be Bigfoot.” Interestingly, the teller introduced the story as his “grandfather’s experience with Bigfoot/Cain,” but the text itself does not.42 This is a particularly good example of the growing interchangeability of the two figures in modern versions of the legend.

Furthermore, Cain’s new activities (frightening horses and running through fields) seem far less malicious than the figures who intruded upon David Patten or E. Wesley Smith. Indeed, they are strik-

41“Supernatural Religious Legends,” 1.1.4.3.14.1, Wilson Folklore Archives, Perry Special Collections.
42Folk Collections 8, Box 73: 01-041, Lisa Larson, collector, Fife Archives; “A Night at the Canyon,” Whitney Belcher, collector, Wilson Folklore Archives, 1–2204, Perry Special Collections.
ingly reminiscent of Ronald Smith’s story of the figure in his horse pasture. Thus, the doctrinal didacticism of earlier legends—of Snow’s poem, of Joseph Fielding Smith’s instruction to his brother—is downplayed, and Cain himself becomes less a supernatural fiend and more the stock monster of any number of campfire tales—in short, less a cursed soul and more Bigfoot.

Other recent tales further this transition by de-emphasizing or distorting older theological issues connected to Cain. One 1998 story rejects the traditional curse entirely, instead explaining that Bigfoot was an “Indian spirit that turns into a hairy Cain-like creature.” Another collected in 1990 mentions the curse but muddles the racial issue, stating that the informant “learned in Seminary that [Cain] was cursed to not die and walk the Earth all Mongoloidy.” Notably, neither of these stories associates Cain with Africans nor ascribe to him the motive of overthrowing the Church. One 1997 story illustrates the new trends of Cain’s racial identity with noteworthy precision: “A long time ago, maybe Brigham Young’s day, he [presumably Young] was in a carriage when he saw a big, I mean huge black man. Not like we think of a black man, but his whole countenance was dark and black.” This story seeks to preserve the original flavor of the Cain legend but explicitly disassociates Cain from black human beings. Clearly, the underlying concepts of the story have altered. In addition, none of the more recent stories uses any racial language to describe Cain. In short, the theological issues of race and damnation have been downplayed recently in favor of the legend’s “fright” potential and its association with traditional campfire fare like “Indian spirits.”

A 1997 story provides us with a fascinating retelling of David Patten’s encounter with Cain that demonstrates what the Cain cycle has turned into. The teller announces that he read this story in Kimball’s *Miracle of Forgiveness* but goes on to tell a very different account: “During the early days of the Church in New York state, a brother was riding his horse through a thicket of wood when he came across an extremely tall, frighteningly hairy creature roaming through the trees. This monster-like form stopped the man and told him that he was Cain... . Because of this spotting, many members of..."
the Church believe that Cain is Bigfoot.” While this story and Patten’s affirm several similar details about Cain (height and hairiness), the modern version replaces Patten’s description of dark skin with “frighteningly” and “monster-like.” In addition, this story omits Cain’s description of his diabolic mission and Patten’s exorcism. In short, racial and religious issues at stake disappear. The tale has become a horror story whose point is identifying Cain with the modern monster Bigfoot.

One modern story seems to buck all these trends. It was collected in 1983 from, the collector writes, “my seminary teacher,” and by implication was the teacher’s experience. The student heard it “in first person” (but retells it in the third). The teacher’s point was “to teach us not to play with Ouija [sic] boards.”

A group of teenaged boys were playing with a ouija [sic] board. They were asking simple, fun questions. One of them had the idea to take the board to the graveyard. . . . After a while they started asking deeper questions. One boy asked, “Can we see Cane [sic]?” The ouija board answered yes. All of a sudden a huge black man was standing on the hill. . . . Everyone was scared, so they ran to their car with the black man in hot persuit [sic]. The guy driving screeched away, and then drove everybody home. . . . The next morning he had decided that it never happened, but at breakfast his mom asked why he kept coming and going the night before.

This story, collected five years after the end of the priesthood ban, seems to violate the general trend of recent times. It identifies Cain as a “black man” and has definite overtones of the supernatural, including the graveyard setting and the Ouija board. However, the teller was a seminary teacher in 1983, a generation older than the student who recorded it. An experience date of perhaps the 1950s may explain the use of “black” rather than “dark” or “hairy.”

In other ways, however, this tale corresponds to other recent stories in its shift away from the nineteenth-century understanding of supernatural evil. Though the story has an unusual stress on the supernatural, like contemporary stories, Cain never speaks. He simply chases people. No one tries to invoke priesthood. Further, Cain is nei-

---

44“Supernatural Religious Legends,” 1.1.4.3.11.1, Wilson Archives, Perry Special Collections.
45Folk Collection 8a, Group 7: Box 3, 2.4.1.5.20.1, Fife Archives.
ther the focus nor the source of the supernatural in the story; the Ouija board is. Although elements of evil are present, they are very different from the nineteenth-century versions. Cain does not appear as a supernatural persecutor in his own right. The boys do not represent the kingdom of God, and Cain does not challenge the Church. Indeed, a crucial element in the story is that the boys are engaged in trivial, reckless entertainment, nothing as laudable as missionary work. Cain enters the story as a warning against or even punishment for wrong action. He is summoned by human wickedness, rather than appearing independently. It is important to notice the buildup of the story; the progression from “simple, fun questions” to the graveyard, to the fateful question, “Can we see Cane?” What is being dramatized here is the slippery slope, a classic rhetorical device in Mormonism used to warn against sin. A series of poor decisions, not Satanic power, leads to this encounter. Therefore, evil is internalized, understood as human error rather than as an external force in its own right. It is not Pauline in the way that nineteenth-century Mormon evil was. This story, then, alters the nineteenth-century Cain to fit twentieth-century theology just as surely as transforming him into the mindless, brutish Bigfoot did.

Mormon historians have noted the diminished role of overt manifestations of the supernatural since the nineteenth century; Thomas Alexander’s discussion of the “routinization” of “gifts of the Spirit” and the discouragement of their exercise outside the lines of Church structure, is a prime example. The transformation of Cain into Bigfoot illustrates this trend. Modern tales do not repudiate the supernatural overtones of the nineteenth-century Cain. Even made over as Bigfoot, Cain is still presumed to be real and still alive—just as Genesis describes. This status is similar to the preservation of the power of gifts of the Spirit, such as healing—power that any Mormon would strongly defend, despite the removal of the Pentecostal-style spontaneity that once accompanied them.

While the supernatural is preserved, however, its borders are reframed and reduced. In the new Cain, the power of the malevolent supernatural is severely curtailed, not only through the fading of overt demonology from Cain’s story, but also through severing his

link with Africa. Both developments reflect a new, largely intangible, conception of evil. No longer can it be located on a specific continent or its residue be seen on skin; similarly, no longer are Saints warned of, in Brigham Young’s words, demons “visiting the human family with various manifestations.” Importantly, however, the basic supernatural premise of Cain’s existence, and the network of religious assumptions that rest upon it—that of the validity of the Bible, the literalness of Adam and Eve, and the existence of an interventionist God—remain unquestioned. If Cain is removed as one of these demonic manifestations—if he is no longer representative of a material, aggressive, Pauline conception of evil—his transformation into Bigfoot allows the supernaturalism of his story to persevere and that of Mormonism to be affirmed.
Howard and Martha Coray: Chroniclers of Joseph Smith’s Words and Life

Elizabeth Ann Anderson

The introduction to the first Utah edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s history of her son’s life reads: “The History of the Prophet Joseph Smith, originally entitled, ‘The History of Mother Smith, by Herself,’ [and] was written at the dictation of Lucy Smith, mother of the Prophet, by Mrs. Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, who acted as her amanuensis.”1 Who was this amanuensis, and what part did she play in recording the Prophet’s life and words?

An “amanuensis” is one who is employed to record a conversation. It is of Latin etymology referring to a slave with secretarial duties. The employment of Martha Coray to record Mother Smith’s oral history in no way reflects servitude; rather it evolved as a natural outgrowth of her deep admiration and love for the Prophet Joseph Smith. Her husband, Howard, commented in his autobiography, “I have frequently heard her say, that [the Prophet Joseph] was the great-

---

1Preston Nibley, ed., History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, Lucy Mack Smith: With Notes and Comments by Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), vii.
est miracle to her she had ever seen; and that she valued her acquaintance with him above everything else.” 2 Howard also professed a great love and respect for Joseph Smith. Not only did the Corays assist in Mother Smith’s history, they also recorded several discourses that Joseph gave in Nauvoo. They carefully recorded a part of history that casts an illuminating beacon on the multi-faceted and charismatic Joseph Smith Jr. Their lives serve as a worthy example of dedication and commitment to preserving an accurate record of contemporary observations.

Martha Jane Knowlton was born in June of either 1821 or 1822 in Covington, Kentucky, the third of ten children. Genealogical records, including her gravestone in the Provo, Utah, City Cemetery, cite June 3, 1822, as her birth date, while various biographical articles written by later family members use the date of June 21, 1821. Her parents, Harriet Burnham Knowlton and Sidney Algernon Knowlton came from New England stock. Seeking to better their circumstances, the Knowlton family moved to Ohio when Martha was a young child. Martha’s strong character was developed early as attested in her obituary:

Her straightforward and honest way of doing things, joined with more than ordinary clearness of perception and understanding of matters and things in general for one of her tender age, attracted the attention of some of the most noted of the place, for instance Rev. Walter Scott, Levi H. Jameson and others, and at the age of about 10 she was placed in charge of a class, much older than herself in a Sunday School and she filled the position so ably that she won for herself no small degree of praise. At the age of 12 she applied for admission by baptism in the Campbellite Church, but on account of her age, they held the matter for a short time under advisement before receiving her, notwithstanding she was altogether qualified, as far as information and a sound moral character are concerned.

Very early in life she evinced a character in a degree somewhat rare for one of her sex—that is, of decidedly doing her own thinking[:] hence, before adopting any principle of religion, law or politics, whether proposed by father, husband, priest or king, she must clearly see and understand for herself the righteousness and consistency of

---

2Howard Coray, Autobiography, 11, Coray Family Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Mss 1422, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).
Martha’s first exposure to the Mormons came in 1838 when she was sixteen or seventeen. By then the family was living in Hancock County, Illinois, about twenty-five miles southeast of Nauvoo. Her father, Sidney, took pity on the exiled Saints as they were driven from Missouri and offered employment and housing to a number of them. Martha, intrigued with these refugees’ religion, began attending their meetings. On one occasion she heard the preaching of Apostle George A. Smith who “set forth the principles of the gospel in such a plain and unmistakable manner as to completely upset all her Campbellism.”

A story related by granddaughter Daphne Helena Roberts Cooper describes an incident that occurred while Martha was studying Mormonism. One of Martha’s sisters, interested in spiritualism, persuaded Martha to accompany her to a séance at which the spiritualist, or medium, would write a message for the individuals assembled, presumably from the departed spirits of loved ones. The medium sat next to Martha; and when the director of the séance asked the medium to commence writing messages, she replied that her arm was inflamed and swollen. The affronted director insisted that, as there were many present who wished to see her perform, she must comply. Laying her hand in Martha’s lap, the medium asserted, “Here is a girl who could write if she would.” At that moment, Martha received a view into the spirit world. The room appeared to be thronged with evil-looking, terrible spirits crowding about, vying for the opportunity to have their messages conveyed to those present in the room. Appalled, Martha forcibly removed the medium’s hand from her lap, immediately rose, and expressed her disgust with the proceedings. “You may be able to hear from the other side, but that is not the kind of spirits I am anxious to meet.”

Not long after this, Martha Jane Knowlton embraced the gospel and was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in January 1840. A hole had to be cut through the ice for the ordinance. Less than two weeks later on January 21, 1840, Martha re-

---

4Ibid.
5Jennie N. Weeks, researcher, and Inez S. Cooper, comp., “Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” 2, Coray Family Papers, Box 1, Id. 8.
ceived a patriarchal blessing from Joseph Smith Sr. Lucy Mack Smith was present and related the incident:

[O]n this occasion [Father Smith] stood upon his feet near 3 hours and when he got through blessing and preaching he laid hands on Brother [. . . ] who was terribly afflicted with the black cancer but was healed very suddenly for there was great manifestations of the spirit of God at this meeting and a person [Martha Jane] was blessed whom he had never seen that day and who had not been in the church a fortnight[.] [W]hen he blessed her he repeated a prophecy that had been pronounced upon her head by Bro. [John E.] Page word for word and [s]aid that the spirit testified to him that she was told these things in her confirmation[.] [T]his surprized her for she had just arrived in Nauvoo with Bro and Sister Page and she knew that there had not one word passed between him and my husband upon the subject.6

The blessing mentioned several interesting items. Patriarch Smith began by stating that he pronounced the blessing “as I understand it is by the consent of thy Father and the request of Br. Page thy Spiritual Father and bless for the Spirit says bless and thou shalt be blest with a Fathers blessing.”7 Martha had previously been confirmed a member by Apostle John E. Page. It is not known what prophecy Page had uttered at her confirmation that Father Smith ratified “word for word,” but Martha’s patriarchal blessing includes the following pronouncements:

[Thou] shall ere long be filled with the spirit of Prophesy—Gift of Tongues and instruct the Lamanites in needle work for the Spirit testify these Things. . . . Thou shalt not marry a Gentile for this is contrary to the Order of Heaven, but if thou wilt seek diligently the Lord shall guide thee through the slippery paths of youth and shall give thee a companion of his own choosing—thou shalt have Children and if faithful they shall receive the Priesthood and in after days shall arise and call you blessed—and now continue faithful and ere

---

7Martha Jane Knowlton, Patriarchal Blessing by Joseph Smith Sr., January 21, 1840, Coray Family Papers, Box 2, fd. 8. A handwritten note on this blessing states that it was given at the home of Asa Smith with “a Brother Gurly” (probably Zenos Gurley) as the scribe.
Howard Coray mentions this blessing in his autobiography, commenting, “The above blessing I found written in one of my wife [sic] memorandum books. I heard her say, that it was taken by a very poor scribe, and that much was not taken at all; and, that what was, was not altogether correct.” Father Smith died in September 1840; and in 1841, Martha received a second patriarchal blessing from Hyrum Smith in which she was promised: “Your Name [shall be] written in the family Book of Life never to be blotted out, & this shall be your Comforter, in the days of your Pilgrimage, even the promise of eternal Life which is the Second Comforter, to Comfort your Heart in the Days of your Tribulation, which shall be many, notwithstanding you shall be sustained through them all, & shall Triumph over your afflictions. . . . [A]s to your inheritance and your household, shall be with your fathers house, shall be with Joseph’s Inheritance, upon the Land of Joseph.”

Martha’s admiration for the man who led the church to which she had now pledged her life began almost immediately:

After joining the church she soon became acquainted with the prophet Joseph, she said that before he was pointed out to her as the man, she could discern something in him of such a peculiar character that she knew who he was, and from her unbounded confidence in him as the man of God, she took in common hand every discourse that she heard him preach and has carefully preserved them. Bro. Geo. A. Smith said that she had taken more pains to preserve the sayings of the great Prophet and had accomplished more in that direction than any other woman in the church.

Her daughter, Martha Coray Lewis, stated: “It was ever her custom when going to meeting to take pencil and note paper; she thus preserved notes of sermons that would otherwise have been lost to the Church.” She also stated that Wilford Woodruff “consulted her notes, when he was Church Historian, for items not to be obtained

---

8Ibid.
9Howard Coray, Autobiography, 14.
10Martha Jane Knowlton, Patriarchal Blessing by Hyrum Smith, November 8, 1841, Coray Family Papers, Box 2, fd. 8.
11“Died,” Territorial Enquirer, December 17, 1881.
elsewhere."12 This unstinting praise is ironic, considering Brigham Young’s challenge to the accuracy of Mother Smith’s record—and to Martha herself (discussed below).

Martha’s propensity for record keeping paralleled that of her husband, Howard Coray. Together they made a team committed to meticulous documentation. In fact, one family record reports that, when Martha asked Howard after Smith’s assassination whom they would follow—Sidney Rigdon or Brigham Young—he answered simply that “they would go with the records, that the Lord would not allow the records of the church to fall into wrong hands.”13 As secretary to Joseph Smith, Howard understood the importance of the “records of the church.”

Born May 6, 1817, in the township of Dansville, Steuben County, New York, to Silas Coray and Mary Stephens Coray, Howard went with his father to Jacksonville, Illinois, where he attended the college’s “preparatory department” for about a year. Meanwhile, his family moved to Pike County, Illinois. Howard heard a sermon by the noted preacher, Henry Ward Beecher and, in a private conversation, asked him how he knew there was a God. He said, he was once praying in the back part of his garden, and the Lord came and stood beside, or near him. I asked him how he knew this, if he saw the Lord, or heard his voice. He said, “No,” but realized in some way His presence and that He was there. I told him I was willing to join any denomination that was right, but before taking such a step, I wanted some unmistakable testimony, something more divine than man is able to give. Being rather desirous to know of an absolute certainty that there is a God . . . I resolved to lay aside my studies, and turn my whole attention in the direction of getting religion, some testimony from God, and, if possible, to find out what His will was concerning me. So I prayed much—I would get up in the night and pray, and followed this up about two weeks.14

Howard continues: “Although I had confidence in Mr. Beecher as an honest, well meaning man, I was forced to the conclusion that

13Weeks and Cooper, “Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” 5.
there must have been some mistake in regard to the Lord’s coming and standing beside him, for I had made every endeavor that I had the capacity of making to see something miraculous, yet had received no spiritual manifestation whatever. So I concluded . . . that the universalism doctrine was about as true as any of the isms.”

Despite his disappointment, Howard continued his pursuit of religious truth and was thus “brought face to face with Mormonism.” During a school vacation, he took the opportunity to attend a Mormon preaching service at Roswell Perry’s home in Perry, Illinois. Not wishing to be noticed he sat in the back and sized up the missionary, an Elder Joseph Wood: “All I could discover was that he was above the medium size, rather good looking and had a very bright and intelligent countenance.” After a hymn and prayer, Wood “read for the foundation of his remarks, ‘For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.’ Hebrews 7:12.” The text was unfamiliar to Howard and his curiosity was piqued. Wood “soon showed by weeding through the scriptures what he would do with it. He explained what the law was, and then how it was changed and in what manner. Well, by the time he got through speaking, I was satisfied that he was decidedly the most profound theologian that I had ever seen, but, as to how he came by his information was beyond my ken. His style of reasoning was exceedingly convincing, and his eloquence overwhelming. I was well prepared by this discourse to hear him again, or more upon the subject of Mormonism, ‘as it was called.’”

Other members of Howard’s family also desired to hear more about this new religion, and Howard’s father invited Wood to the home: “After supper, and the chores all done, the family gathered around to hear what the preacher might have to say and to ask questions, such as the occasion might suggest.” After listening to the discussion, Howard asked: “Can I know that Mormonism is true?” Howard recalled that he was willing to do anything necessary to obtain this knowledge. Wood’s reply was that Howard

15Ibid. Universalism was the belief, opposed to Calvinism, that God would ultimately save all human beings.
16Howard Coray, quoted in Dean Jessee, “Howard Coray’s Recollections of Joseph Smith,” BYU Studies 17, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 342.
18Ibid., 5.
most assuredly could know of the truthfulness of the doctrine that he taught and that, in fact, it was Howard’s “duty to obtain that knowledge. He then quoted John 7:17: ‘If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.’ He then remarked that the Saints were entitled to the Spirit of God, and the spiritual gifts as found in the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians.”

Wood recited several other scriptures on key doctrinal points, and Howard was convinced by the end of the conversation. He told Wood that he might baptize him in the morning. “According to promise, on the morrow my father took brothers George, William, myself and Elder Wood about four miles to a creek, some six or eight miles distant from Perry and Elder Wood baptized first myself, next William and then George, and confirmed us by the water’s edge. This was on the 24th or 25th day of March, 1840.”

Howard, at this point, had an intellectual conviction but stated in his autobiography: “In some two days I received a testimony of the spirit to such a degree as to perfectly satisfy me that I had not made any mistake, that what was called Mormonism was absolutely the gospel, that Joseph Smith was truly a Prophet raised up in the 19th century to usher in the ‘Dispensation of the Fulness of Times,’ clothed with the Melchizedek Priesthood with all the gifts and graces appertaining thereto.”

Shortly after his baptism, Howard left Perry for Nauvoo with some companions to “gratify a curiosity . . . to see the Prophet.” Upon meeting the Prophet, Howard was introduced erroneously as a student from Jacksonville College, which embarrassed the young man since he had interrupted his studies. Nevertheless the Prophet seemed impressed and, after questioning him and ascertaining his qualifications, asked Howard if he would move to Nauvoo and clerk for him. Readily agreeing, Howard arranged his affairs and began his new duties two weeks later beginning by “copying a huge pile of letters into a book, [and] correspondence with the elders as well as other

---

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
persons, that had been accumulating for some time.”

He commented, “This labor was performed in his [Joseph’s] kitchen, having no other place at that time to do such business.” Howard thoroughly enjoyed his employment, which gave him valuable opportunities to observe Smith’s character:

The Prophet had a great many callers or visitors, and he received them in his office where I was clerking, persons of almost all professions, doctors, lawyers, priests and people seemed anxious to get a good look at what was then considered something very wonderful: a man who should dare to call himself a prophet and announce himself as a seer and ambassador of the Lord. Not only were they anxious to see, but also to ask hard questions, in order to ascertain his depth. Well, what did I discover? . . . He was always equal to the occasion and perfectly master of the situation; and possessed the power to make everybody realize his superiority, which they evinced in an unmistakable manner. I could clearly see that Joseph was the captain, no matter whose company he was in, knowing the meagerness of his education, I was truly gratified at seeing how much at ease he always was, even in the company of the most scientific, and the ready off-hand manner in which he would answer their questions.

Howard wrote that he had “heard it remarked that Joseph Smith was Sidney Rigdon’s cat’s paw,”—a colloquial term implying that he was Rigdon’s tool for accomplishing Rigdon’s own purposes. Rigdon was away from Nauvoo when Howard set to work; but when he returned and Howard met him in Joseph’s company, he thought: “Now I will see who the cat’s paw is.” He had his answer almost immediately. Rigdon reported an encounter in Philadelphia when he had been unable to satisfactorily answer a question concerning the Revelation of John and asked Smith what his answer should have been. Smith proceeded “off hand” to cite chapter and verse that explained the doctrine, convincing Howard Coray that “that don’t look much

23Ibid., 6.
26Howard Coray, “Autobiography,” 3.
like Joseph’s being a cat’s paw.”

Howard was present when Stephen A. Douglas, an Illinois politician and later Democratic nominee for president in 1860, called on the Prophet. In answer to his query of how he managed to govern “a people so diverse,” Howard records Joseph offering the famous maxim—“I simply teach them the truth, and they govern themselves.”

Howard continued to be impressed with the mind and spirit of his employer, especially after observing several verbal “contests” between Smith and intellectual challengers. He commented: “Thus it was in every instance that came under my observation: how could we expect it to be otherwise—for any man who had never peered into heaven and seen heavenly things, be a match for one who had had a half a score or more heavenly messengers for teachers.”

Howard Coray’s close association with Joseph Smith provided opportunities to witness the many facets of Smith’s personality, but none was more personal than an incident in June 1840. Howard tells the story with considerable relish:

The Prophet and myself, after looking at his horses, and admiring them, that were just across the road from his house, we started thither, the Prophet at this same time put his arm over my shoulder. When we had reached about the middle of the road, he stopped and remarked, “Brother Coray, I wish you were a little larger, I would like to have some fun with you.” I replied, “Perhaps you can as it is,” not realizing what I was saying, Joseph a man of over 200 pounds weight, while I scarcely [weighed] 130 pounds, made it not a little ridiculous for me to think of engaging with him in anything like a scuffle. However, as soon as I made this reply, he began to trip me; he took some kind of a lock on my right leg, from which I was unable to extricate it, and throwing me around, broke it some three inches above the ankle joint. He immediately carried me into the house, pulled off my boot, and found at once that my leg was decidedly broken; then he got some splinters and bandaged it. A number of times that day did he come in to see me, endeavoring to console me as much as possible. The next day when he happened in to see me after a little conversation, I said, “Brother Joseph, when Jacob wrestled with the angel and was lamed

—

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 4.
by him, the angel blessed him; now I think I am also entitled to a bless-
ing.” To that he replied, “I am not the patriarch, but my father is, and
when you get up and around, I’ll have him bless you.” He said no
more for a minute or so, meanwhile looking very earnestly at me, then
said, “Brother Coray, you will soon find a companion, one that will be
suited to your condition and whom you will be satisfied with. She will
cling to you, like the cords of death, and you will have a good many
children.”31

Nine days later Howard was able to hobble about the house us-
ing a crutch. Two weeks later he traveled on foot to a meeting a mile
away, evidence to him of a miraculous healing by his Prophet.

After completing the initial work for which he had been em-
ployed, Smith asked Coray to begin writing the history of the Church,
with Joseph supplying all the materials. At first Coray declined, feel-
ing inadequate for the task, but Smith replied that Coray would be
thankful as long as he lived if he agreed to undertake the task. So,
“having more confidence in him than I had in myself,” Howard “en-
gaged in the business of an historian.”32 His partner in this endeavor
was Edwin D. Woolley and the two were given the challenge to not
only combine and arrange the material in chronological order, but to
amplify it in a “good historical style.” Howard found his co-worker
somewhat less than qualified and in the following excerpt from his
autobiography vents his frustration:

On seeing his [Woolley’s] work, I at once discovered that I had
no small job on my hands, as he knew nothing whatever of grammar;
however, I concluded to make the best I could of a bad job, and thus
went to work upsetting and recasting, as well as casting out not a lit-
tle. Seeing how his work was handled, he became considerably dis-
couraged and rather took offence at the way and manner in which I
was doing things, and consequently soon withdrew from the busi-
ness.

Immediately after brother Woolley left, I succeeded in obtain-
ing the services of Dr. [George] Miller, who had written for the press,
and thus was considerably accustomed to this kind of business. Now
I got on much better. I continued until we used up all the historical
matter furnished us by the Prophet. And, as peculiar circumstances
prevented his giving attention to his part of the business, we of ne-

31Ibid., 8–9.
cessity discontinued our labors, and never resumed this kind of business again.  

With his work on the history at a standstill, Coray began teaching school, during which time he made the acquaintance of his future wife. It was love, or at least like, at first sight for the girl with the “flashing, brilliant, black eyes.” Howard relates the details:

While at meeting, the blessing of the Prophet came into my mind, viz: “that I should soon find a companion, etc. etc.” So I thought I would take a square look at the congregation, and see who there was, that possibly the fair one promised me might be present. After looking and gazing awhile at the audience, my eyes settled upon a young lady sitting in a one-horse buggy. She was an entire stranger to me and a resident of some other place. I concluded to approach near enough to her to scan her features well and thus be able to decide in my own mind whether her looks would satisfy my taste. She had dark brown eyes, very bright and penetrating, at least they penetrated me, and I said to myself, she will do. The fact is, I was decidedly struck.

After the dismissal of the meeting, instead of going for my dinner, I remained on the ground and presently commenced promenading about to see what I could see. I had not gone far before I came square in front of the lovely miss, walking arm in arm with a Mrs. Harris, with whom I was well acquainted. They stopped and Mrs. H[arris] said, “Brother Coray, I have the honor of introducing you to Miss Martha Knowlton, from Bear Creek.” I, of course, bowed as politely as I knew how and she curtsied, and we then fell into somewhat familiar conversation. I discovered at once that she was ready, off hand, and inclined to be witty; also, that her mind took a wider range than was common for young ladies of her age. This interview, though short, was indeed very enjoyable, and closed with the hope that she might be the one whom the Lord had picked for me; and thus it proved to be.

I shall not go into all the details of our courtship; suffice it to say, every move I made, seemed to count one in the right direction. I let bro. Joseph into the secret and showed him a letter that I had written, designed for her. He seemed to take uncommon interest in the matter and took pains to see her and talk with her about me, telling her that I was just the one for her. A few letters passed between us; I visited her at her home, proposed, was accepted, and on the 6th day of February, 1841, we were married at her father’s house. [B]ro. Robt. B.

Thompson performing the ceremony.34

The young couple taught school together in a room they rented from Robert B. Thompson until the fall of 1841 when they moved to Augusta, near Burlington, Iowa. Howard, in Lyman Wight’s employ, traded goods “for grain for the Nauvoo House.”35 Here on April 10, 1842 their first child, Howard Knowlton Coray, was born. Later that year the small family returned to Nauvoo where Howard resumed teaching school, his tenure interrupted for a six-month mission during the winter of 1842. At one time Howard, aided by Martha, was instructing nearly 150 students.

In July 1843 Martha experienced a vivid and peculiar dream, the details of which are not related. However, believing it held great significance, she persuaded Howard to accompany her to visit Hyrum Smith, desiring an interpretation. After the couple had made several unsuccessful attempts to secure a private meeting, Hyrum called at the Corays’ home and invited them to take a buggy ride with him. Howard relates:

When we had gotten far enough out of town to converse safely, without attracting attention or being understood, he commenced rehearsing the revelation [LDS D&C 132] on celestial marriage and carefully went through with the whole of it, then reviewed it, explaining such portions of it as he deemed necessary. This was on the 22nd of July, 1843. The dream was in harmony with the revelation and was calculated to prepare her [Martha’s] mind for its reception. She never doubted the divinity of it, nor rebelled against it. And while still in the buggy, Brother Hyrum asked my wife if she was willing to be sealed to me. After a moment’s thought, she answered yes. He then asked me if I wished to be sealed. I replied in the affirmative and after telling us that he knew by the spirit of the Lord that it was His will for us to be sealed, he performed the ceremony, then and there.36

It is well established that plural marriage was being practiced secretly in Nauvoo by this date. Presumably the Corays’ willingness to believe Hyrum’s instructions were the reason that he performed their sealing to each other. However, they were not among those who entered plural marriage in Nauvoo. According to the Salt Lake Endow-

34Ibid., 10–11.
36Ibid., 16.
ment House records, Howard was sealed on January 13, 1853, to Mary Ann Johnson, but they divorced April 10, 1855. Curiously, both Howard and Martha’s writings remain silent on the subject. Howard does mention that, in January 1846, he and Martha were endowed in the Nauvoo Temple, were “resealed” by Brigham Young, and had their two children sealed to them. Howard and Martha were in turn adopted and sealed into the family of Hyrum Smith and Mary Fielding Smith. According to this practice, termed the “Law of Adoption,” each male family head was sealed to a patriarch of higher authority, usually an apostle. The intent was to connect all families in an unbroken chain through a priesthood lineage back to Adam and, through him, to Christ.

NAUVOO DISCOURSES

During their Nauvoo years, Martha and Howard Coray attended many of Joseph Smith’s public discourses and faithfully recorded his words. While others such as Wilford Woodruff and Willard Richards certainly penned more extensive notes, the Corays left four transcripts in notebooks that give significant details that add emphasis and elaboration to Joseph Smith’s public presentations. These discourses were given on July 19, 1840, March 21, 1841, May 21, 1843, and August 13, 1843.

July 19, 1840 Discourse

It had been Martha’s habit since age thirteen to make a record of

40 Martha Jane Coray, Notebooks, Martha Jane Coray Collection, LDS Church Archives. These four discourses also appear, along with versions of the same addresses recorded by William P. McIntire, Willard Richards, Franklin D. Richards, James Burgess, Wilford Woodruff, Levi Richards, and William Clayton in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980).
what she read and heard, especially “sermons, and other things . . .
when I observed that no clerk was present,” as she explained to
Brigham Young in 1869.\footnote{Martha Coray, Letter to Brigham Young, June 13, 1865, in Anderson, \textit{Lucy’s Book}, 108–9.}
Apparently no clerk was present on July 19 as the only record of it is that found in Martha’s small (3x5½") notebook. Historian Dean Jessee explains:

Since, by 1840, there was not yet a procedure in the Church for
systematically reporting all of Joseph Smith’s speeches, many of his
addresses were never recorded, and others were preserved only unofficially in the personal writings of lay members. In addition, the long-hand reports recorded at the time were subject to inherent limitations because of the absence among Church members of sufficiently developed shorthand skills to permit verbatim reporting during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. This accounts for the existence of some reports of Joseph Smith speeches that are not referred to in the Prophet’s History. The Martha Jane Knowlton report [she was not yet married] of July 1840 is of this genre.\footnote{Dean C. Jesse, “Joseph Smith’s 19 July 1840 Discourse,” \textit{BYU Studies} 19, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 391.}

While Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook have questioned the reli-
ability of this particular discourse’s date,\footnote{Ehat and Cook, \textit{The Words of Joseph Smith}, 418–20.} the ideas it communicates are consistent with other contemporary accounts of Joseph’s teachings, permitting a verdict of viability and veracity. It contains numerous prophecies and clarifies the vision of the Church’s destiny. (See Appendix.) One of its most significant ideas is more commonly expressed as that the U.S. Constitution would one day hang by a thread and be rescued only by the elders of the Church. Martha’s notes read:

“Even this Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to peices and tumbling to the ground and when the constitution is upon the brink of ruin this people will be the Staff upon which the Nation shall lean and they shall bear the constitution away from the very verge of destruction.”

Other subjects in this discourse deal with (1) the parable of the
twelve olive trees, (2) defining the land of Zion, (3) predicting that the appeals for redress for the Saints’ persecutions suffered at unjust hands would not prevail, (4) prophesying that foreign Saints would
join forces with American Saints to protect the Lord’s vineyard, (5) warning that some Saints would seek Joseph’s life more vigorously than the Missouri mobbers ever had, (6) encouraging the growth of Nauvoo as a gathering place that would hasten Christ’s coming, (7) anticipating that the temple would be “as great a temple as ever Solomon” built, whose bell in its watch tower would sound in the ears of all inhabitants of the countryside, and (8) praying that he—the Prophet—might be allowed to see its completion before he drew his last breath.

March 21, 1841

Both William Patterson McIntire (1813, died in St. George in 1882) and Martha Coray recorded Joseph Smith’s discourse at the home of Bishop Vinson Knight on March 21, 1841. McIntire’s account is relatively short, while Martha’s is more detailed. Both mentioned Smith’s remarks on the Levitical priesthood, but Martha included several scriptural references that established John the Baptist’s rightful claim to the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood and expressed an appreciation of his unique mission. According to her notes, Smith said three conclusive signs were given at Christ’s baptism which affirmed the significance of the event. Martha then recorded a statement found nowhere else in Smith’s teachings that underscores the symbolic importance of the dove’s appearance: “The dove which sat upon his shoulder was a sure testimony that he was of God Brethren be not deceived nor doubtful of this fact a spirit of a good man or an angel from heaven who has not a body will never undertake to shake hands with you for he knows you cannot perceive his touch and never will extend his hand but any spirit or body that is attended by a dove you may know to be a pure spirit Thus you may in some measure detect the spirits who may come unto you.”

Two years later, Smith gave more specific instructions on discerning between evil and angelic spirits (LDS D&C 129), but the foregoing indicates that the concepts were already familiar to him.

A comparison of the text of McIntire’s minute book with Martha’s notebook illustrates her meticulous care in preserving Joseph Smith’s words. At times the account reads almost like a verbatim transcript, suggesting that her secretarial skills must have been highly developed. It seems likely that she hurriedly scribbled phrases, then returned home and transcribed a version coherently completed from

May 21, 1843

At Sabbath morning preaching services, six members of the congregation made a written record. Levi Richards recorded Joseph Smith’s address in his diary using only twenty-eight words. Wilford Woodruff’s journal used only ten more to describe a magnificent discourse which touched on the more sure word of prophecy and calling and election. Woodruff explains that the Prophet “spoke upon the same subject that he spoke upon at Lima on the 14th in which was interesting in the highest degree” and about which Woodruff had made a more extensive record.45 James Burgess, Franklin D. Richards, and Willard Richards, Joseph Smith’s secretary, also summarized the discourse. At least by word count, Martha Coray’s and Willard Richards’s versions are by far the most complete and detailed of the six.

All agree that the text was 2 Peter 1. Richards recorded somewhat confusingly: “how did he obtain all things? through the knowledge of him who hath called him.—there could not be given pertaining to life knowledge & godliness without knowledge wo wo wo to christendom.—the divine spirits; &c if this be true. [S]alvation is for a man to be saved from all his enemies.—until a man can triumph over death. he is not saved. knowledge will do this.” The Coray account reads more like a transcript: “Knowledge is necessary to life and Godliness. wo unto you priests & divines, who preach that knowledge is not necessary unto life & Salvation. Take away Apostles &c. take away knowledge and you will find yourselves worthy of the damnation of hell. Knowledge is Revelation hear all ye brethren, this grand Key: Knowledge is the power of God unto Salvation. What is salvation. Salvation is for a man to be Saved from all his enemies even our last enemy which is death.”46

In another passage, Richards relates: “organization of Spirits in the eternal world.—spirits in the eternal world are like spirits in this world. when those spirits have come into this [and] risen & received glorified bodies. they will have an ascendancy over spirits who have no bodies. or kept not their first estate like the devil. Devils punishment, should not have a habitation like other men. Devils retaliation come into this world bind up mens bodies. & occupy himself. authori-

46Ibid., 205, 207.
ties come alone and eject him from a stolen habitation.”

Martha Coray wrote:

The design of God before the foundation of the world was that we should take tabernacles that through faithfulness we should overcome & thereby obtain a resurrection from the dead, in this wise obtain glory, honor, power and dominion for this thing is needful, inasmuch as the Spirits in the Eternal world, glory in bringing other Spirits in Subjection unto them, Striving continually for the mastery, He who rules in the heavens when he has a certain work to do calls the Spirits before him to organize them, they present themselves and offer their Services—When Lucifer was hurled from Heaven the decree was that he Should not obtain a tabernacle not those that were with him, but go abroad upon the earth exposed to the anger of the elements naked & bare, but oftimes he lays hold upon men binds up their Spirits enters their habitations laughs at the decree of God and rejoices in that he hath a house to dwell in, by & by he is expelled by Authority and goes abroad mourning naked upon the earth like a man without a house exposed to the tempest & the storm—

Throughout Martha’s text she makes copious use of the scriptures evidently cited by the Prophet Joseph in his discourse. Often they are phrases woven into a larger sentence: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy whereunto give heed until the day Star arise in your hearts,” an allusion to 2 Peter 1:16-19. Martha’s record allows a more focused glimpse into what it must have been like to hear a sermon from Joseph’s mouth.

August 13, 1843

Joseph Smith’s funeral sermon, preached August 13, 1843, for Judge Elias Higbee, was recorded by Willard Richards, Franklin D. Richards, Levi Richards, William Clayton, and Howard Coray. Howard’s writing style is somewhat different from Martha’s. His sentences are a bit choppier than Martha’s, but the thoughts and phrases are still more completely realized than those of many other recorders. Two noticeable differences exist between the text recorded by Willard Richards (which was used with Clayton’s to create the published version in the History of the Church) and Howard’s version. The first is a paragraph alluding to knowledge obtained only through revelation. Richards’s paragraph states: “had I inspiration, Revelation & lungs to

47Ibid.
communicate what my soul has contemplated in times past there is not a soul in this congregation but would go to their homes & shut their mouths in everlasting silence on religion, till they had learned something.” Richards does not continue by explaining what the “something” is. The Coray version amplifies somewhat: “[C]ould I tell the fact as it is all that heard me would go home and never say one word more about God or Christ or religion until they had received that assurance from Heaven which would set their souls at rest by placing all beyond a doubt.” Although Howard also does not spell out what that “assurance” is, later passages in the discourse discuss making one’s calling and election sure. The context suggests that it is the sure knowledge of God and Christ’s existence and the assurance of one’s personal salvation. Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook conjecture that the statement refers to Joseph’s “assurance . . . of his prophetic calling.”

The second amplification afforded by Howard’s entry refers to an oft-quoted passage that parent-child sealings are unconditional if the parents have received the fulness of the priesthood. William Clayton’s record is: “When a seal is put upon the father and mother it secures their posterity so that they cannot be lost but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father.” Franklin D. Richards’s record communicates the same idea, though in quite different words: “Judge Higbee would say that covenants either there or here must be made in view of eternity and the Covenant sealed on the fore heads of the Parents secured the children from falling that they shall all sit upon thrones as one with the God-head joint Heirs of God with Jesus Christ.”

Howard Coray’s version stipulates a condition: “A measure of this sealing is to confirm upon their head in common with Elijah the doctrine of election or the covenant with Abraham—which when a Fa-

---

48Ibid., 238, 240.

49Ibid., 299 note 11. 2 Peter 1:19 reads: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” The passage from this sermon was canonized in Doctrine and Covenants 131:5 as (date in scripture): “(May 17th, 1843.) The more sure word of prophecy means a man’s knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood.”
ther & mother of a family have entered into their children who have not transgressed are secured by the seal wherewith the Parents have been sealed.”

Ehat and Cook comment: “Clearly this [Coray’s addendum] is a more reasonable and consistent doctrine: if it were not for such a conditional [sic], the concept would contradict significant doctrines taught by Joseph Smith, not the least of which would be a contradiction of his article of faith that ‘men will be punished for their own sins.’”

Howard and Martha Coray’s entries evince the importance of considering all available accounts to gain a more complete version of Joseph Smith’s words, uttered in an era without electronic recording devices or even shorthand stenography.

Often diaries and journals add color and detail to what might be considered ordinary events. Howard’s autobiography gives one such example. On October 5, 1840, Joseph had his scribe, Robert B. Thompson, deliver a “Treatise on Priesthood,” to the Saints assembled for a general conference. Joseph had prepared the text in advance, the only time such preparation is known to have occurred. Ehat and Cook cite the uniqueness of this particular discourse: “Much like the Prophet’s dictated revelations, this text has few editorial changes. Furthermore, the document demonstrates the Prophet’s knowledge of the scriptures. With no Bible at hand, he accurately cited and dictated the text of fourteen scriptural passages. Only twice did the Prophet not remember the chapter and verse of a passage. Nevertheless, he quoted those passages accurately. In this important address the Prophet makes many important statements on Temple Priesthood the day after announcing plans for the construction of the Nauvoo Temple.”

Howard Coray in his autobiography related the circumstances surrounding the preparation of this discourse:

One morning, I went as usual, into the Office to go to work: I found Joseph sitting on one side of a table and Robert B. Thompson

---

50Ibid., 241–42; emphasis mine.
51Ibid., 300 note 19.
on the opposite side, and the understanding I got was that they were examining or hunting in the manuscript of the new translation of the Bible for something on Priesthood, which Joseph wished to present, or have read to the people the next Conference: Well, they could not find what they wanted and Joseph said to Thompson “put the manuscript one side, and take some paper and I will tell you what to write.” Bro. Thompson took some foolscap paper that was at his elbow and made himself ready for the business. I was seated probably 6 or 8 feet on Joseph’s left side, so that I could look almost squarely into Joseph’s left eye—I mean the side of his eye. Well, the Spirit of God descended upon him, and a measure of it upon me, insomuch that I could fully realize that God, or the Holy Ghost, was talking through him. I never, neither before or since, have felt as I did on that occasion. I felt so small and humble I could have freely kissed his feet.53

**WRITING “THE HISTORY OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH”**

While the Corays’ written record of these four discourses made a significant contribution in preserving Joseph Smith’s sermons, their main contribution came after Joseph’s martyrdom. Sometime during the winter of 1844–45, Lucy Mack Smith asked Martha Coray to help her compile a history of the Smith family, specifically highlighting Joseph’s life. Martha readily agreed and stopped co-teaching with Howard to begin the project. Of the venture, her daughter Martha Jane Knowlton Coray Lewis remarked: “I have heard her say that the cause of her writing the history of Joseph Smith was that she might preserve as much as possible of the history of our great prophet to read to her own children; she accordingly went to her (Mother Smith) daily, and wrote until Mother Smith would grow weary. She then read over, several times, what she had written, making such changes and corrections as Mother Smith suggested. The work was undertaken purely as a labor of love.”54

Howard Coray also became involved in this project: “Not long had she [Martha] worked in this direction before I was requested also to drop the school and turn it over to Brother William and Woolley and help her in the matter of the history. After consulting President Young, who advised me to do so, I consented and immedi-

---

54 Weeks and Cooper, “Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” 5.
ately set to with might. We labored together until the work was accomplished, which took us until nearly the close of 1845. That Howard received President Young’s blessing in the matter is interesting in light of later events. According to Lavina Fielding Anderson’s introduction to the critical edition of Mother Smith’s book, “Lucy’s narrative has a complicated history of composition and printing. It also bears the dubious distinction of being the first—and so far only—work published under an apostle’s direction to be publicly denounced and censored by one president of the church and authorized for revised reprinting by another.” And, one might add, praised by a third and living president. In the Sunday morning session of April general conference, 2005, President Gordon B. Hinckley held up a copy of the published work and remarked, “I hold in my hand a precious little book. It was published in Liverpool, England, by Orson Pratt in 1853, 152 years ago. It is Lucy Mack Smith’s narrative of her son’s life.”

From the rough draft Martha and Mother Smith had produced, Martha and Howard Coray edited and penned a meticulously handwritten “fair copy.” It is written in ink in a bound volume of lined paper, complete with chapter divisions. Howard then made a second copy, which is now housed in the LDS Church Archives. The first fair copy stayed with Mother Smith, came into Apostle Orson Pratt’s possession, and was printed in 1853 in England with Mother Smith’s permission but without Brigham Young’s. Young took sharp exception to this action, calling the work “a tissue of falsehoods.” Young also attacked Martha Coray’s character, denouncing her as a “novel writer” and implying that she fabricated a history based on recollections from a forgetful, elderly woman. In addition to his vehement censure, Young demanded that all who had purchased copies return them to

56Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 15.
58A “fair copy” is defined as a manuscript “having few alterations or corrections . . . a clean manuscript.” http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=fair (accessed July 1, 2006).
59Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 105. See also 108–9 for Martha Coray’s defense of the manuscript in a letter to Brigham Young June 13, 1865.
his office so they could be destroyed.60

His castigation of the manuscript now appears heavy-handed and unreasonable. Some surmise that the favorable portrait of William Smith, long a thorn in Young’s side, and his frequent doctrinal disagreements with Orson Pratt precipitated the outburst.61 Whatever the instigation, Pratt’s published version, as edited by George A. Smith and Robert Campbell, was serialized in 1901–03 in the *Improvement Era* and, in 1945, with other editing by Church Historian Preston Nibley.62 Ironically, relatively few significant changes were made to the original manuscript, attesting to Mother Smith’s keen memory and the Corays’ excellent transcription. The fair copy title was “History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet,” changed to *History of the Prophet Joseph Smith* at the time of the 1902–03 reprinting.

The book continued to be a source of controversy. Howard and Martha’s daughter Helena K. Coray Alexander wrote her father in September 1904:

I have read the Doctrine and Covenants through carefully and I find these [sic] many promises to the Prophet Joseph’s children. I would like to see fulfilled—David63 is dead so that is ended in this world. I have had a letter from his brother Joseph [III]—he wants to know about [?] history of his father. I think if he could be assured that Joseph F. had not had access to it and that there was anything of interest that Orson Pratt had left out he would be glad to buy it. Would not his father rejoice to see him have it? Might it not be the means of opening his eyes to the truth? Have we a right—if there is anything in it that would give him light[—]to withhold it. I have thought a great deal about it and wondered what we ought to do. I have not answered him yet—for I do not know the nature of the changes Orson Pratt made. Geo. and Edna looked through it. I wish you would let me know what they found out—and how you and the children there feel about selling it—should he wish to buy. If he does I should feel that we had not right to object to let him have it—for a reasonable price. Joseph F. says it is of no value to the church—yet it might be the means of his cousin’s sal-

60Ibid., 100–101; 109–10.
61Ibid., 125–28.
63David Hyrum Smith, Joseph and Emma Smith’s fourth son to survive infancy, had died in 1904.
According to Anderson, Martha had refused to give permission for publication of a revised work during her lifetime. Anderson comments: “It is not clear why her consent was necessary or how she could have stopped a reissue.”¹⁵ The foregoing letter suggests that possibly the Corays still held some rights to the manuscript as their daughter hints that Howard had access to the original manuscript, or at least surmised he had enough influence to acquire and sell it to Joseph Smith III even though it had been in the Church’s possession since about 1846.

For compiling and transcribing this monumental work, Howard received a total $235, with $50 of the amount to be “in kind” consisting of store goods. Martha received neither compensation nor acknowledgement of her contribution to the effort. Perhaps for Howard the completion of the history was a fulfillment of Hyrum Smith’s patriarchal blessing to him:

You are of the tribe of Caleb according to the manifestation of the Spirit, or a descendent of Caleb, and according to the blessings of thy lineage, are entitled to the blessings made to that Tribe; and shall possess them in thy day; for you have integrity and zeal for the cause of God.

If you were sent to spy the land you should not be afraid of the Sons of Anac notwithstanding your infirmity;⁶⁶ the fruitful portions of the land, your eyes would behold, and that you would contribute with all your heart to God. The desolate portions of the land would not be any stumbling block in your path, and your testimony on your return would be favorable because of your zeal for the cause which is sacred. This is a type for you and a blessing on your head for you to look upon that you may know that God has taken cognizance of your zeal. . . . You shall become wise before you sleep in recording sacred histories; for you shall be called an historian. In these things you shall improve greatly, insomuch that there shall [be] few greater.⁶⁷

Their work on the Smith history completed, Howard and Mar-

⁶⁴Nellie [Helena K. Coray Alexander], Letter to Howard Coray, September 21, 1904, Coray Family Papers, Box 1, fd. 3. I have been unable to identify George and Edna from Coray family records.

⁶⁵Anderson, **Lucy’s Book**, 133.

⁶⁶“Anak” refers to a race of giants mentioned in Numbers 13:32–33. Howard’s “infirmity” is that he had had a withered hand all his life.

⁶⁷Howard Coray, Patriarchal Blessing, October 20, 1840, Coray Family Papers, Box 1, fd. 5. See also Howard Coray, “Autobiography,” 11–13.
tha prepared to leave Nauvoo with the Saints. They departed in May 1846 and traveled as far as the Missouri River where they wintered with Martha’s father. In 1848, they traveled on to the Nishnabotna River where Martha tended the ferry and Howard broke ground and raised corn. In 1849 the couple, now with four children, moved to Kanesville, Iowa, raised another crop of corn, then sold their property to Orson Hyde and moved to Fort Kearney to winter before finally reaching the Salt Lake Valley the summer of 1850.

Over the next years, the Coray family lived in Salt Lake City, Tooele County, Mona (Juab County), and several times in Provo. Howard worked at farming, school teaching, clerking, running sawmills and factories, and hauling lumber. The family grew to seven sons and five daughters who lived past infancy. Daughter Euphrina Serepa (or Seraphia) recorded one of her father’s dreams of other children whom he felt belonged to their family but whose lives had been ended by miscarriage:

One morning, being awake about 4 o’clock, as usual, he noted his bed-room door was partly open, and next moment a handsome youth, in Scout uniform entered, marched to the bed-side, smiled, saluted and marched out without speaking, but the watcher was thrilled by the “still small voice” that said “THIS IS YOUR SON!”

The Spirit of the youth had barely disappeared when a radiant young girl appeared. She was dressed in a fancy costume and gliding to the bed-side, she smilingly curtsied, and began a formal dance, waving her arms and moving with consummate grace through intricate steps. The watcher was entranced by the beautiful picture she made, and as she bowed away with a gesture of farewell, the “Still small voice” again spoke: “THIS IS YOUR DAUGHTER!” . . .

When my father told me of this visitation, his face reflected the wonder and joy of his soul. He implicitly believed he had been assured of the truth of a thought he had held onto for many years namely, that a spirit claims the physical embryo at once, and is THE LIFE thereof “until death,” whether death comes BEFORE, or after birth. My mother lost 2 children by miscarriage before I was born and Father firmly believed that those “children” were as treasures laid up in Heaven, and would meet him there, some day.

She adds that Martha again miscarried after her (Euphrina’s) birth. After Martha’s death, Euphrina dreamed of seeing Martha with a beautiful baby seated on her lap. When Euphrina asked who the baby was, her mother replied, smiling, “THIS IS YOUR LITTLE SISTER!” Euphrina told her father about the dream, recounting the ex-
quisite love and tenderness she had experienced. He commented, "THAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE LAST OF MY FAMILY." Howard Coray's conviction and assurance of personal faith transferred to Euphrina—"Shall I have my BROTHER, and TWO SISTERS in Paradise? I hope and BELIEVE so!"  

Martha Coray remained steadfast and loyal to the Church, contributing in many ways over her lifetime, including writing for the *Woman's Exponent*. She left journals (1873–78) detailing her everyday life and documenting her numerous contributions to the community in which she resided. She was a resourceful woman who marketed herbs and liniments. Her interest in the medical profession took a personal turn after the death of one of her daughters, presumably in childbirth. She wrote Brigham Young of her concern over obstetrical care and pleaded that "a class of students, women suited in mind and temper to the calling, be established in every settlement" to afford better medical care.  

Young acted upon her suggestion in the early 1870s by calling several men and women to attend eastern medical schools to qualify as physicians and ensuring that midwives were available in each community to deliver babies. He also encouraged classes that taught nursing, obstetrics and hygiene.  

Martha also was extremely adept at the practice of law, and several stories have been recorded of her serving in the capacity of a lawyer. She also assayed minerals, studied chemistry and geology, and participated in local politics. In 1875, Brigham Young appointed her to the first board of directors of Brigham Young Academy in Provo. It is not known whether he was, in this way, making a conciliatory gesture for his accusations regarding her role in Mother Smith's book or because he recognized the contributions she could make to the

---

In a letter to Brigham Young the year after her appointment, Martha defined her philosophy of education: “God’s laws of religion first—Man’s laws of honor and morality 2nd. Science of every attainable kind and as much as possible but lastly in forming a permanent base for character and hope of future salvation.” Martha served devotedly on the executive committee and also on the auditing, curriculum, and rules and by-laws committees. One of her actions on her deathbed was to append her signature to an official paper. She died December 14, 1881.

The *Salt Lake Herald* eulogized her as a “remarkable woman” with “superior qualities [which] impressed themselves upon those who approached her even for a brief period. She was possessed of indomitable energy and besides being widely read and cultured and possessing in an eminent degree many womanly traits, she was almost masculine in her strength of character. Her mind was clear and comprehensive, and she employed it to good advantage.” Her gravestone reads: “While a toiler among the poor—She was a teacher of the learned—God and Nature were her preceptors—Humanity was her religion and maternal sacrifice her idolatry.”

Howard Coray mourned the passing of his wife, commenting that his “fondest hope . . . is to again strike hands with the wife of my youth, in a more genial clime, where sorrowing and sighing there is none, and parting shall be no more.” Howard served several missions for the church, including one to the Southern States, then spent his declining years in peaceful retirement in his children’s homes. He died January 16, 1908, and was buried beside Martha in the Provo City Cemetery.

Thousands of early Saints witnessed events and heard sermons from Joseph Smith. Thankfully Howard and Martha Coray were among the few who recorded those activities. Not only do we know Brother Joseph a bit better through their words, but we also know Howard and Martha.

---

72 Her granddaughter, Edna Dyer, believed Martha’s appointment was Brigham’s way of apologizing. Quoted in Billings, “Faith, Femininity, and the Frontier,” 148.
73 Martha Coray, Letter to Brigham Young, April 10, 1876, Coray Family Papers, Perry Special Collections.
74 Weeks and Cooper, “Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” 10.
75 “Death of Mrs. Coray,” *Salt Lake Herald*, December 16, 1881, 8.
76 Howard Coray, Journal, n.d., 11, Coray Family Papers, Box 1, fd. 6.
Martha more intimately. Their records tell us something of Joseph’s impact on his audience through their efforts to capture his words and those ideas which made the deepest impression on their inevitably selective attention.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to the Corays’ unfailing devotion and dedication appears in an 1885 letter from Howard to Joshua Stevens, to whom he bears a particular testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

I have had privileges beyond the most of my brethren. I was clerk for Joseph Smith in the year 1840—lived with him. Saw him under varied circumstances—with his family—his friends, as well as strangers. He was always self possessed and at home perfectly master of every situation that I ever saw [him] in. I was present when he translated as a Seer on one occasion. I was also present when he received a revelation in relation to priesthood matters; and if any sense of sight, of feeling, & of hearing can be trusted, I know Joseph Smith was no humbug. What I saw him do. What I know he did do, was as convincing to me, that God had called him to introduce the Dispensation of the fullness of times, as if I had seen him raise the dead. I know of these things in a way and manner in which there is no possibility of deception by the Holy Ghost. Shall I turn away and deny what I know because dark clouds are hovering over us? I hope I am not made of that kind of stuff.77

APPENDIX

Note: The text of Joseph Smith’s July 19, 1840, discourse in Martha Jane Knowlton’s notebook:

Read a chap in [Ezekiel] concluding with this saying and when all these things come to pass and Lo they will come then shall you know that a Prophet hath been among you.

Afterwards read the parable of the 12 olive trees and said speaking of

77Not much is known about Stevens except that he was killed on August 27, 1912, by Mexican rebels at Pacheco, Chihuahua, Mexico while defending his daughters. Andrew Jenson, Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1914), under date cited. The “dark clouds” to which Howard refers are, no doubt, the federal pressures on plural marriage, intensified by the passage of the Edmunds Act in 1882.
the Land of Zion It consists of all N. & S America but that any place where the Saints gather is Zion which every righteous man will build up for a place of safety for his children The olive trees are 12 stakes which are yet to be built not the Temple in Jackson [County, Missouri] as some suppose for while the 12 stakes are being built we will be at peace but the Nations of the Earth will be at war. our cry from the 1st has been for peace and we will continue pleading like the Widow at the feet of the unjust judge but we may plead at the feet of Majistrates and at the feet of Judges At the feet of Governors and at the feet of senators & at the feet of Pre[s]idents for 8 years it will be of no avail. We shall find no favor in any of the courts of this government. The redemption of Zion is the redemption of all N & S America and those 12 stake must be built up before the redemption of Zion can take place and those who refuse to gather and build when they are commanded to do so cease to be Saviours of men and are henceforth good for nothing but shall be cast out and trodden underfeet of men for their transgression as Reed Peck was when he applied in the name of an apostate for business in a store in Quincy They told him that they wanted no apostates round them and showed him the door At this same store the Authorities of this Church could have obtained almost any amount of credit they could have asked—

We shall build the Zion of the Lord in peace untill the servants of that Lord shall begin to lay the foundation of a great and high watch Tower and then shall they begin to say within themselves what need hath my Lord of this tower seeing this is a time of peace &c—Then the Enemy shall come as a thief in the night and scatter the servants abroad when the seed of these 12 Olive trees are scattered abroad they will wake up the Nations of the whole Earth Even this Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to peices and tumbling to the ground and when the constitution is upon the brink of ruin this people will be the Staff upon which the Nation shall lean and they shall bear the constitution away from the very verge of destruction—Then shall the Lord say go tell all my servants who are the strength of mine house, my young men and middle aged &c come to the Land of my vineyard and fight the battle of the Lord—Then the Kings & Queens shall come then the rulers of the Earth shall come then shall all saints come yea the Foreign saints shall come to fight for the Land of my vineyard for in this thing shall be their safety and they will have no power to choose but will come as a man fleeth

78 Reed Peck had joined the Church in Colesville, New York, became antagonistic during the Missouri period, and was excommunicated in Quincy, Illinois, on March 17, 1839. Larry C. Porter, “The Colesville Branch and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon,” BYU Studies 10 (Spring 1970): 377.
from a sudden destruction—But before this the time shall be these who are
now my friends shall become my enemies and shall seek to take my life and
there are those now before me who will more furiously pursue me the more
dilligently seek my life and be more blood thirsty upon my track than ever
were the Missouri Mobbers You say among yourselves as did them of old
time, is it I, & is it I But I know these things by the visions of the Almighty.

But brethren come ye yea come all of you who can come and go to with
your mights and build up the cities of the Lord and whosoever will let him
come and partake of the poverty of Nauvoo freely for those who partake of
her poverty shall also partake of her prosperity. And it is now wisdom in God
that we should enter into as compact a city as possible for Zion and Jerusalem
must both be built up before the coming of Christ How long will it take to do
this 10 years Yes more than 40 years will pass before this work will be accom-
plished and when these cities are built then shall the coming of the Son of
Man be

Now let all who can coolly and deliberately dispose of their property
come up and give of their substance to the [poor?] that the hearts of the
poor may be comforted and all may worship god together in holiness of
heart Come brethren come all of you.—And I prophecy in the name of the
Lord that the state of Illinois shall become a great and mighty mountain as a
city set upon a hill that cannot be hid and a great that giveth light to the
world The city of Nauvoo als[o] shall become the greatest city in the whole
world.—

Curse that man who says to his neighbor you are a mean man because
you do not believe as I do I now invite all liberall minded men to come up to
Nauvoo and help to build up the city of our God We are not greatly dis-
tressed no nor ever will be This is the principle place of gathering therefore
let the brethren begin to roll in like clouds and we will sell you lots if you are
able to pay for them and if not you shall have them without money and with-
out price

The greater blessing is unto those who come in times of adversity. For
many will come to us in times of prosperity that will stand at the corners of
the streets saying with long pharisaical faces to those that come after them
dont go near Bro Joseph dont go near the authorities of the church for they
will pick your pockets they will rob you of all your money Thus will they
breed in our midst a spirit of dissatisfaction and distrust that will end in per-
secution and distress—

Now from this hour bring every thing you can bring and build a Tem-
ple unto the Lord a house unto the mighty God of Jacob. We will build upon
the top of this Temple a great observatory a great and high watch tower and
in the top thereof we will Suspend a tremendous bell that when it is rung
shall rouse the inhabitants of Madison wake up the people of Warsaw and
sound in the ears of men [in] Carthage Then comes the ancient records yea all of them dig them yea bring them forth speedily

Then shall the poor be fed by the curious who shall come from all parts of the world to see this wonderful temple Yea I prophecy that pleasure parties shall come from England to see the Mamoth and like the Queen of Sheba shall say the half never was told them. School houses shall be built here and High schools shall be established and the great men of the [earth] shall send their sons here to board while they are receiving their education among us And even Noblemen shall crave the privilege of educating their children with us and these poor saints shall chink in their pockets the money of these proud men received from such as come and dwell with us

Now brethren I obligate myself to build as great a temple as ever Solomon did if the church will back me up. Moreover it shall not impoverish any man but enrich thousands I prophecy that the time shall be when these saints shall ride proudly over the mountains of Missouri and no Gentile dog nor Missouri dog shall dare lift a tongue against them but will lick up the dust from beneath their feet and I pray the father that many here may realize this and see it with their eyes. And if it should be (Stretching his hand towards the place and in a melancholy tone that made all hearts tremble) will of God that I might live to behold that temple completed and finished from the foundation to the top stone I will say Oh Lord it is enough Lord let thy servant depart in peace, which is my earnest prayer in the name of the L Jesus Amen on this day the Stake of Macedonia over which Father John [sic] Smith presided was publicly appointed[.]
IN HARMONY?
PERCEPTIONS OF MORMONISM IN SUSQUEHANNA, PENNSYLVANIA

Stanley James Thayne

THE HISTORY OF MORMONISM in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, began in 1825 when Joseph Smith boarded at the Isaac Hale home in the village of Harmony.1 In December 1827 he took up more permanent residence there after he married Emma, Isaac’s daughter, on January 18, 1827. Some of the most significant events in Mormon

STANLEY J. THAYNE (stanleythayne@gmail.com) is a graduate student in the History Department, Brigham Young University, in U.S. history. He wrote an earlier version of this paper as an undergraduate at BYU and presented it at the Mormon History Association annual conference, at Casper, Wyoming, May 26, 2006. The paper was written as part of a Brigham Young University ORCA research scholarship, funded by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship and mentored by J. Spencer Fluhman, assistant professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University. He thanks Fluhman, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel for assistance in obtaining images, and Susan Sessions Rugh for her suggestions for revisions. He served in the Pennsylvania Harrisburg Mission from January 1999 to January 2001.

1Joseph Smith, “History, 1838,” in Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, edited by Dean C. Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 238; and “Statement of Isaac Hale,” in Emily Blackman, History of Susquehanna County Pennsylvania (1873; rpt., Baltimore: Regional Publishing, 1970), 578, which dates Smith’s arrival at November 1825. Another Harmony resident, J. B. Buck, recalled that Smith was lumbering in Susquehanna County
history took place in Harmony: the translation of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of both priesthoods, and, of course, the courtship of Joseph and Emma. In 1830, however, the Smiths fled Harmony, due to what Joseph described as the “spirit of persecution.”

Smith did not leave a very good reputation behind. “It is a fact, of which we are not particularly proud, that Susquehanna County harbored such a madman as Joe Smith,” wrote local historian Emily C. Blackman in 1873. Smith left in his wake a wealth of folklore—legends of treasure digging and water-walking that portray him as an impostor. These stories, echoes of the “spirit of persecution” that drove the Smiths from the area, have persisted and have, until recently, evinced a very negative perception of Smith and Mormonism—so negative in fact, that as recently as the 1980s LDS missionaries were apparently expelled from the town of Susquehanna by the mayor’s order.

Such treatment has also led to negative perceptions by local Latter-day Saints toward the towns of Susquehanna and Oakland, which were both known as Harmony in the 1830s. A popular legend circulated among missionaries and local Saints that Joseph Smith “dusted his feet” and left a curse on the area when he departed. Because of this belief and what many Latter-day Saints have perceived as a spirit of hostility, until recently, both missionaries and members have avoided the area.

in 1818. Blackman, History of Susquehanna County, 575. This is surely a mistake of memory, however, as Joseph would have been only thirteen at this time, and this “lumbering” episode is not mentioned in any other source. Larry C. Porter, Origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816–1831 (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1971; rpt. Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History/BYU Studies, Dissertations in LDS History Series, 2000), 48, 64 note 31.


3Blackman, History of Susquehanna County, 577.


5The name of Harmony was changed to Oakland in 1853. That same year, the town of Susquehanna was established just across the river.
These perceptions—both those held by Mormons toward locals and those held by locals toward Mormonism—have undergone a dramatic shift since the 1990s. While newspapers, county histories, and local folklore conveyed negative perceptions of Mormonism during most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, public reaction to several events such as the 1999 placement of missionaries in Susquehanna, the organization of the Susquehanna Branch in 2000, and the establishment of an annual LDS pageant in Oakland in 2000, suggests an amelioration of local perceptions of Mormonism. So dramatic has been this shift in perceptions that, instead of being barred from the town by the mayor, in May 2002 LDS missionaries taught and baptized Mayor Nancy Hurley shortly after she attended the pageant in Oakland.\(^6\)

---

EARLY PERCEPTIONS AND JOSEPH SMITH FOLKLORE

In 1833 Philastus Hurlbut, a former Mormon who had been excommunicated for “un-Christian conduct with women,”7 wrote to Isaac Hale requesting a statement on Joseph Smith’s character. Hurlbut wanted condemnatory information, since he had been “‘employed’ by an anti-Mormon public committee to gather evidence to ‘completely divest Joseph Smith of all claims to the character of an honest man,’”8 and with a personal desire “to ferret out Mormonism and break it up.”9 Not only did Isaac Hale provide the desired statement, but six other members of the Hale family and their in-laws (the Lewises and the McKunes), all prominent county families, made affidavits reporting negatively on the character of Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris. These affidavits were published in Eber D. Howe’s Mormonism Unvailed (1834), in the Susquehanna Register the same year, and in Emily Blackman’s History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania in 1873. The negativity of Isaac Hale’s tone is understandable in light of the fact that Joseph Smith married his daughter Emma without his consent and against his protestations.10 The sting felt by Hale spread to other members of his extended family—the Lewises, McKunes, and Skinners—which constituted a significant segment of the community. Unfortunately for Mormonism, the general disfavor of Hale’s extended family set the tone for how Mormonism would be perceived in the county throughout the rest of the nine-

had met with the missionaries for a short time before the pageant and was baptized soon thereafter.

7History of the Church, 1:352.
8“‘To the Public,’” Painesville Telegraph 5, no. 33 (January 31, 1834), rpt. in Painesville Telegraph 5, no. 34 (February 7, 1834), quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reappraised,” BYU Studies 10, no. 3 (Spring 1970): 284. The “Committee” consisted of ten citizens of Kirtland, Ohio, who signed “To the Public.”
10Hale stated that his reasons for opposing were, among other unstated concerns, that Smith “was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve” (Blackman, History of Susquehanna County, 578), referring to his employment as a treasure seer for Josiah Stowell’s group of money-diggers. The distrust this business engendered in Hale, compounded by Smith’s meager finances, caused Hale understandable distress.
teenth century and most of the twentieth.11

While collecting additional information from Susquehanna citizens for her history, Blackman tapped into the wealth of Joseph Smith folklore that had developed in the forty years since Smith left the area, particularly on the theme of treasure hunting. Blackman collected several statements about Joseph’s “peepings” and “diggings.” Joseph himself stated that he had been hired to find a lost Spanish silver mine;12 but due to the nature of oral legend, these tales almost certainly underwent some embellishment. Variants Blackman collected tell of sacrifices of white sheep (a pre-Joseph Smith local legend associated a white dog’s sacrifice with good luck),13 “straggling Indian” collaborators, and Joseph’s leading a band of dupes on treasure hunts that were foiled when “his followers broke rules of silence, [and] ‘the enchantment removed the deposits.’” Some of Blackman’s informants stated that a few of these holes could still be found.14 The tradition that Smith had dug the mysterious-looking depressions in the hillside near the Hale property persisted. An early twentieth-century postcard, produced by John Stoal of Chenango County, New York, depicts a man in a “money hole near Susquehanna, Pa.” The caption

11In 2004, Susquehanna County resident Donald Day stated: “People still talk about how his [Joseph Smith’s] father-in-law [Isaac Hale] didn’t like him, and especially... [Emma’s] uncle [Nathaniel Lewis]... disliked him even more.” Donald Day, Oral History, August 3, 2004, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, 5. Emma’s mother was Elizabeth Lewis (married Isaac Hale September 20, 1790); their oldest son, Jesse Hale, married Mary McKune July 23, 1815. Nathaniel Lewis, a lay preacher for the local Methodist Episcopal Church, and his sons were openly antagonistic of Smith, due to his involvement in seering and his claims regarding the Book of Mormon translation. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1994), 25–29.

12Smith, “History, 1838,” in Jessee, Personal Writings, 238.

13Sacrificing a white dog for good luck was apparently a common folktale in earlier Susquehanna culture. Commenting on this legend as applied to Smith, Carl Carmer, The Susquehanna (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1955), 339, stated, “The likelihood that this tale is of folk origin and invented in malice is heightened by the fact that it is told with a pointed conclusion intended as ridicule. It appears in substantially the same form in an old history of the county” and is similar to Native American legends.

reads “Joseph Smith the ‘Mormon Prophet’ hired to dig for silver here in 1825.”

When Mormon historian Hyrum Andrus visited Susquehanna in 1953, locals explained that “Joseph lost the plates & in order to find them dug a big hole in a nearby hill.” But they also told Andrus that others dug the hole looking for Smith’s lost plates. Other accounts, borrowing embellishments from other events, claim that the large hole marks the spot where Joseph actually discovered the Book of Mormon plates. In 1914 the Montrose Democrat, reproducing an article from the Binghamton [New York] Press, stated that a “press correspondent, while out hunting recently, was shown the hole where Smith claimed to have discovered the famous Bible that formed the foundation of his church.” Some of the older residents can still point out these holes to the curious inquirer.

Many of the legends told about Smith probably intended to dis-

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15}}\text{Susquehanna resident Eugene Price, a member of the Susquehanna Depot Historical Society, showed me this postcard on August 3, 2004; the transcription is from my handwritten notes.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\text{Hyrum L. Andrus, [Statement], May 17, 1953, MSS SC 1072, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\text{Montrose Democrat 74, no. 51 (December 24, 1914): 5. This paragraph was reprinted from the Binghamton Press. Other locales have similar legends about the discovery of the plates in areas other than Manchester. Just up the river from Susquehanna in Afton, New York, a sign on Route 41 near Cornell Creek read: “Joseph Smith in 1827 dug for and claimed to find some of the plates for the Mormon Bible 1/2 mile up this creek.” Charles J. Decker, “Legends and Local Stories about Joseph Smith,” 1977, typescript, 3. The sign is now located in the Afton Historical Society.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{18}}\text{In August 2004, Eugene Price gave me directions for finding some of these “money holes” as he has for other Mormon history buffs, and Charles Decker, town historian, also gave me directions to some of the holes just north of Susquehanna County, in Afton, New York, in August 2004. In October 1992, Decker had assisted Dan Vogel with a similar hunt. Both Dan and I experienced difficulty locating these holes or their traces. Dan Vogel, “The Locations of Joseph Smith’s Early Treasure Quests,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 27, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 217, 223. A photograph of a “treasure mine,” taken by Alexander L. Baugh, was printed in J. Taylor Hollist, “Walking-on-Water Stories and Other Susquehanna River Folk}\]
credit him as an uninspired impostor. A second-hand report credits Emma’s cousin by marriage, Sophia Lewis, as saying she “heard [Smith] say the book of plates could not be opened under penalty of death by any other person but his first-born, which was to be a male.” Blackman adds a footnote that “the child was a girl, and was buried in

“Money Hole,” Harmony, Pennsylvania, 1907. Photograph by George Edward Anderson. A similar photo was made into a postcard by John Stoal. Courtesy of LDS Church Archives.

Tales about Joseph Smith,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 44. Donald Day, a retired game warden, member of the Susquehanna Depot Historical Society, and a county resident for approximately fifty years, has led several curious missionaries and historians (I met Don after my mission on a return visit to the area) to the local “Spanish silver mine.” Day said that he has never heard the mine associated with Joseph Smith but that it is often referred to as the “Spanish Silver mine.” Since it is just over the mountain from Isaac Hale’s home, Smith and Josiah Stowell’s company may have dug it. Day, Oral History, 1.
the graveyard on J. McKunes’s farm.”¹⁹ This note betrays her intent to discredit the Prophet since the grave marker clearly indicates that the child was a son. An unpublished family history written by a grandchild of Rhoda Skinner who, according to Skinner family tradition, was the midwife at the delivery, confirms that the child was a son.²⁰

Perhaps the most popular tale about Joseph Smith today is his al-


²⁰Joan M. Luckett, “Family History,” 1979, typescript, 7, Perry Special Collections, observed: “Cyrus [Skinner] has twin brothers, Israel and Jacob, that moved to Susquehanna County Pennsylvania around 1810. Israel’s farm (according to an unpublished Skinner family history in my possession) is said to have been a one time residence of Joseph Smith.” Luckett quotes that family history’s statement from Jacob’s wife, Rhoda McDowell: “She was the midwife who delivered the only son of Joseph Smith (the Mormon Prophet) and his wife Emma Hale Smith. It was their only child who died in infancy and is buried in the McCune Cemetery near Oakland, Pennsylvania. Before the baby was born, Joe Smith came out with something like a pillowcase, telling our grandmother it was the golden plates (Mormon Bible). He said that if anyone looked at the plates before the child was born, which was to be a son, they would die. Rhoda said that she would risk it if she could find something sharp to open the sack, but everything sharp had been hidden. When she found two shears the pillowcase was gone. When I read this, [Luckett continues,] I was really surprised. Two years ago our family visited that area of Pennsylvania and went to the cemetery. Jacob and Rhoda Skinner are buried in front of the prophets [sic] infant son.” See also Carter E. Grant, “An Angel Visited This Home,” *Improvement Era* 66, no. 3 (March 1963): 172. The grave marker reads: “In Memory of An / Infant Son of / Joseph And Emma / Smith June 15th 1828.” Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 4:418–19. The marker does not give the child’s name, but according to the Smith family Bible, Joseph and Emma named him Alvin. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:418. An unidentified and undated newspaper article indicates that changes were made to a sign at the entrance to the McKune cemetery that “made it clear it was not a daughter, but a son of the Prophet Joseph Smith that was buried in the cemetery.” LaMar C. Berrett, *The Wilford C. Wood Collection: An Annotated Catalog of Documentary Type Materials in the Wilford C. Wood Collection, Volume 1* (Bountiful, Utah: Wilford C. Wood Foundation, 1972), 13.
To convince the unbelievers that he [Smith] did possess supernatural powers he announced that he would walk upon the water. The performance was to take place in the evening, and to the astonishment of unbelievers he did walk upon the water where it was known to be several feet deep, sinking only a few inches below the surface. This proving to be a success, a second trial was announced which bid fair to be as successful as the first, but when he had proceeded some distance into the river he suddenly went down, greatly to the disgust of himself and proselytes, but to the great amusement of the unbelievers. It appeared on examination that planks were laid in the river a few inches below the surface, and some wicked boys had removed a plank which

caused the prophet to go down like any other mortal.21+

Blackman did not mention the water-walking legend in her 1873 History, and neither did R. M. Stocker in his 1887 Centennial History of Susquehanna County. Also, as J. Taylor Hollist, a local LDS historian, points out, “Frederick G. Mather interviewed four people in New York and five people in Pennsylvania for his 1880 Binghamton Republican article. The interviewees from New York mention the walking-on-water tale, but the Pennsylvanians do not.”22++These factors seem to suggest that the legend began in New York and eventually made its way to Pennsylvania where it became associated with the Joseph Smith home site, also located on the banks of the Susquehanna River.

Not only did the legend most likely begin in New York, but it was probably first associated with Jemima Wilkinson, a millenarian prophetess who predated Joseph Smith by about fifty years. Variants of the water-walking legend associated with Wilkinson were published as early as 1821; and though they were quite different from the legend later associated with Joseph Smith, Wilkinson’s biographer Herbert Wisbey has reported oral legends and depict Wilkinson “as actually walking on the water supported by a platform built just below the surface.”23+++So far as I have discovered, the Smith water-walking legend first appeared in print in Susquehanna County in a “Prize Essay” written by Margaret Hawes of Oakland, Pennsylvania, in 1907. She says the incident occurred on Smith’s Harmony farm “at the river bank,” where he “fastened planks from the shore to the Island.” This device was thwarted when “a mischievous fellow partly cut the cords that held the

23Herbert A. Wisbey, Pioneer Prophetess: Jemima Wilkinson, the Publick Universal Friend (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), 175. In earlier published versions, Wilkinson does not actually walk on the water but tells those gathered around—followers who expressed absolute faith in her—that, since they believe, no further proof needs to be given. David Hudson, Memoir of Jemima Wilkinson (2d ed. 1844; rpt., New York: AMS Press, 1972), 184–86. The earlier editions were printed by (Bath, N.Y.: R. L. Underhill & Co., 1821); Western Palladium (New Lisbon, Ohio), 30, no. 10 (September 5, 1829); and Thomas Hamilton, Men and Manners in America (1833; rpt., New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 361.
planks and Joseph’s weight when he got into the middle of the river let him down.24 The legend appeared again in 1919 in a Montrose Independent Republican article announcing that the old Joseph Smith home had burned down. In this version the prank is attributed to “small boys” and the structure was a “submerged bridge.” After Joseph’s failure, the account maintained, “he hied away to a haven of refuge where he remained in seclusion for some time,” an element that still shows up in some oral accounts.25

Donald Day, a Susquehanna County resident for about fifty years and a retired game warden, began hearing the tales soon after he moved into the area in the 1950s. He states: “I used to have a deputy [James McGuane], and we’d check mink traps. At one point we were down behind what is now the Mormon monument (but then, was nothing), and he says, ‘Right here is where’—and he told me about it [the water-walking legend]. He knew Joseph Smith by name. He was Catholic, and he was born and raised in Susquehanna. He says, ‘This is where he was going to walk on the water,’ and then he told me that story. I’ve heard it so many times from other people, when that subject comes up.” Day added that he discounted the tale: “I’ve thought a lot about that since, and how difficult it would be to put a dock out in the water where you’ve got nothing but cobblestones. It would be nearly impossible for an individual to construct such a thing. You could drive them with piles and all that kind of stuff, and even now with metal, but then you didn’t have all that kind of stuff.”26

Susquehanna resident Eugene Price, a member of the Susquehanna Depot Area Historical Society, also regards the tale as fictional. Ira Reynolds, a 102-year-old Susquehanna resident, believes “it was just a story, and probably never happened.”27 One lifetime resident, however, defended the veracity of the tale because his grandmother told it to him when he was young and presumably

24[Margaret Hawes], “Prize Essay,” Montrose Democrat, January 31, 1907.
25“Mormon’s Old Home Burns—Prophet Joseph Smith’s One Time Residence Destroyed,” (Montrose) Independent Republican 64, no. 27 (July 4, 1919).
would have known, even though she was born after Smith’s death. 

**COUNTY NEWSPAPERS**

During the 1830s, in addition to the *Susquehanna Register*, two other Susquehanna County newspapers ran frequent stories tracking the progress of Mormonism. The earliest was an 1832 review of the Book of Mormon in *The Herald of Gospel Truth and Watchman of Liberty*, printed in Montrose, the Susquehanna County seat. Similarities in the scathing critique suggest that the reviewers were probably familiar with Alexander Campbell’s *Delusions*, published nearly two years earlier. Interestingly, the article makes no mention of Smith’s time in the county. Another Montrose newspaper, the *Independent Volunteer*, frequently reprinted articles about Mormon happenings, such as the construction of their “heathen temple on Lake Erie,” the migrations of these “deluded people, marching like Pilgrims” into Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, and their “zealous friendship of many powerful [Indian] tribes” on the frontier.

Another Montrose paper, the *Susquehanna Register and Northern Farmer*, also reported occasionally on Mormon “troubles.” In 1844 the paper tracked the events that led up to Smith’s martyrdom, reprinting extracts from the *Nauvoo Expositor* and *Warsaw Signal*. On July 11, 1844, an article on the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor’s* press con-

---

28Anonymous #1, Oral History, August 4, 2004, Susquehanna, 1. This interviewee said that his “grandmother died at ninety-eight, twelve or thirteen years ago,” which meant she would have been born around 1893–94, about sixty-five years after Joseph Smith left the area and about fifty years after his death.


31See, for example, “Progress of Mormonism,” March 7, 1844; “More Mormon Trouble,” March 21, 1844; “Trouble among the Mormons,” June 13, 1844, all in *Susquehanna Register and Northern Farmer*.

32“Arrest of Joe Smith,” June 27, 1844, and “Trouble with the Mormons,” July 11, 1844, in *Susquehanna Register and Northern Farmer*. 
cluded with the trailer: “Later.—Joe Smith in Jail—Shot! Killed in trying to escape! Great news next week.” Though the exclamation of Smith’s murder as “Great news” was probably just a sensational grabber to promote readership for the next week’s issue, such blatant insensitivity may also reflect lingering hostility toward Smith and Mormonism—hardly unique to Susquehanna at the time. Although the paper subsequently printed a laudatory eulogy of Smith, the editor couldn’t resist one more jab by identifying the author as “A Sucker.” In November 1844, another article gloatingly reported that Emma Smith “it is said, has lost all confidence (if she ever had any) in the Mormon faith.” The article does not mention that Emma was a native of Susquehanna County.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the *Susquehanna Register* and the *Montrose Democrat* occasionally printed stories about Mormon happenings, but these stories had few local connections. Instead, they resembled articles in other national papers about visits to Nauvoo or Utah Territory; slanders of Brigham Young, “the fifty-wived priest,” and his “bestial followers”; and political controversies involving polygamy. Two, however, reported Mormons who visited the county. According to a satiric 1893 account, “Two weary pilgrims from Salt Lake City, with the sad countenances of men who have more than six wives, ambled into town on Monday and at once proceeded to the spot where Joseph Smith excavated for his temple and indulged in other unabridged tomfoolery. They gained some information from a few of the ‘oldest inhabitants’ (who are either champion liers [sic] or people with faulty memories,)

33“Trouble with the Mormons,” *Susquehanna Register and Northern Farmer*, July 11, 1844.
36Correspondence, reprinted from *Mauch Chunk Gazette, Susquehanna Register* 28, no. 28 (July 14, 1853): 1; “The Mormon People—Their Religious Belief—Their Relations to the Government—As Gleaned by a ‘Democrat’ Representative,” *Montrose Democrat*, December 10, 1886, 3. I thank Susquehanna County historian William S. Young for his gracious assistance in providing me with references to several newspaper articles on Mormonism.
38“War on Roberts of Utah,” *Montrose Democrat*, December 22, 1848.
ded the earth with a spade and pocketed some of the soil, and solemnly went hence, making no sign and unbosoming themselves to no man. Why came these pilgrims here?” 39

The derisive tone and the semi-hostile closing question suggest that Mormons were not welcome visitors. This resistance was even more evident in an 1899 article warning citizens that the Mormon missionaries—who apparently by that time were “putting in much time in [the] county”—are “smooth, and attempt to give such a picture of Mormonism as will be acceptable to decent people.” The article advised anyone who wanted to know the “real aims of Mormonism” to write to Philadelphia for an anti-Mormon leaflet. 40 Blackman’s negative view of Joseph Smith from forty-six years earlier was echoed in a 1919 newspaper article: “Natives of Susquehanna county rarely boast of the fact that the leader and founder of Mormonism was a Susquehanna county man. Such is a fact, well known to most of the people of the county, but rarely alluded to as something of which to be proud.” 41

Not all views of Joseph Smith and Mormonism during this period were negative, however. Psychologist B. F. Skinner, who grew up in the town of Susquehanna between 1904 and 1922, recalled “scurrilous stories” about Smith, including the water-walking legend, but also said that Smith and other leaders of nineteenth-century “perfectionist movements” 42 were examples that showed “you could step in and do something about your life.” 43 He seemed to view Smith as someone who rose out of obscurity to achieve great things but acknowledged that regionally “Smith was laughed at by the local people.” 44

JOSEPH SMITH HOME SITE

The Joseph Smith home served as a reminder for locals of the Mormon historical roots in the area. Ira Reynolds, a 104-year-old resi-
dent of Susquehanna, recalls that his wife (now deceased) entered the Smith home as a young girl and saw where the Book of Mormon plates were translated. Donald Day agreed that Reynolds’s wife, whose birth name was Smith, “went to school with a little girl who lived there [at the Joseph Smith home]. She would stop and go into that house and go under the stairwell, under the steps, and supposedly that’s where these golden tablets were translated.” Ira confirmed that the “the golden plates were read under those stairs” in the Smith home.45

After Joseph had moved to Kirtland, Ohio, he sold the Harmony farm and home to Joseph McKune in 1833.46 McKune’s son, Benjamin F. McKune, inherited the property on his father’s death and apparently leased it to tenants. In 1957, Abner H. Baird and Hazel T. Baird, Latter-day Saints from nearby Scranton, gathered information on the Smith farm and spoke with Rex B. Hawes, who had lived in the home from 1896 until 1909 when the property “was heavily mortgaged to Mr. Simon Barnes.” The Bairds obtained a notarized description of the house from Hawes:

The Joseph Smith home was built of lumber having two rooms downstairs. The floor downstairs was of beautiful hardwood maple. When entering the house, one came into a hallway and there a stairway led up to an attic or loft. The east end of this loft was boarded off into a room with a window looking toward the east. I was told that Joseph Smith did a lot of writing in this room. Another stairway, underneath the attic stairway, led down to a cellar underneath the house. There was a nice fireplace at the northwest end of the house but this fireplace was removed when McKune moved another house there and joined it to the Joseph Smith home. The house added to the original home was moved from the McKune property on the hillside.47

The Barneses eventually purchased the property but sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Edward D. Beavens in 1909. The house burned down

45Day, Oral History, 2; Reynolds and Day, Oral History, 1.
46Before leaving Harmony, Joseph took out a loan from George H. Noble & Co. by having a lien placed against the property. He then used that money to pay Isaac Hale, who signed over the deed for the house and property to him. Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 5:432.
around 1918–19. According to tradition, it was probably set alight by a hot cinder or spark from the railroad. George and Gladys Colwell bought the property in 1932 and deeded it to their daughters in 1939.

After 1919, with only postcards depicting the “Old Joe Smith House” to jog local memories, discussion of Joseph Smith apparently declined among Susquehanna residents. Donald Day moved to Hallstead, near Susquehanna, in the early 1950s and recalled that “no

---

48Anonymous #1, Oral Histories, August 3 and 4, 2004, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania; transcripts in my possession. Two fireplace mantels were removed from the home years later. One is in the Afton Historical Society, and the other is in the Charles Decker home. Day, Oral History, 2.


50Reproductions of these postcards printed by the Susquehanna De-
one discussed the Mormons; there was no monument, no Mormons—why would you say anything about it? 51

Still, Joseph Smith was not forgotten. Mormon historian Hyrum L. Andrus visited the area in 1953 to “determine the prevalent attitude toward Joseph Smith and the Church.” Although “formerly people had been quite hostile...[they] had always manifest a marked degree of interest in the Prophet & particularly in the property he once owned.” 52 One woman he talked to mentioned that “she knew that people seldom went to the McKune cemetery without going to visit & look upon the grave of the infant child of the Prophet.” He also found that “residents of that area know of and seem to delight in the telling their own particular version of the story associated with Joseph Smith while there, even though at times their stories do not correspond with a similar version by a neighbor. Nevertheless there is a certain degree of coherence.” 53 Despite their general disbelief in Smith’s prophetic authority and their occasional ridicule, he concluded, several locals had maintained a curious historical interest in the Prophet’s life and almost all could recite at least a few stories about him.

**MONUMENTS AND LAND PURCHASES**

This general historical awareness eventually led to more concrete reminders of Joseph Smith. In 1946 the Pennsylvania State Historical and Museum Commission commissioned the placement of a historical marker near Great Bend, Pennsylvania, to identify “the home of Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism.” 54 Historical consciousness also began to grow among some Latter-day Saints during the early and mid-nineteenth century, as several historical sites associated

---

51 Reynolds and Day, Oral History, 2.
52 Andrus, [Statement], May 17, 1953.
53 Ibid.
ated with Joseph Smith’s life in Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois were purchased. Mormon antiquarian and retired taxidermist Wilford C. Wood, of Woods Cross, Utah, was as much responsible for this surge in historical interest as any other individual. In addition to amassing an extensive collection of valuable artifacts, Wood purchased several sites now sacred to Mormons—including the Nauvoo Temple lot, Adam-ondi-Ahman, and Liberty Jail—and then deeded them to the LDS Church. In the late 1940s Wood purchased an eighty-acre plot in the township of Oakland (formerly Harmony), that included the Joseph Smith home site, the foundation of which was still visible; in February 1947, he transferred the deed to the Church.

Wood’s purchase may have made some locals uneasy about a possible Mormon incursion. Local resident John Gardner, in his...
1982 novel *Mickelsson’s Ghosts*, wrote a fictional dialogue that may have reflected real attitudes during the latter half of the twentieth century. Mickelsson purchases a home, learning months later that it had belonged to Joseph Smith. He asks the seller why she reduced the price.

“That was because of the Mormons, of course,” she said. . . .

“They wanted it real bad. There’s more and more of ‘em around here these days. They pay ta$h dahler.”

“You didn’t want to sell to them?” [Mickelsson asks] . . . .

“I know it’s terrible to be prejudiced,” she said, “but I’ve always gotten on so well with my neighbors. Right or wrong, I knew they’d just hate me if I sold to *those* people. How would they have liked it if I’d sold to the

...
Willard Bean, assigned as an LDS public relations missionary in the Palmyra region in 1915, faced similar problems as he tried to obtain the Hill Cumorah and other Mormon historic sites in New York. Yet while Gardner’s fictitious scenario might reflect the private attitudes of some locals who were averse to such developments, it does not seem to parallel Wilford Wood’s actual experience in purchasing the Joseph Smith and Isaac Hale properties. The Colwells, from whom he purchased the properties, were aware of Wood’s religious affiliation and seemed perfectly willing to sell to him. In a letter to Wood, Marietta Colwell expressed her feeling “that it [the Hale property] really should belong to the Mormon people.”

Not all Susquehannans were averse to the concept of Mormon memorialization either. In 1946 folklorist Austin Fife talked to U. G. Baker, editor of the Susquehanna Evening Transcript, who told him “that he had been trying for years to get the Mormon people to establish a monument and other markers in and about Susquehanna to commemorate the old Joseph Smith homestead, Hickory Grove where the Aaronic priesthood is said to have been restored, and other locations.” Though the Church showed “little interest” because of “insufficient funds,” it reportedly recognized the project as worthy.

In 1960, LDS Aaronic Priesthood quorums raised the funds for a bronze monument commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. Sculpted by Mormon artist Avard Fairbanks, the monument depicts the resurrected John the Baptist ordaining Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. On June 18, 1960, Presiding Bishop Joseph L. Wirthlin, accompanied by his counselors, presided over the monument’s unveiling and dedication. The monument was placed

59Baird and Baird, “Deeds, Wills, Maps.”
60Marietta Colwell, Letter to Wilford Wood, October 14, 1946, Oakland, Penns., Wilford Cotton Wood Collection of Church Historical Materials, 1-H-a-1, LDS Church Archives.
61Austin Fife, April 14, 1946, FMC I 167, Fife Folklore Archives.
between the foundation of the Smith home and the McKune cemetery. A sign bordering State Highway 171 designates the spot as the “Aaronic Priesthood Restoration Site.”

In addition to rousing slumbering local legends, the placement of this monument made Susquehanna a destination for Mormon tourists, though of secondary interest to the Hill Cumorah and the Sacred Grove near Palmyra. Mormon families and converts made pilgrimages to the site for baptisms in the river near the spot where Joseph and Oliver Cowdery baptized each other in 1829 (JS—History 1:69–71). LDS veneration of the site led Otto Reimherr, a professor of philosophy and religion at Susquehanna University, to dub the Susquehanna River “Mormonism’s Jordan.”

Local residents seem to have been aware of these pilgrimages,

---

and some may have viewed them as somewhat peculiar. In *Mickelsson’s Ghosts*, novelist Gardner creates a baptismal scene viewed by the recently arrived Peter Mickelsson. “Driving along the crooked road that followed the Susquehanna,” he comes upon “a stretch of road where cars were parked bumper to bumper on both shoulders . . . It seemed to him the strangest thing in the world—here, miles from nowhere, all these cars.” Mickelsson curiously stops his car and gets out. In the river, “hundreds of people, adults and children, stood sunk to the waist or higher.” Perplexed—since “they didn’t seem to be fishing or dredging for a body” —he asks a local bystander:

“What’s going on down there?”

“Mormons,” the man said . . . “Every year about this time they come out here and try to drown each other.” . . . “Why here?” [Mickelsson asked.] “Holy land,” the young man said . . . “You ever hear of Joseph Smith?” He cracked a laugh . . . “He used to live right back there.”

Though river baptisms are a usual summer ritual at the site,

Gardner’s description of hundreds of people in the water is probably an exaggeration and may be purely fictional. Other locals who have noticed many Mormon visitors at the site seem less concerned with what occurs there. Don Day commented that such pilgrimages “don’t generate any excitement that I know of because people don’t know what goes on when Mormons go down to the river because they can’t see it [a row of trees separates the riverbank from the road] . . . and [they’re] not invited.” Day added that locals are used to seeing cars or buses parked at the site but “generally ignore it—[the monument and restoration site] is just part of the landscape now, it’s been there so long.”

Local Latter-day Saints also use the river for baptisms occasionally. Local converts and members’ children often choose to be baptized in the river; and every missionary in the area hopes for the opportunity to baptize a convert in the same place Joseph Smith was baptized. (I performed my first baptism as a missionary in the Susquehanna.)

Not all Mormon hegiras to the area are for baptizing, however. Many, perhaps most, Mormon travelers visit the site as one of several stops on a Church history trek that might also include Kirtland, Ohio, and Palmyra, New York. Tour buses also occasionally stop at the site as part of guided Church history tours.

MISSIONARY WORK AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Missionary efforts immediately after the Church’s organization met with some success—about 126 members—in other northern counties in Pennsylvania by the end of 1830. Sometime during the 1830s, a branch was established in Springville in southwestern Susquehanna County, but it seems to have faded away by the decade’s end. As the majority of the Saints migrated to Kirtland, Ohio, beginning in January 1831, and later into Missouri, Church populations

---

64Donald Day, telephone conversation, June 2, 2007, notes in my possession.
66V. Alan Curtis, “Missionary Activities and Church Organizations in Pennsylvania, 1830–1840” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1976), 59–60; and Paul Zilch Rosenbaum, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-
in northern Pennsylvania dwindled.67

Erie County, Pennsylvania, which was en route to Kirtland, enjoyed considerable missionary attention. With the organization of the Eastern States Mission in 1839 under John P. Greene, missionary effort revived in southeastern Pennsylvania. That year, missionaries working in Philadelphia and Chester counties, succeeded in establishing branches.68 However, I have found no accounts of missionaries visiting Harmony during these early years. Joseph Smith assigned Greene to “preside over the Saints in that place [New York City] and in the regions round about.”69 Those “regions” meant all states east of the Mississippi River. Susquehanna County was a small region in an enormous mission. By the mid-1870s, Scranton, Lackawanna County (just south of Susquehanna County), Pennsylvania, and the surrounding area had apparently become something of a battleground between “Josephite” (RLDS) and “Utah” (LDS) missionaries, though with discouraging results for the Latter-day Saints.70 It is possible that some of these elders ventured north into Susquehanna County. An

68Ibid. Holzapfel mentions three missionaries—Jedediah M. Grant, Joshua Grant Jr., and Benjamin Winchester—as perhaps “the first missionaries to visit Philadelphia.” Winchester printed several pamphlets in Philadelphia that became highly influential missionary tracts.
69History of the Church, 3:347.
70William Adams was called to the Eastern States Mission on November 15, 1876. En route to his mission with his companion, William C. McGregor, they “met Elder Pierce returning from Pennsylvania” who informed them that “the Josephites were making inroads among the saints and leading many astray, principally in the city of Scranton.” Upon arriving in Philadelphia at the mission home, they reported to President Henry Grow. “He was very much discouraged,” Adams recorded, “he had just returned from Scranton and other places of the coal region and he said the Saints were wavering in their faith, that they sometimes believed that the Josephites had the truth, though when they heard from an Elder in Utah they would weaken in their faith toward the Josephites, that it was no use to go there to preach to them.” William Adams (1822–1901), Autobiography, January 1894, typescript, transcribed by Floyd L. Eisenhour, Historical Records Survey Project, March 23, 1937, MS 8039, microfilm, LDS Church Ar-
1899 Montrose Democrat article commented that Mormon missionaries were “putting in much time in [the] county, though with what results in implanting their evil doctrines, we do not know.”

During the first half of the twentieth century, Pennsylvania was divided into missionary districts, or conferences. In 1930, the Susquehanna Conference, which included counties in south-central New York and northeastern Pennsylvania, had branches in Binghamton, Broome County, New York (just north of Susquehanna), and in Scranton, Pennsylvania, with a combined membership of 198. It is not possible to determine how many lived in Susquehanna County—sandwiched between the two organized branches—but it is doubtful that they were numerous.

The latter half of the twentieth century saw modest flourishing in parts of Susquehanna County. In 1979, the Scranton District, which included Susquehanna County and parts of New York, was organized into the Scranton Stake, with a northern border that paralleled the New York–Pennsylvania border. A new branch was organized in Montrose, Pennsylvania, attended by several Susquehanna County members who had been meeting in the Binghamton Ward. Missionaries were stationed in Montrose; and the fledgling branch, which started out renting a Seventh-day Adventist meetinghouse, built its own chapel. Still, Montrose was twenty-six miles from Oakland and Susquehanna, a thirty- to forty-minute drive.

Roger Rolfe, who served in the Philadelphia Mission during the early 1980s, remembers being stationed in Susquehanna County in 1981—an area missionaries at the time referred to as “outer dark-chives.

71 Montrose Democrat, January 19, 1899.
72 Andrew Jenson, Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), 850.
73 Montrose Branch, Scranton Pennsylvania Stake, Annual Historical Reports, 1979, LR 197863, LDS Church Archives; Robert Sorensen, email to Stanley Thayne, Roger Rolfe, an LDS missionary in Montrose in 1981, remembered meeting in the rented church house during the “off-time, when no one else was meeting there.” Roger Rolfe, Oral History, telephone-interview, June 13, 2006; typescript notes in my possession.
ness." With the closest missionary leaders in Scranton and with no car, "we hardly ever saw anyone," Rolfe recalls. A significant experience, however, occurred when he and his companion, Elder Jeff Johnson, were first assigned to Montrose. Montrose’s branch president, Robert Sorensen, picked them up in Scranton and drove them sixty miles north to the Aaronic Priesthood restoration site. They walked to the riverbank where he told the two young elders: "I figure this is where Joseph and Oliver knelt; let’s do so now.” After offering a prayer to dedicate the area to missionary work, Sorensen told the missionaries, “We haven’t been very successful here; now we want you to change that.” “After that,” Rolfe recalls, “we worked pretty hard.”

Still, the elders spent nearly all of their time in Montrose, twenty-six miles away, with only bicycles for transportation. Occasionally they received permission to visit other parts of the county, staying in branch members’ homes. Rolfe remembers riding through Susquehanna twice on his bicycle. “It was a dark and dreary place,” Rolfe recalls. “We felt the cloak of darkness.” Their mission president actually instructed them not to proselyte in Susquehanna or Oakland because of the report that “Joseph had wiped his feet of the area.” “It wasn’t a strict order,” Rolfe recalls, and the president believed that “in the Lord’s time” the curse would be rescinded, but “he made it sound like it would be in the millennium.”

The legend had a powerful effect upon the psyche of Latter-day Saints in the area. I served in the Pennsylvania Harrisburg Mission from January 1999 to January 2001 and was assigned to the Montrose area, which covered all of Susquehanna County including the towns of Oakland and Susquehanna, in May-December 1999. A few local members living between Montrose and Susquehanna told me that Susquehanna was a “dead” area, and I heard rumors of the curse. But during my six-month assignment in the county, I witnessed a great shift in local Saints’ perceptions of Susquehanna and Oakland.

Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot

74 Susquehanna County was a part of the Philadelphia Mission during the early 1980s. It was assigned to the Harrisburg Mission around 1984–85. Rolfe, Interview, 1.
75 Rolfe, Oral History, 1.
76 Ibid.
In 1853, Harmony Township, where Joseph had resided, changed its name to Oakland Township, with the Borough of Oakland just north of the Joseph Smith home site. That same year, Susquehanna Depot was incorporated as a borough across the river. In 1869, Susquehanna Depot shortened its name to Susquehanna. As the original name suggests, Susquehanna was a railroad town. It was a logical place for a depot because eastbound locomotives had to stop there to have extra engines hooked on to push trains up the steep grades passing through the Poconos. Shops and businesses were built to accommodate railroad workers and travelers, and Susquehanna became a major manufacturing center for the New York and Erie Railroad. “Life was paced by the Shop whistle,” recalls B. F. Skinner, who grew up in Susquehanna during the early 1900s. “Susquehanna existed to serve the railroad.”

Accordingly, Susquehanna and Oakland flourished economically, although Oakland was the less prosperous community, where many of the railroad’s workers lived. The community enjoyed relative stability and prosperity in early years, boasting itself as “the smallest big city in America.” But the local economy fluctuated with the railroad’s success. Occasional mass layoffs created discontent among workers, leading to strikes and lockouts, with a massive strike in 1922. From that low point, the Erie Railroad Company limped on for another fifty years, experiencing multiple bankruptcies, reorganizations, and a merger. It finally collapsed in 1972. Susquehanna and Oakland stagnated and still have not recovered from that economic depression.

The combination of economic depression and the history of Mormon persecution created the perfect environment for legend-for-

---

80 Ibid., 5.
81 Stracuzzi, “The Erie Railroad and Its Effect.”
mation among Mormon missionaries. Susquehanna and Oakland, in the missionaries’ view, were being punished for rejecting the Lord’s prophet. One local Latter-day Saint commented that, though he never heard that Joseph Smith left a curse, he believes that something happened to create that “awful feeling. . . . I mean, the railroad left and it [was] just economically destroyed,” he stated. “There’s just nothing there.”

I have found no documentation that Smith ever pronounced such a curse on Harmony, but the possibility of invoking a curse is not altogether implausible. The biblical injunction Christ had given to his apostles authorizing the practice was reiterated in an 1830 revelation Smith received in Harmony: “And in whatsoever place ye shall enter, and they receive you not, in my name, ye shall leave a cursing instead of a blessing, by casting off the dust of your feet against them as a testimony, and cleansing your feet by the wayside.”

Smith’s revelations mention this practice at least four more times, and several missionaries had carried it out as early as June 1830, though there is no documentation of which I am aware that Joseph Smith performed this act.

--

85 After failing to sell any copies of the Book of Mormon and being ejected by an innkeeper in Livonia, New York, Samuel Smith “travelled a short distance, and washed his feet in a small brook, as a testimony against the man.” Lucy Mack Smith, Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Smith’s Family Memoir, edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 478–79. For a list of journal accounts describing this performance by missionaries between 1830 and 1837, see “Feet Washing,”
Furthermore, the Harmony cursing legend is not without analogs. Kirtland, Ohio, another Mormon gathering place, had a similar and better-documented “curse” associated with it. After the Saints were driven from Kirtland in 1838, Smith prophesied that Kirtland would be built up again but not for several generations because the Lord “had a scourge prepared for the inhabitants thereof” (D&C 124:83). On another occasion, Smith referred to this “scourge” as a “curse” but seemed to view it as invoked by the Lord and not by himself. In June 1844 at Carthage Jail, Smith recounted a dream in which he “viewed the desolation” of Kirtland and “contemplat[ed] how it might be recovered from the curse upon it,” as though both the institution and revocation of the curse were out of his power.

Speculating on this Kirtland curse, Mormon historian and long-time Kirtland resident Karl Ricks Anderson has suggested that the curse may have been having “the gospel and its blessings withdrawn from the community” and that the curse manifested itself by


Cursing legends exist in several varieties. In addition to Mormon missionaries who cursed cities or towns for rejecting them or for persecuting Latter-day Saints, Fillmore, Utah, has maintained a local legend that Brigham Young cursed it for four generations because townspeople disregarded his counsels. Janean Robison, “Fillmore, Utah, and Brigham Young,” Paper delivered at the Folklore Society of Utah annual meeting, November 11, 2006, West Valley City, Utah, e-copy in my possession. The Mormon belief that the American continent was the abode of ancient Book of Mormon peoples led, in some cases, to legends that certain haunts of the Gadianton robbers had been cursed. The small community of Hebron, a failed late nineteenth-century United Order village in southern Utah, for example, had such a legend associated with it. W. Paul Reeve, “‘As Ugly as Evil’ and ‘As Wicked as Hell’: Gadianton Robbers and the Legend Process among the Mormons,” Journal of Mormon History 27, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 125–49.

History of the Church, 6:609. Hyrum Smith referred to this curse in a “letter to the Saints in Kirtland—disapproving of certain plans for building up Kirtland.” History of the Church, 4:443–44. This letter, and other sources, prophesied that descendants of the Kirtland Saints would someday return and build up Kirtland. Karl Ricks Anderson, Joseph Smith’s Kirtland: Eyewitness Accounts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 243–44.
the subsequent “decline in population,” commerce, and industry. This speculation relating the curse to population and prosperity strikingly resembles the reflections of several Latter-day Saints regarding the legendary Harmony curse.

But to summarize, if Smith cursed Harmony, he never recorded it and the curse took considerable time to become operative. The area’s prosperity during the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century would have made a curse—if it were to be manifest in terms of material prosperity—seem unlikely, or at least ineffective. But by the latter half of the twentieth century, the legend seemed more feasible because of Susquehanna’s economic depression. One Latter-day Saint who moved to Montrose from Vestal, New York, in the 1980s, commented that “the prevailing attitude [in the county] was that it was a . . . very low-income, low-class type of community over there [in Susquehanna].” We were very snobby,” admitted another Susquehanna County resident, now a member of the Susquehanna Branch. “Susquehanna was the welfare capital of the county.”

Some lingering antagonism toward Mormonism also manifested itself in Susquehanna during the late twentieth century. “It was a scary place to go,” states Brad Hall, who was often in Susquehanna and Oakland at night as a home teacher. “People were pretty nasty to you, and you’re not sure if you’re going to get mugged or not, so, I just didn’t care to go there.” He also recalled that, in the early 1980s, the mayor told the missionaries “they were not allowed to proselyte there, and to stay away and leave their people alone.”

These two factors—economic depression and antagonism toward Mormonism—seem to have perpetuated the legend of a curse. But not all local Mormons believed there had been a curse. Brad Hall thought that such stories grew “out of nothing” because missionaries were frustrated by the unresponsiveness. Others shared the same sentiment. Though most local Latter-day Saints put little stock in the legend’s veracity, they generally agreed that Mormonism was not wel-

---

88 Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, 244.
91 Hall, Oral History, 7.
92 Ibid. Tony Cox, Bob Sorensen, and others expressed a similar be-
come in Susquehanna. Thus, it came as a surprise to many when Montrose Branch president Tony Cox began discussing his plans to establish an LDS branch in Susquehanna.

THE HARMONY TWIG

The idea of organizing a branch in Susquehanna came to Tony Cox as a spiritual impression. In the early spring of 1999, a few months after being called as branch president, Cox was visiting some families and doing some home teaching in the Susquehanna area when he felt impressed to stop at the Aaronic Priesthood Restoration site. “I walked around it,” Cox explains, “and the Spirit hit me very forcefully, and it said: ‘Feed my sheep. Now is the time for these people to hear the gospel message and to become converted.’” Gradually, through additional “thoughts and impressions,” Cox became confident that a branch would be organized in Susquehanna and that he would play a major role in that effort.93

Within a few weeks of this initial experience, Cox discussed his thoughts and impressions with the members of the priesthood executive committee. The committee was supportive and decided to hold a committee meeting at the Aaronic Priesthood Restoration site to discuss the matter further. Several weeks later, on May 26, 1999, they met in a grove south of the monument.94 Participant Robert Sorensen, then serving as Young Men’s president, described the meeting as a joyful experience. “I didn’t have any visions or anything,” Sorensen stated, “but it was right. It was the right thing to do [and] the right person was doing it. . . . We were pioneers.”95 The feeling was unanimous. “Generally,” Cox stated, “we all felt that the Lord wanted to establish a branch there in that area, so we started the wheels turning.”96

These initial events—Cox’s inspiration at the monument and the meeting in the grove—demonstrate the striking importance of place in the mindset of Susquehanna County Saints. The Aaronic Priesthood restoration site and its accompanying monument create a rich sense of heritage. Otto Reimherr stated that “the Susquehanna func-

---

94Ibid., and supplemental undated notes by Tony Cox, photocopies in my possession, courtesy of Tony Cox.
95Sorensen, Oral History, 1–2.
96Cox, Oral History, 4.
tioned as the river of revelation . . . which makes it continually memorable in Mormon history. Cox’s experience demonstrates that the Susquehanna, with the monument and grove near its banks, still functions as a “river of revelation” that is vital to the Mormon experience in the county. More than memory, the location is a living, motivating presence in the consciousness of Susquehanna Saints.

Until 1999, Susquehanna was part of the Montrose mission area, which covered all of Susquehanna County. Because visiting Susquehanna involved a fifty-mile roundtrip from Montrose, where the elders lived, they rarely visited the area. Feeling that a greater missionary emphasis would be needed in Susquehanna to form a branch, Cox asked Patrick Schwartz, the mission president, to assign two missionaries to Susquehanna. In July 1999, Schwartz notified Elder Kenneth Nelson and me that two more missionaries were being sent to Montrose, where we were serving. He assigned us to divide the county and create a new

---

98 Missionaries have a monthly mileage allotment for their automobiles, which can limit the amount of work done in outlying areas.
Susquehanna area. On August 5, 1999, Nelson was transferred, and Elders Alan Hedengren, Michael Staheli, Jeffery Larson, and I arrived in Montrose. We divided the county, creating the Susquehanna area for the first time. Larson and I remained in Montrose while Hedengren and Staheli traveled to the Susquehanna area each day to proselyte. Cox remembers it as “the start of something wonderful.”

Missionary work was slow at first in Susquehanna but picked up when the elders baptized the Walshes, a family of five, and Sandy Roe, of Oakland, in the fall of 1999. The next year Schwartz assigned a senior missionary couple, Coy and Jolene Roberts, to serve in Susquehanna. Eventually the elders assigned to Susquehanna moved from Montrose to Susquehanna, and two more elders were sent to assist them in Susquehanna.

In the spring of 1999, President Cox had contacted Scranton Stake president Bradley Mains and discussed the possibility of organizing a Susquehanna Branch. That fall, after missionaries had been assigned to the area, they began filling out the paperwork to create a branch. Cox, the missionaries, and a few Montrose Branch members living close to Susquehanna and Oakland began renting the Oakland Borough Building for meetings. This former schoolhouse was now used for various community functions.

“The first ever organized sacrament meeting in Harmony in this dispensation,” in Cox’s words, was held on February 6, 2000. About forty people attended, including those who would become branch members, and two non-Mormon locals. Most of the people who would become Susquehanna Branch members were from the Montrose Branch but lived near Susquehanna. The meeting, planned to last the usual one hour, “turned into a two hour spiritual feast as tes-

---

99Cox, Notes. The Susquehanna proselytizing area covered the northeastern corner of Susquehanna County, a much smaller area than the Montrose area. Included in it were the towns of Susquehanna, Oakland, Great Bend, Lanesboro, and Hallstead.

100Ibid.

101This is probably best interpreted as the first sacrament meeting after Smith left the area in 1830, since the History of the Church, 1:106, records a sacrament meeting in August 1830. See also heading of D&C 27.
timony after testimony was given."  

The official organization was delayed by paperwork, but Susquehanna-area members continued to meet as a dependant branch. Cox, along with his executive committee and auxiliary leaders from the Montrose branch, provided priesthood leadership; Jolene Roberts taught Relief Society, the women’s organization; Kim Hall taught Primary, the children’s classes; and other Montrose Branch members took turns teaching other classes and performing ordinances. Kim Hall coined “Harmony Twig” as the name for the small congregation. “We were a little part of a branch,” Hall explained, “and since we weren’t an actual branch, the next thing down is a twig. And we wanted our own identity, so we became . . . the little twig—the Harmony Twig.”

The twig became a branch on November 19, 2000, when Mains and his counselors came to Susquehanna, organized the branch, and called Gerald L. Larsen, a senior missionary from Utah, as its first president. Total branch membership was about eighty, consisting of past missionary conversions, move-ins, and members from

102 Cox, Notes.
103 Ibid.
neighboring Binghamton New York Ward, Honesdale Pennsylvania Ward, and primarily from Montrose Branch. In December 2000, the branch started renting a hall in the rear wing of historic Starrucca House, a dining hall constructed between 1863 and 1865 that was later restored and added to the National Register of Historic Places. In the fall of 2006, heavy rains and flooding forced the branch to relocate. As of fall 2006, the branch was sharing the Montrose chapel about forty minutes away but was negotiating the rental of a unoccupied church building near Oakland on the New York–Pennsylvania state line. Branch members also anxiously anticipate the rumored construction of a larger meeting house at the Aaronic Priesthood Restoration site.

At some point during these organizational developments, the feelings of Susquehanna residents toward Mormonism changed. “I don’t know exactly how or when, but their hearts definitely were softened,” said Brad Hall. Instead of being chased away, as elders experienced in the 1980s, “now the missionaries walk down the street and they can’t get down the street because everybody stops them to talk to them and say ‘hi,’ and ‘come on in,’ and they like to visit with them.”

A significant factor in this attitude shift may have been the Celebration at Harmony Pageant begun by the Scranton Stake in 2000. This annual event includes a musical drama depicting events of Joseph Smith’s life, tours of historical sites, and “demonstrations of life in the 1800s that include blacksmith work, quilting, candle and soap making.” The local community is recruited to help out, and the fire department cooks a public barbecue lunch for the event, which in turn provides funding for the city—a definite economic advantage for

---

108Hall, Oral History, 7–8.
109The Harmony Pageant was held annually from 2000 to 2004 but was then discontinued indefinitely for budgetary reasons.
the community. And in conjunction with the celebration, LDS youth and missionaries participate in community service projects, such as painting the county building, cleaning the cemeteries, and volunteering at the local hospital. Susquehanna Mayor Nancy Hurley attended the pageant in 2002 and described it as a beautiful production to which locals have responded positively. “People are starting to notice the members of the Church,” Mayor Hurley said. “In fact, there were a couple people I met with from the county recently [who asked] ‘What can we do to help the Church in the county? . . . We know that they’re coming here, and they’re going to be building, and we want them feel to welcome, and what can we do to help?’”

On August 15, 2002, the LDS Church purchased an additional piece of land joining the monument property to that which borders the riverbank. This acquisition will eventually “make it possible for visitors . . . to walk to the river without trespassing” or illegally “crossing railroad tracks.” Though the plans were approved by Susquehanna County commissioners, deciding how to cross the railroad

---

112 “Land Purchase Joins Properties,” Church News, August 24, 2002,
tracks and the possibility of re-routing the highway, were topics of pro-
longed discussion. Currently, the access road across the railroad
tracks has been reopened and a parking area near the riverside is be-
ning developed. Rumored plans for the future site—buzzing around
the county and in the columns of Deseret News—include a reconstruc-
tion of the Smith home, a visitors’ center, and possibly a chapel. LDS members in the area look forward to such developments, but, as
many have expressed, will not be satisfied with their efforts until they
also see a temple in the county. Other locals are also interested in de-
velopments at the site for their anticipated positive economic influ-
ence on the community. One resident expressed interest in building a
souvenir shop, and Mayor Hurley hoped to see business increase with
the influx of anticipated visitors.

**CONCLUSION**

Organizing an official branch of the LDS Church in Susque-
hanna was a pioneering effort that brought about a major shift in pub-
lic perceptions of Mormonism and has also changed the way local
Latter-day Saints view the towns of Susquehanna and Oakland. After
his experiences proselyting in the area in the 1980s, Roger Rolfe was
surprised to learn that an LDS branch had been organized in Susquehanna. He confessed that he had not expected such develop-
ments until “the millennium.”

The 2002 conversion of Mayor Nancy Hurley is probably the
most conspicuous missionary success, and residents seem optimistic
about the possible economic benefits of developing Mormon sites;
but almost certainly feelings are mixed. Missionaries in the area de-
scribed hearing that a local clergyman opposed Mormon develop-
ments. Local residents whom I interviewed, knowing of my religious
affiliation, including missionary service in the area, may not have

113
114
115
116

4444
been completely candid.

Nevertheless, local Latter-day Saints are optimistic about their prospects in Susquehanna. As for the alleged curse, whether it ever really existed, it has officially been lifted. During the priesthood executive meeting in the grove near the Aaronic Priesthood Restoration Monument in May 1999, one committee member stated, “Now’s the time to take the curse off the land.” Tony Cox offered a formal prayer asking the Lord to “remove the curse from the area,” then commenting: “Now’s the time for those people to hear the gospel; and in reality, if they hear it, and accept it, that would indeed take the curse off the land.” Though in the Saints’ view many Susquehannans still need to hear the “good news,” significant developments have changed perceptions and brought Latter-day Saints a little more in harmony with their neighbors on the Susquehanna.

117 Cox, Oral History, 5.
118 Ibid.; Cox, Notes. Kirtland, Ohio, again poses a striking analog. On October 14, 1979, during the ground-breaking ceremony for an LDS meetinghouse there, President Ezra Taft Benson stated, “The scourge that was placed upon the people in that prophecy [D&C 124:83] is being lifted today. . . . Our prophecy said that yet your children may possess the Kirtland lands, but not until many years shall pass away. Those many years have, I feel, passed away, and now is the time. Now is the time to arise and shine and look forward to great progress in this part of the Lord’s vineyard.” Address at groundbreaking for the Kirtland Ward meetinghouse, October 14, 1979, LDS Church Archives, quoted in Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, 246–47.
been completely candid.

Nevertheless, local Latter-day Saints are optimistic about their prospects in Susquehanna. As for the alleged curse, whether it ever really existed, it has officially been lifted. During the priesthood executive meeting in the grove near the Aaronic Priesthood Restoration Monument in May 1999, one committee member stated, “Now’s the time to take the curse off the land.”

Tony Cox offered a formal prayer asking the Lord to “remove the curse from the area,” then commenting: “Now’s the time for those people to hear the gospel; and in reality, if they hear it, and accept it, that would indeed take the curse off the land.” Though in the Saints’ view many Susquehannans still need to hear the “good news,” significant developments have changed perceptions and brought Latter-day Saints a little more in harmony with their neighbors on the Susquehanna.

---

117Cox, Oral History, 5.
118Ibid.; Cox, Notes. Kirtland, Ohio, again poses a striking analog. On October 14, 1979, during the ground-breaking ceremony for an LDS meetinghouse there, President Ezra Taft Benson stated, “The scourge that was placed upon the people in that prophecy [D&C 124:83] is being lifted today. . . . Our prophecy said that yet your children may possess the Kirtland lands, but not until many years shall pass away. Those many years have, I feel, passed away, and now is the time. Now is the time to arise and shine and look forward to great progress in this part of the Lord’s vineyard.” Address at groundbreaking for the Kirtland Ward meetinghouse, October 14, 1979, LDS Church Archives, quoted in Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, 246–47.
“THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE”: THE CLIFFORD FAMILY AND THE JOSEPH SMITH MEMORIAL FARM

Susan L. Fales

“...[that] they might carry with them the spirit of the place into their various fields of labor...” —Frank Brown prayer at the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm, 1913

At 1:00 P.M. on May 20, 1913, the Edwin and Alice Clifford family gathered their nine children and their belongings and stepped from the train at South Royalton, Vermont. They had traveled almost 3,500 miles from Kennington, Kent, England. Waiting to transport the family to their new home was a “Cadillac with no doors” driven by Frank L. Brown, director of the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm, who had hired Edwin as caretaker/farmer. He was accompanied by photographer George Edward Anderson, whom

SUSAN L. FALES {susan_fales@byu.edu} is Curator of Digital Historical Collections at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 8602. She is co-compiler with Chad J. Flake of Mormons and Mormonism in U.S. Government Documents: A Bibliography (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989) and author of “Artisans, Millhands, and Laborers: The Mormons of Leeds and Their Nonconformist Neighbors,” in Mormons in Victorian Britain, edited by Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 156–78. She presented an earlier version of this paper at the 2005 Mormon History Association annual meeting in Killington, Vermont. Mabel Grace Clifford Fales is her mother.
the family had known when he served his mission in England. Their destination was the large farmhouse owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The family was all dressed up in their Sunday best to make a good impression. Edwin and the boys even wore spats. Much to the amusement of the locals, Anderson and most of the children walked behind the horse-drawn cart carrying much of the luggage that followed the Cadillac through town and up Dairy Hill.2 Edwin and Alice and the youngest children “enjoyed” the ride up the road to their new home.

Neither Edward nor Alice left a record of first impressions; but their oldest child, Alfred, then nineteen, recalled, “We kept going through the wildest country I had ever seen, and I kept thinking we’ll get through it and instead we stopped right in the middle of it!”3 Alice’s fifth daughter, Mabel, related years later, “This was a very difficult place for Mother because when she came up the hill at the time to where the farm was located—she thought, ‘Oh how rough the countryside was.’ England was so beautifully landscaped everywhere with hedges and flower gardens. And going up into the hills of Vermont was quite some change for all the family.”4

The local White River Herald, published in Randolph, Vermont, mentioned the family’s arrival in its “About the Towns” column: “A Mormon family by the name of Clifford arrived here last Monday from England. The family consisted of husband, wife and eight [sic] children. They are to locate on the Mormon farm.”5 The Clifford family spent a total of eight years at Memorial Farm in two stages, the first from May 20, 1913, to July 19, 1917. After about two years in

---

2Tom Clifford, “Charles W. Clifford: The English Chauffeur at Hillstead,” ca. 1995, unpublished manuscript, typescript in my possession, 2. Charles, the second son, was sixteen when the family arrived in Vermont.
3Alfred Clifford, conversation with Susan Fales, summer 1984, at the home of Alfred’s daughter, Helen Clifford Crawford, in New Hampshire.
4Mabel Fales, Oral History, 4.
5It’s clear from all family accounts that all nine of the Clifford children arrived with their parents. In fact, the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm Register of Visitors, LDS Church Archives, CR 391/10, under May 20, 1913, lists the entire family including all nine children. “South Royalton,” White
Littleton, Massachusetts, they returned on October 25, 1919, and left for good on June 11, 1923. In a way, however, the Clifford family never really left the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm. In distinctive ways that are separate from its identity as both a historic site and a sacred space, it was simply home. For Clifford family descendants, Memorial Farm seems to have taken on varying hues of meaning, some perhaps mythic or iconographic. It has become a place of physical, spiritual, and emotional gathering; and the family’s eight years there raise some intriguing questions.

What influence did this place really have on the spiritual development and the character of the family members? Was Joseph Smith a direct spiritual influence on members of the family? What were the contributions of the Clifford family in shaping this public place of remembrance in honor of Joseph Smith? What was the relationship of

---

River Herald, May 22, 1913, 7/3. Newspaper citations include the page and column (e.g., 7/3). Unless otherwise noted, newspaper information is taken from the “About the Towns” column, written by the South Royalton correspondent, first M. J. Sargent and, after August 27, 1915, Perley S. Belknap.

the Clifford family to the larger community of Dairy Hill and South Royalton? To what extent was the larger community an influence in the lives of the Cliffords and what was the impact of the Clifford family on Dairy Hill and South Royalton? Indeed, how is it possible to measure these almost intangible influences—whether spiritual,
familial, or social?

Perhaps the first question is what brought this family of eleven to leave their families, friends, and home in England and make the long journey to South Royalton? What influences in Edwin and Alice’s lives prompted them to make this move?

---

7 The family left their home in Kennington, Kent, England, traveled to London and then to Southampton, embarked on the *Ascania I* on May 8, 1913, arrived in Quebec on May 19, 1913, reached Montreal at 2:00 A.M. by train, entrained for South Royalton about 8:00 A.M. on May 20, and reached South Royalton at about 1:00 P.M.
FAMILY BACKGROUND

Edwin Clifford, was born March 11, 1870, in Eastling, Kent, England, the fifth of eight children of William Clifford and Harriet Videon Clifford. The family moved several times while he was growing up but never more than about twelve miles from his birthplace. His father, a farm laborer, died when Edwin was fourteen. Since age twelve, Edwin had already been working full-time on a neighboring farm for six pence a day.

Early in his life he demonstrated what was to be a life-time passion and gift for gardening. He mentions in his personal history: “Being the eldest boy at home, I took care of the garden and the stock... This I did for five years. Often people would pass along the road and say my garden would take a prize. I remember I took great pride in my garden.”

When he was nineteen, his mother remarried and he left home for the first time, working as a groom and gardener in the village of Kingsnorth near Ashford. There he met Alice Maria Shorter, a cook. Their courtship met two major obstacles—Alice’s father, Henry, and the custom against two servants working at the same estate from “keeping company.” Henry Shorter gave his future son-in-law “a good calling down, thinking that I had better wait until the girl was out of the cradle. She was then eighteen years old.”

Alice had been born October 31, 1871, at Great Chart, Kent, England, the eldest of the eleven children born to Henry Shorter and Maria Cowell Shorter. As a house carpenter, Henry appears to have been better off financially than the Clifford family, and family stories suggest that this was one reason for his opposition.

Edwin countered by sailing with his brother, Thomas, for America on the Majestic on March 6, 1892. Landing at Ellis Island about two and one-half weeks later on March 24, 1892, Edwin found work as a warden at the newly constructed State (Psychiatric) Hospital in Central Islip, Long Island, New York, where his maternal aunt, Mary Ann Videon Adams,

---

9Ibid. The age at first marriages in 1891 in Kent was 26 for men, 25.7 for women, which was a little younger than the rest of England, but far older than Edwin’s nineteen and Alice’s eighteen. Alan Armstrong, ed., The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914 (Suffolk, Eng.: Boydell Press/Kent County Council, 1995), 43.
lived. According to Edith, the Cliffords’ second daughter, Edwin and Alice planned this emigration to overcome the obstacles to their courtship. She and a girlfriend arrived, also via the Majestic, at Ellis Island four months later on July 20, 1892. Edwin took her to his Aunt Mary’s home and undoubtedly was instrumental in getting Alice hired as a cook at the hospital. They were married February 9, 1893, at the Methodist Church in Bayshore, Long Island. Four months later, on May 3, Edwin and Alice, and Thomas, returned to England “thinking that we would rather make our home in our native land.”

Their first child, Alfred, was born thirteen months later, followed by ten more at intervals of about two and a half years: Gladys, Charles, Alice (died age thirteen days), Edith, Albert, Hilda (died age five weeks), Mabel, Frank, Olive, and Jack. Alice was forty-one at Jack’s birth. Four months later, the family left for Vermont.

Edwin during these years was working hard to support his growing family, first as a coachman for a Church of England minister in the “pretty village of Kennington,” and then to Hythe on the English Channel as a coachman, and finally back to Kennington, around 1897 or 1898, to work as a gardener at Spearpoint estate, then owned by a Mr. Jemmet. Shortly afterward, a Captain Downs, a merchant seaman, bought it for his retirement estate. He had a prickly personality that Edwin thought “I couldn’t live with more than two weeks, . . .
I stayed with him for fifteen years.”14 The family rented three different homes on Vicarage Road near the parish church. The largest, Vicarage Villa, had “five nice rooms and a very large garden.”15

In 1901, Edwin stopped at a street meeting on a Saturday evening in Ashford to hear the preaching of Mormon elders. “I heard what I thought was the true Gospel and what we were seeking for; it seemed to feed my soul,” he recalled. “I will never forget how I went home so lighthearted and happy, to tell my wife that I thought I had found the Truth.” The next Sunday he attended his first LDS meeting at the Temperance Hotel in Ashford where he “found there a wonderful spirit.”16 He was baptized October 28, 1901, with Alice following fifteen months later on January 13, 1903. Mabel remembers her mother saying that the doctrine of eternal families made her decide to be baptized.17 This faith was no doubt comforting when, a year later, Hilda was born and died after five weeks.18

Edwin’s decision to be baptized, though relatively quick, was not easy. He said: “I will admit it was hard for me to break away from the faith where I had been brought up.”19 He also met with some opposition and concern from his employers, who were strict Church of England. He thought at first he might have to leave his work. When his former vicar invited him to the vicarage for a discussion, Edwin said

14Ibid., 4.
15Ibid., 5.
16Ibid.
17Mabel told me this motivation in numerous conversations.
18Ashford Branch, British Mission General Minutes, 1899–1910, London Conference, Archives of the Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, (hereafter LDS Church Archives), LR 10785 Series 11, May 10, 1904. Church records include information about little Hilda’s funeral. She died at 2:00 A.M. on May 10, 1904. The funeral was held at the Clifford home, with several members of the Ashford Branch present. Brother George Taylor, a traveling elder, spoke on life after death and the small congregation sang three songs that are no longer familiar: “Dear Little Rosebud,” “What Voice Salutes the Startled Ear,” and “Mid Scenes of Confusion.” Her father gave the closing prayer. “The corpse was then conveyed to the church yard at Kennington, and Elder Taylor read I Corinthians XV” and all sang Eliza R. Snow’s famous hymn “O My Father.”
he did not believe in some Anglican doctrines, especially infant baptism by aspersion. Edwin and Alice had been baptized as infants in the Church of England, as had their older children. Yet from their New Testament study, they knew that the Savior had been baptized by immersion. The vicar’s answer—that “baptism was changed from immersion to sprinkling because it was too severe on the small babies”—was not satisfactory to Edwin.20

The LDS Church provided opportunities for growth and leadership that Edwin undoubtedly would not have experienced in his work as an estate gardener. Henry B. Blood, president of the London Conference (mission district), noted on July 26, 1903, “I do think that the Father of a family should be an Elder, so that he may have the power to administer & it would give me much pleasure to see Bro Clifford ordained an Elder.” Elder John H. Freebairn performed the ordination on September 6.21 Edwin was soon after called as Sunday School superintendent, and Alice was secretary.22

On April 20, 1904, the five oldest children were blessed; and five days later, Alfred and Gladys, the two oldest, were baptized. The Saints met often at the Clifford home. The Church became a central part of the family’s life, and certainly, given the size of the branch (thirty-one in December), the Clifford family was central to the branch as well.23

The minutes often show Edwin speaking, conducting meetings, administering the sacrament, and praying. Alice often bore her testimony. The three oldest children frequently gave readings or recitations, read the scriptures, or sang a hymn. On July 12, 1908, Edwin was sustained as branch president.24

Missionary George Edward Anderson, a professional photographer, first met the family on Sunday, November 14, 1909, when he noted in his journal: “Bro CLIFFORD, Edwin, lives at Kennington, Vicarage Lane. First house to the left, of the main road going thru the village, Daughter made me welcome, and just sitting down to dinner,

---

20Ibid.
21Ashford Branch General Minutes, July 26, 1903; September 6, 1903.
22Ibid., December 31, 1903.
23Ibid., December 10, 1905, By June 23, 1907, the branch numbered “42 souls.”
24Ibid., July 12, 1908.
which I enjoyed very much. A clean Bright well behaved family a pleasure to be with them. . . Mabel & Edith and Albert Edward are 3 older than baby, a daughter 14 learning dressmaking and the oldest boy carpentry. 7 children, Sister Clifford neat tidy kind and good soul, and very comely.”

PREPARING FOR THE BIG CHANGE

As early as 1905, the year the Joseph Smith Monument was dedicated in Vermont, Edwin recalled that a missionary encouraged him to “immigrate to America, for soon my sons would be called into the army, because a war would break out in England.” Edwin apparently dismissed this idea because it didn’t seem economically feasible with his large family. It is doubtful that the unnamed elder had suggested a specific destination; but George Edward Anderson, who partly financed his mission by selling views of Church historic sites, showed his photographs of Church historic sites to the family, possibly fixing the idea of immigration more firmly in their minds. He recorded on November 4, 1909, “Spent the afternoon talking with Bro & Sister Clifford and showing them the views pictures, and telling children stories.” On Christmas Eve day he was again with the family and jotted in his diary: "Jos. Smith Postcard Birth. Place. Cottage . . . and [?] 8 x 10 view of Memorial Cottage.” Only a week later after testimony meeting on Sunday, January 2, 1910, he wrote: “Bro Clifford wanted me to go back home with them. Talk about MEMORIAL COTTAGE.” The next day, Anderson had “dinner and chat with Bro and Sister Clifford would like me to write to Bro Wells [Junius F. Wells, first director at the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm] & see if could go to Vermont in Spring.”

Anderson left England in 1911; but instead of returning to his home in Springville, Utah, he went to South Royalton and set up a small photography studio near the Joseph Smith birthplace. Frank L. Brown, his wife, Winifred, and their family had arrived in early April 1911 to “take charge of the Joseph Smith cottage, monument,

25George Edward Anderson Diary, November 14, 1909, MSS 1477, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).
27Anderson, Diary, November 4, 1909.
28Ibid., December 24, 1909, and January 2, 3, 1910.
and land belonging to the Mormon church,” and Anderson doubtless influenced Brown to offer Edwin the position of farm manager.

According to Edwin’s personal history, the offer came in 1912. They decided to accept it and even began their preparations. But “looking at this great undertaking,” Edwin wrote, “we decided it was too much at this time and gave up the idea. Even after I had written Brother Brown... that I was coming, something seemed to hold me back.” Captain Downs, whom Edwin calls his “gentleman,” cabled Brown on Edwin’s behalf that he “had given up the idea of emigrating.” According to a family story, they had booked passage on the Titanic and felt that divine intervention had spared them.

In 1913 after Jack’s birth in January, Brown again offered Edwin the position. Edwin and Alice consulted the children in making the momentous decision. Edwin called it his “greatest test of faith in the Church.” On an April Sunday, he retired to a little log cabin on the estate. “It was in a quiet spot all itself,” he wrote. “Here I prayed to my Father to help me to settle this thing in my mind. I remember how I felt in this place, all alone with God, with faith to believe he would help me... I had prayed that I might see President [James B.] Walkley of the London Conference and ask his advice. About three o’clock in the afternoon, a knock came to my door; when I opened it, President Walkley stood before me. As he entered the house he said: ‘When I turned the corner in the road and could see your house, I knew the

29“South Royalton,” White River Herald, April 11, 1911, 5, Ibid., May 18, 1911, 5; Frank and Winifred Brown may have met the Clifford family while serving a mission in the London Conference, which included Kent County October 1902 through November 1904. George Edward Anderson later served in the same area from early 1908 to November 1911.


31The oft-given reason for not traveling on the Titanic is that Alice was pregnant with their last child, Jack, born January 3, 1913. As the Titanic launched its only voyage on April 10, 1912, when Alice would have been only a few weeks pregnant, this reason seems unlikely. It also seems strange that Edwin, in writing his personal history, did not mention that they had booked passage on the Titanic, although perhaps it is only recently that the Titanic disaster has taken on mythic proportions.
devil was there to tempt you."32

After singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," President Walkley told Edwin that it was the first time he’d been out after an illness and his wife reminded him of a meeting in South London. However, apparently through inspiration, he knew “he must go into the country to see Brother Clifford.”33 This meeting was all Edwin needed. “We never had any more worry, and were most happy in leaving the old country to travel to Zion.” Alice was relieved by the decision and confided that “she could see black spirits around the home when I was so troubled.”34

In what was undoubtedly a whirlwind of preparations, including saying goodbye to family and friends, packing up a family of eleven, and ending fifteen years as a gardener at Spearpoint, the family departed from their home on May 7. President Walkley met them at the station in London and helped them off to Southampton, where they left port on May 8 aboard the Ascania, bound for Quebec, Canada. According to family lore, upon their arrival the dock workers teased “that after the Clifford family came off of the ship . . . the boat rose higher in the water.”35 Alice never saw her parents or siblings again. Edwin made one return trip and saw his mother before her death in the 1930s.

LIFE AT THE JOSEPH SMITH MEMORIAL FARM

Today the Joseph Smith Memorial Birthplace (its current name) bears few signs of having been a working farm on Dairy Hill in South Royalton. On May 23, 1905, Junius F. Wells, the creator of Memorial Cottage, the monument, and the site’s first director, had purchased


from C. H. and Hannah Robinson, a sixty-five-acre tract “out of the center of the . . . 252-acre farm.” He also hired Robinson to care for the site year-round. Robinson then sold the remainder of his farm to the Church. With subsequent purchases in 1906 and 1907, the Church increased the total acreage to 283.36 Copy of deed from C. H. Robinson to Joseph F. Smith, Junius F. Wells Collection, MS 1351, Box 7, fd. 4, used by permission of the LDS Church Archives; Erekson, “American Prophet, New England Town,” 68–70.

Hope Nash, a local historian, dates the farmhouse to 1834, built by John Coy.37 The Cliffords thus began their new life in Vermont in an almost ninety-year-old farmhouse on Dairy Hill Road with 283 acres. In nearby Memorial Cottage, built in 1906, lived Frank L. Brown, his wife, Winifred Tibbs Brown, and their son Kenneth. They had been set apart on March 15, 1911, by members of the Presiding Bishopric as missionaries and directors of the Joseph Smith Memorial.

At the time of immigration, the children’s ages ranged from nineteen years to five months: Alfred, nineteen; Gladys, eighteen; Charles, sixteen; Edith, twelve; Albert, ten; Mabel, seven; Frank, four; Olive, two; and Jack, five months. Edwin and Alice, forty-three and forty-two respectively, had difficult adjustments to make; certainly the move was easiest emotionally on the younger children.

Edith, trained by her maternal grandfather, Henry Shorter, had been working as a carpenter and cabinet maker. Gladys had worked in England as a dressmaker beginning as young as fourteen, and Charles may have been working as a gardener.38 Edith, Albert, and Mabel were students. The oldest children undoubtedly left many friends, and even sweethearts, in Kennington.

Gladys, a cheerful, happy person, seemed delighted with Vermont and wrote a postcard with the family’s picture on it to her Aunt Lucy and Uncle George in England, describing their attend-

36Copy of deed from C. H. Robinson to Joseph F. Smith, Junius F. Wells Collection, MS 1351, Box 7, fd. 4, used by permission of the LDS Church Archives; Erekson, “American Prophet, New England Town,” 68–70.

37Hope Nash, Royalton, Vermont (Royalton, Vt.: Royalton Historical Society, 1975), 133. On August 3, 1913, a George E. Coy of North Tunbridge, Vermont, signed the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm Register of Visitors, LDS Church Archives, CR 391/10, and wrote: “Born in Farm house 1835 16th Nov.,” which seems to verify the ownership history.

38Anderson, Diary, November 14, 1909.
Mabel Clifford Fales standing before the farmhouse on Dairy Hill, 1957. Courtesy of Susan L. Fales

Memorial Cottage, George Edward Anderson, September 1, 1913. George Edward Anderson Collection, Photo Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
ing the grandly named “World’s Fair” in Tunbridge, Vermont. Alfred left many friends in England; and when he returned for the first time in the 1970s, he confided to his daughter Helen his tremendous guilt at not serving in World War I, in which many of his friends were killed. Charles, according to his grandson Tom Clifford, was a “reluctant immigrant,” who had left “a sweetheart of new acquaintance.” Charles missed his girlfriend so much that he left the Memorial Farm after a few months, unbeknownst to his parents, and sailed back to England. Since his girlfriend had already found someone else, he soon rejoined his family in Vermont.

---

39 As of this writing, there is still a “World’s Fair” held annually at Tunbridge.


LIFE AS A FARMER

George Edward Anderson, who had visited Spearpoint estate, described Edwin’s work: “Had a pleasant time, looking over place seeing how, they train cherry, peach, and apple trees, ... flowers & hote [sic] house, pond fish ... strawberries, gooseberries ... .” That was in January. When he visited again on March 1, 1910, he noted “the green House and the Beautiful flowers that are coming into bloom... . The place was full of plants and laden with perfume.”

Edwin was used to hard work in England as an estate gardener, pig grower, and family gardener, but Vermont farming was unexpectedly challenging. His first job was “to help Brother Brown and two elders put a barbed–wire fence through a wood to keep in the sheep. I thought that was pretty rough work. Then the milking of the cows came. I remember I was put back on one of the hard ones first, which I thought was pretty tough; once I had accomplished this one, the others came easy.” He humorously conceded that maybe they had done the right thing starting him on the hard cow.

Edwin joined the Vermont State Jersey Club, whose members came to the annual meetings dressed in their best to meet “college professors and feed salesman” and share in their reverence for the Jersey cow. In 1920, Edwin, along with the Lyle McIntoshes, the Roland McIntoshes, and Heber C. Smith, the third director of the Memorial Farm and Birthplace, accompanied by his son, Andrew, attended the club’s meeting at the Quechee Falls farm.

Flowers and ornamental trees had been planted on the Memorial Farm’s 283 acres under Junius Wells’s direction. Frank L. Brown’s report to the Presiding Bishopric in October 1915 mentions a new barn, built at a cost of $3,000, and the purchase of a large herd of Jerseys. A cement porch had been added to the farmhouse, and fifty acres of alfalfa had been planted. There were also three hundred apple trees.

42Anderson, Diary, January 10 and March 1, 1910.
eighty sugar maples, seven acres of lawn, four hundred varieties of flowers, and a lily pond—obviously enough to keep several gardeners busy. Wells had wanted the site to welcome the public, and Brown echoed that they were maintaining it as “as a public park for the people of the county, who hold nearly all their celebrations there.”

Visitors continued to extol the beauty of the flowers and the grounds. Elder George Albert Smith attended the 1921 July 24th celebration at the farm. The Deseret News reported that “the beautiful lawns and flower gardens never looked better.” By then, the Browns had been replaced as directors by Heber C. Smith and his wife; and “the visiting authorities” gave them “warm praise . . . for their efforts in keeping the revered place in such fine condition.” According to Mabel, Edwin was “very disappointed that he could not spend more time taking care of the flower beds and lawn there, but he just didn’t have the time or energy with all of his farm work to do the work that he really loved.”

Edwin did, however, plant a small lawn before the farmhouse with “flowers all across the front of the porch,” making it the only farmhouse on the hill with such landscaping. The family had high-backed rocking chairs on the porch, from which they enjoyed hollyhocks, pinks, and even English primroses. The morning glory vines were trained up strings at one end of the porch, hiding the milk pails.

Neither family nor Church records explain the expectations of the Clifford family as caretakers at the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm or what kind of living allowance they received. Also unrecorded is the purpose seen for the operating farm. Probably the Church hoped that the dairy farm and sugaring could make this historic site self-sup-

---

46 “Tells of Improvements on Joseph Smith Farm,” Deseret Evening News, October 11, 1915, 1–2. This latter assertion is somewhat exaggerated; Dairy Hill School, neighboring farmhouses, and local barns were often used for celebrations.

47 Frank E. Hoff, President Vermont Conference, “Pioneer Day at Joseph Smith Memorial Cottage, South Royalton, Vermont,” Journal History, July 24, 1921, 3, LDS Historical Department Library, Salt Lake City.

48 Mabel Grace Clifford Fales, “Personal History,” 1975, typescript, 3, in my possession.

49 Ibid.

50 Clifford undoubtedly received wages, since C. H. Robinson, the
porting, but it never was. The only consistent cash sales were from maple syrup and cream, augmented by the occasional sale of a calf. None of the directors’ annual reports indicated a profit from the farm.\(^{51}\)

Heber C. Smith, the third director, must have expressed his frustrations to the Presiding Bishopric about the farm operation. His brother David A. Smith, first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, wrote sympathetically on May 22, 1922: “We have a difficult problem in trying to operate the Vermont Farm, for at this end comparisons are made from paper rather than from actual conditions, and while there is much more land in the Memorial Farm than there is in the Palmyra Farm, we do not stop always to consider that all of the land at the Palmyra Farm can be cultivated while only patches of the Vermont Farm can be made productive.”\(^{52}\) He might have added that the growing season, the climate, and the soil are considerably different between South Royalton, Vermont, and Palmyra, New York. Apparently these differences were not understood in Salt Lake City, for Heber C. Smith said as much in a letter to the Presiding Bishopric in January 1924:

I fear the Bishopric have in the past been a little unfair (unintentionally of course) of comparing [sic] the financial possibilities here with those at Palmyra. This is a mountainous rocky place with here and there tillable patches of land. . . . As to friends I believe we have them here in great numbers. . . . In that regards this place will compare most favorably with conditions at Palmyra. But of course all in all I appreciate the fact that brother Bean has done and is doing a splendid work for which he has my praise and admiration.\(^{53}\)

Apparently Heber Smith had been unfavorably compared to Willard Bean, the highly successful director and farmer at the Church’s first caretaker, was paid $70 per month. Auditing Report, January 12, 1911, Junius F. Wells Collection. The Presiding Bishopric Collection has reports of wages for “hired help,” but none are specifically earmarked for the family.

\(^{51}\)Presiding Bishopric Collection, 1916–38, CR 4–6, LDS Church Archives. Used by permission of the LDS Church Archives. The fourth director of the Memorial Farm was Angus J. Cannon.

\(^{52}\)David A. Smith, Letter to Heber C. Smith, May 23, 1922, Presiding Bishopric Collection.

\(^{53}\)Heber C. Smith, Letter to the Presiding Bishopric, January 21, 1924, Presiding Bishopric Collection.
toric site/farm in Palmyra.

In an intervening letter to his brother, Heber Smith had lamented the difficulties of farming at the Memorial and tentatively proposed: “I sometimes think it would be wise to let some of our holdings go and confine our efforts to Monument, Cottage and grounds for beautifying these grounds and maintaining them properly is a big job. Of course there are arguments either way that are favorable. But with out question with this big rocky wooded farm with an inferior grade of stock where it is necessary to put so much in and obtain such small returns it sometimes becomes somewhat discouraging.”54

And at that, the directors were in residence primarily during the warmer weather. Edwin and Alice were there year-round. They seem to have been consistently cheerful, however, since the Clifford children remember mostly good times. A highlight of each spring was “sugaring off,” when “Dad [would] boil in the sap to make the good maple syrup and sugar,” recalls Edith.55 Mabel’s reminiscences were more specific. “Neighbors would gather at the sugar house, with pans of snow on which they poured syrup that had been boiled to the right consistency to set sort of like taffy. To pick this up on the tines of a fork, and eat it with pickles and plain... was a real treat.”56

Edwin, with characteristic brevity, simply describes the “sugaring off season” as “very interesting.” He estimates making about seventy-five gallons of syrup and two hundred pounds of sugar each year. Sap rises in the sugar maples so early that he had “to tramp roads with

---

54Letter to Bishop David A. Smith from Heber C. Smith, July 8, 1923, Presiding Bishopric Collection.
56Mabel Fales, “Personal History,” 2. “Father would hitch the horses to a special low wide sled with a large wooden tub on it, and he would drive up into the woods to gather the sap from the buckets hanging on the maple trees. This sap was taken to the sugar house where it was boiled down to syrup and some made into sugar cakes. We used to take Dad’s hot dinner up to him carrying it in a big milk pail—wallowing through much mud that really used to be awful when the frost came out of the ground at that time of year. Of course being kids we did not try to avoid the deepest of this.”
the horses” to make paths through the snow to reach the trees.57

In their recollections, the middle and younger children especially expressed unalloyed delight with the farm, either not recognizing the hard work involved or letting time conveniently obliterate that part of the experience.

“THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE” AND THE CLIFFORD FAMILY

The prime season for visitors began in April or May, when the current director would open Memorial Cottage. Frank L. and Winifred Brown replaced Junius F. Wells in mid-March 1911,58 opened the cottage in early April, and by mid-May, “cordially invite[d] the citizens to visit their home . . . [where] they will be heartily welcomed.”59 By December, a notice in the local paper reported that the Browns had been guests at the South Royalton House over the past week, indicating that they were no longer resident at Memorial Cottage.60 In December 1912 the Browns and their son, Kenneth, went to Boston for the winter.61 During the eight years that the Clifford family lived year-round at Memorial Farm, the Browns and their successors, the Smiths, wintered in Boston, Salt Lake, Washington, D.C., and once in Florida. Only once, in the winter of 1916, the Browns rented a house in South Royalton.62

The peak religious “season” at the farm lasted from May through November, with winter dormancy occupying December through April. As there was no functioning branch of the Church near South Royalton, the Cliffords’ winter religious activities cen-

---

58Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830-present), March 15, 1911, LDS Church Archives. The text of this typed entry reads: “Elder Frank L. Brown and wife were this day set apart under the hands of the First Presidency, Bishop David A. Smith and Brother Benjamin Goddard to a mission taking care of the Joseph Smith Monument grounds and to labor there under the guidance and presidency of the President of the Eastern States Mission.”
60Ibid., December 28, 1911, 5/3.
61Ibid., December 19, 1912, 5/2.
62Ibid., November 30, 1916, 5/2.
tered in the family, with only an occasional visitor and missionary. The lengthy spring/summer season was enlivened by a stream of visitors and celebrations. In later years, a semi-annual district conference (Vermont Conference) was held in South Royalton.

Edwin Clifford does not comment about religious experiences at Memorial Farm; however, he and his family appear in photographs of missionary visits and Twenty-fourth of July celebrations. Also, within six weeks of the family’s arrival, a Sunday School was organized at the farm with Edwin as superintendent. He was called to this position again during the family’s second stay (1919–23). Mission records show that, during the summers of 1920 and 1921, “sessions for the Smith and Clifford children are held occasionally at the cottage by the monument when sacrament meetings are also held.”

The children remembered that Sunday School would be held one Sunday at the farm and another Sunday at the cottage. During the winter, Mabel remembered that the family would hold Sunday School, including partaking of the sacrament, at the farmhouse; sometimes a couple of the neighbor boys would attend. Edith played a foot-pedal organ at the farm and a piano at the Memorial. Olive remembered that the children sat on velvet-covered cushions (apparently window seats) during Sunday School at the cottage, while the “older folks” met in the dining room.

To Mabel, Sundays were special. “What wonderful testimonies were born in that large living room with the pictures of the prophet Joseph and his mother and brother Hyrum seeming to be looking down at us from their place over the mantel.” Although this is the only direct reference to Joseph Smith in family writings, he was a frequent subject of addresses by visiting LDS Church leaders, and undoubtedly the family also attended these celebrations. Andrew

---

63 Eastern States Mission, July 1, 1913, Manuscript Histories, LR 2475, Series 2, LDS Church Archives. He was called for the second time on May 15, 1920 and was still serving in May 1921.
64 Ibid., Vermont District, Summers, 1920, 1921
68 Mabel Fales, “Personal History,” 5.
Jenson, assistant Church historian, spoke Sunday, May 22, 1921, at Knight Hall in South Royalton, giving "the people of Vermont some important reasons why they should be proud of their State having produced the great Anglo–Saxon prophet of the nineteenth century Joseph Smith."69 A year later on Sunday, July, 23, B. H. Roberts, Eastern States Mission president, delivered a powerful discourse on "Why Vermont Should be Proud of Joseph Smith."70

Priesthood ordinances were also performed at the cottage. Frank was ordained a deacon, and Mabel and Albert were baptized in the lily pond on August 5, 1914. Some baptisms were apparently performed in the horse trough—a large round tank painted white, located

69Eastern States Mission, May 22, 1921.
70Mabel Fales, "Personal History," 5.
where the road divided to go around the grounds and cottage.71

The parents taught their children gospel lessons. Edwin would often relate a recurring dream from England about tithing, a difficult doctrine for him to accept. In his autobiography, he wrote:

I well remember before I had paid any tithing in the Church, I used to think that I could not afford it as I was in debt at the store where we used to do our trading. I was promised a blessing that if I paid it, the Lord would pay my debts and that it would come in a way that I would least expect. I took this to the Lord in prayer and commenced to pay my tithing. In six months I was out of debt. I surely thanked God for this blessing; but before I had paid my tithing I used to dream that I was back working for the old minister again as a coachman. My horse would stand in the stable without food or water, for four days together. This I dreamt eight or nine times; and it used to worry me, be-

71Ibid., 3.
cause the dream was always the same. To prove to me that it was of the Lord, after I paid my tithing, I never had the dream again.72

Family prayers were consistently held at breakfast and supper with the chairs turned around, and everyone took turns “as Father asked us.”73

**PIONEER DAY CELEBRATIONS**

There was nothing greater than the Twenty-fourth of July celebrations to bring missionaries, mission presidents, and even Church presidents to Memorial Farm. Junius F. Wells had originally instituted this celebration in honor of the pioneers’ entrance into the Salt Lake Valley; and within two months of the Clifford family’s arrival, they participated in their first celebration.74 George Edward Anderson left a fairly detailed description of this 1913 gathering. Elder Ben E. Rich, Eastern States Mission president, presided at the festivities which began with a sunrise service held to the north of the cottage on Patriarch Hill, where the missionaries raised the flag and sang hymns and patriotic songs.75 Rich, who was not feeling well, sat on the “broad piazza” but could easily hear “High on the Mountain Top,” “My County, [sic] ‘tis of Thee,” “The Star-spangled Banner,” “O Ye Mountains High,” and “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Undoubtedly these songs could be heard at the farmhouse as well. Anderson photographed the missionaries on Patriarch Hill. They had found “a patch of wild raspberries . . . just above the north reservoir, the taste of which sharpened our appetite for a delicious breakfast which Sister Edwin Clifford had prepared at the farm house.”76

After breakfast at 10:00, Rich addressed a meeting in a large tent. Many bore testimony of their families’ pioneer experiences. Frank L. Brown, with tears in his eyes, talked about his father, James Stephens Brown, enlisting at seventeen in the Mormon Battalion, and

---

74Erekson, “From Missionary Resort to Memorial Farm,” 76.
75Ibid.; Junius F. Wells renamed Bald Knob “Patriarch Hill” in honor of Hyrum Smith. Other groves, glens, and hills were named in honor of Smith family members.
of the sacrifices of his mother, Eliza Lester Brown, who had endured much as a pioneer. Rich commended the elders who occasionally worked on the Joseph Smith Memorial Farm and told them they “were doing just as great a work as those who were in the service distributing gospel literature.” At 2:00 P.M. Winifred Brown and her sisters, Mary and Jessie Tibbs, served dinner. Later that afternoon, the missionaries played a traditional baseball game on Missionary Hill.

After supper, the evening meeting, held in the living room of the Memorial Cottage, was crowded with neighbors and friends. Undoubtedly the Cliffords attended the meeting and probably helped with supper. Rich declared, “No Vermonter need be ashamed of the Prophet Joseph Smith.” After more singing and recitations, the group retired to the “piazza” for watermelon and conversation.

On Sunday, July 27, a testimony meeting was held in the cottage. On July 28, the missionaries gathered around a well where they sang “The Old Oaken Bucket,” then went to Sophronia Glen, named after the Prophet Joseph’s sister, for more singing. Frank Brown offered a prayer, petitioning the Lord that all who had been present “might carry with them the spirit of the place into their various fields of labor.” The final activity was gathering around Brown’s doorless Cadillac and singing “God Be With You Till We Meet Again.”

This ritual was to be repeated for many years at Memorial Farm and certainly occurred each of the eight summers that the Clifford family was in residence. The mission presidents and missionaries came and went, but the basic rituals and program remained much the same.

The children remember these celebrations fondly, although they probably did not appreciate how much work these festivities were for their parents, especially their mother. Scarcely two months after arriving in Vermont, the Cliffords assisted in hosting approxi-

---

77 Ibid., 124–25.
78 Junius F. Wells named Missionary Hill in November 1909. It is “on the left of the avenue and cover[ing] the last hill coming into the grounds,” by which he probably meant the hill lying southerly from the current LDS Church Visitors Center. Junius F. Wells Collection.
80 I do not know the glen’s location.
mately two hundred people. Mabel said that her mother turned the living room into a dining room and that’s where she fed the missionaries at noon as they couldn’t take care of all of them up at the cottage. “How my mother and father ever did all this I can’t imagine with such a big family of their own to feed.” Mabel further described a large tent where many of the Elders slept on cots and the “lady missionaries” slept in a building called the “bunkhouse”; and the Clifford children were “relegated to the attic” where they slept on camp cots and the visiting Saints had the children’s bedroom. And some of the missionaries slept in the hay in the barn.

The children also recall hearing addresses from many Church leaders. Mabel was particularly impressed by B. H. Roberts’s response to their shy mother’s testimony which she bore in his presence. After the “amen,” Brother Roberts said “SO BE IT” in a very loud voice—that certainly made a deep impression on me.” Mabel also remembers hearing Roberts speak several times while he was Eastern States Mission president as well as Church President Heber J. Grant. “We were a very blessed family to have met so many artistic, educated and spiritual people during our growing and learning years,” she summarized. Frank echoed this sentiment, commenting that the whole family was blessed by living at the Memorial and all the wonderful people that they met while living on this property.

South Royalton’s citizens participated, to a certain extent, in the Twenty-fourth of July celebrations. In July 1915 the White River Herald noted: “Dairy Hill has been a busy place this week. There have been about two hundred guests entertained at Memorial Cottage for the week. Bread has been brought from White River Junction by auto trucks and several men cooks have provided the other food.”

In 1914 the paper noted that a large group, waiting for the noon train on July 29, “gave a rousing song concert on the station platform and it was pleasant to hear such a volume of voices.” In 1920, the mis-
sionaries’ baseball teams were “organized according to the political preferences of the missionaries. The Republicans defeated the Democrats with a score of 16 to 1.” On Monday afternoon, the missionaries played “some of the boys of South Royalton,” winning by a single point. The “keenly contested” game “was enjoyed by all.”

The Browns brought with them their only child, Kenneth; but Heber and Lileth Smith had three children: Alice, fourteen, Ella, seven, and Heber C., almost four. Alice Smith, only six months older than Mabel, became her “best friend,” which meant that “sleepovers” were part of their teenage life. Mabel greatly enjoyed the amenities of the cottage, including indoor plumbing and taking “a bath in a real bathtub with running hot water. Our baths at home were taken in a galvanized tub in the kitchen in front of the kitchen range.”

**Dairy Hill as Community**

Intricately connected to the family, farm, and “the spirit of the place,” was the community of Dairy Hill. It was originally called Dewey’s Hill, but Clem Drew pushed for “Dairy Hill” to promote his Jersey herd. Dairy Hill rose about two miles south and east of South Royalton. Although very much a part of the town, it also enjoyed its own community. The one-room Dairy Hill School educated local children through the eighth grade. The Dairy Hill Community Club and

---

88 Ibid., August 6, 1914, 5/1; July 29, 1920, 5/1.
89 *The Descendants of Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918)* (Provo, Utah: J. Grant Stevenson, 1976), 117.
90 Mabel Fales, “Personal History,” 5.
91 Nash, *Royalton, Vermont*, 132. During the sojourn of the Joseph Smith Sr. family, Dairy Hill was geographically connected to Sharon by the Old Turnpike Road. (See map.) By the time of the Cliffords’ arrival, Dairy Hill was part of South Royalton. Junius F. Wells noted: “When people set out to visit the birthplace of the Prophet Joseph Smith they naturally look on a road map for Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont. Arriving there, however, and inquiring for the birthplace of Joseph Smith, they are told that they should go north to the vicinity of the Village of South Royalton and turn East at a sign on the highway and follow that [Dairy Hill] road some two miles or more into the hills.” These directions are still current. Junius F. Wells Collection, MSS 1351, Box 7, fd. 8, used by permission of LDS Church Archives.
the Dairy Hill Sewing Club were also local organizations that enhanced the sense of community that the Cliffords encountered during their stay. The school, the only community building outside of Memorial Cottage, was so close to the farmhouse that the Clifford children would sometimes wait for the teacher to ring the bell before they ran “down the dirt road.”

The school generally had only eight or nine students, including the Cliffords, at least three of whom attended during each of their eight years on the hill.

Frank and Winifred’s son, Kenneth, also attended the school; and in a 1916 letter, Frank reminded the Presiding Bishopric that it was partly through the Church’s efforts “that the school is now open after being closed for a great many years.” There was a rural intimacy to the experience, too, as teacher Hester Button boarded with the Cliffords, sharing the bedroom of her student, Mabel.

The local Herald regularly reported activities at the school. For example, it closed on Friday, November 14, 1913, “with exercises by the children. Total enrollment 9; average attendance 7.5 plus.” Mabel and Albert had 100 percent attendance records. Edith won first prize in spelling, with Albert in second place. The paper several times notes the Clifford children’s good attendance and spelling prowess.

For the Cliffords’ first Christmas in America, Dairy Hill School became part of their celebration. On Christmas Eve, “about forty” attended an hour-long program of songs, recitations, and “a dialogue,” entitled “Santa’s Volunteers,” which was given by the eight “pupils.” The school was decorated, and the tree was full of presents. After refreshments of candy, peanuts, and popcorn balls, those present sang “old time” songs to the interesting accompaniment of accordion, violin, and phonograph and left declaring that “they had had the best time of their lives.” These Christmas celebrations were annual events throughout the family’s years on the farm, except for 1919 when a diphtheria outbreak quarantined that part of the hill.

Other holidays saw exercises and programs at the school. At one

92Mabel Fales, "Personal History," 2.
95Ibid., January 1, 1914, 5/4.
Memorial Day program attended by about forty, a pie sale fund-raiser brought in $5.96. The cottage, neighborhood, and school often united in sponsoring a Fourth of July celebration. The cottage grounds were ideal for races and ball games; peanuts, bananas, and lemonade were the most common refreshments. A Halloween “sociable” at the school featured a short play by the students, “a remarkable old witch,” ghosts, games, and candy for “a general good time.”

Edwin and Alice celebrated their twenty-first wedding anniversary on February 9, 1914, less than a year after immigrating. It was marked by a sense of community and kindness when about thirty “neighbors and friends” surprised them with a party, presenting “a willow rocker to show the esteem in which the community holds them.” Music and games followed.

The Community Club of Dairy Hill, formed around 1917, sponsored many gatherings that brought the families together and celebrated important events in their lives. For example, on October 1, 1920, the club held a surprise party for Edith Clifford, who was leaving for Randolph Sanatorium to complete her nursing training. In October, the club sponsored a Halloween social at the schoolhouse, at which Mabel was elected club secretary. In November the club met at the Cliffords’ for a surprise farewell party for Albert Clifford, who was leaving to work “in the foundry” at Randolph. About sixty-five people attended.

Alice joined the Dairy Hill Sewing Club and, on July 21, 1921, only three days before the taxing Twenty-fourth of July parties, hosted the club. “A goodly number of ladies were present and a delicious supper was served by the hostess.”

Other popular activities were sledding on “scooters” made out of a barrel with a seat on it. Sledders would ride down Missionary Hill where the LDS chapel now sits. They skated on the frozen pond between the farm and the cottage, and held husking bees in the fall.

96Ibid., June 11, 1914, 5/1.
99Ibid., February 12, 1914, 5/1.
100Ibid., September 30, 1920, 7/2.
101Ibid., November 4, 1920, 7/2.
102Ibid., November 18, 1920, 7/1.
103Ibid., July 21, 1921, 5/2.
Edith recalled with relish: “All the neighbors came in the evening and sat in the barn on stools husking ears of corn. If a boy found a red ear of corn he kissed a girl and likewise if a girl found one she kissed a boy. . . . I had never seen corn in England, so to eat sweet corn from the cob was quite something new.”

Courtships, weddings, illnesses, and removals from Dairy Hill were all duly chronicled in the *White River Herald*. All of the Clifford children who married locally (Alfred, Gladys, Edith, and Albert) received journalistic coverage. When a diphtheria epidemic hit Dairy Hill in December 1919, it closed the school and quarantined the farm. The newspaper reported that “Mabel, Alice, and Jack, children of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Clifford, are all ill with diphtheria. Mrs. Alfred Clifford is also ill with the disease.” Jack, only seven years old, almost died. Heber C. Smith was forced to return from wintering in Dorchester, Massachusetts, to oversee the farm. But by December 18, the invalids were improving and there were no new cases. On January 8, 1920, the entire family was “decidedly better,” the house “fumigated on Tuesday,” with the lifting of the quarantine expected daily.

Charles P. Madsen, formerly an electrician at the Salt Lake Theatre, wrote an article published in the 1916 *Deseret Evening News* about a lengthy stay at Memorial Cottage that shows the sense of community on Dairy Hill. He was amazed when almost a hundred neighbors and friends showed up to hold a surprise party to celebrate the Browns’ fourteenth wedding anniversary. The Dairy Hill resident who had been chosen to present them with their gift said, “We do not know why we do this. You know New Englanders rarely welcome any one to their midst, but regard them as strangers until they have been in our midst at least 20 years. And here, after only six years, we find ourselves regarding Mr. and Mrs. Brown and their son Kenneth as one of us.”

Winifred Brown explained to Madsen after the party that President Joseph F. Smith, in setting them apart as missionaries, “had

---

105 “South Royalton,” *White River Herald*, October 14, 1915, 5/3; Ibid., October 12, 1916, 5/2; Ibid., December 11, 1919, 7/2. Olive, not Alice, had diphtheria.
106 Ibid., December 18, 1919, 7/2; ibid., January 1, 1920, 5/2; and ibid., January 8, 1920, 5/2.
blessed them to go up there and live the gospel rather than to preach it, and had prophesied that a few years would turn hate into love, and the people would come to them voluntarily in love.”

This perception of being “one of us” may have applied even more directly to Cliffs since they lived on Dairy Hill all year round, sent their children to the country school, and saw their oldest sons and daughters marry locally and settle down in Vermont or New Hampshire.

On September 11, 1922, the Smith and Clifford families celebrated Labor Day with a corn roast, since the Smiths “anticipate an early removal from the farm.” It was also the last winter for the Cliffs at Memorial Farm. No LDS Church records give a reason for the Clifford family’s move in 1923 to Connecticut; but Mabel’s oral history commented: “As we left the farm to go to Littleton, Massachusetts [in 1917], I know this was another difficult decision for Father to make. He felt that if he didn’t get away from the farm that he never could earn enough money to pay Brother Brown back the money that he had borrowed to bring his family to this country. His pay was so small when he was there that he just had to get away where he could earn more.” Perhaps age and health also played a role in their final decision. Edwin was fifty-three and Alice, diabetic, was almost fifty-two. In addition Edwin was able to leave dairy farming for estate gardening, the work he loved and was trained for.

Mabel records, “That summer of 1922 [1923] my Dad and Mother sold their furniture at an auction on the front lawn. I remember feeling badly to see our things sold.” Edwin and Alice left Memorial Farm on June 11, with their four youngest children: Mabel, seven-


Ibid. Apparently each new farm director had to prove himself to the Vermonters. Lileth Smith, wife of Heber C. Smith, recalled in a conversation, on February 10, 2006, with me and Ellen Chadwick Porter, a granddaughter of Edwin and Alice Clifford, that South Royalton women would pull their skirts away from her in shops so they wouldn’t touch her. Perhaps Dairy Hill and South Royalton differed in their acceptance of the Mormons.

109Eastern States Mission, Manuscript History, September 11, 1922.

Mabel Fales, “Oral History,” 7. This detail raises other questions that are currently unanswerable: Did Edwin succeed in repaying the debt? How large was it? Had Frank Brown advanced the money from his own pocket or acted as the Church’s agent?
teen; Frank, fifteen; Olive, twelve; and Jack, ten. They moved next
door to their second son, Charles, and his family in Farmington, Con-
necticut. Edwin once again returned to his first love, gardening, rid-
ing his bike every day to the greenhouse on a private estate.111

LAST THOUGHTS

Despite this apparent wealth of information, questions remain.
No record or reminiscence contains a job description or conditions
of employment. While the Browns and the Smiths were missionaries,
the Cliffords were not. Edwin raised and milked Jersey cows, tapped
maple trees, and boiled it down to make maple syrup and maple
sugar. He and Alice prepared Memorial Cottage each spring for the
directors’ return and, each fall when they left, drained the water and
winterized the cottage.

Edwin died at age seventy-five and Alice at fifty-six, so eight
years seems short by comparison; but those eight years came at the
most impressionable time of life for the younger children. Clearly
“the spirit of the place” penetrated deeply into their psyches. Six of
the nine children remained active Church members, and all re-
tained throughout their lives the integrity, work ethic, and sense of
fun developed in their Dairy Hill childhood.112 Certainly their
neighbors saw them as friends. When they moved to Littleton, Mas-
sachusetts, at the end of their first four years, the White River Herald
praised Edwin as “a good citizen, honest and industrious, who will
be greatly missed in the community, as will his good wife and large
family of children.”113*

When Heber C. Smith, newly appointed Memorial Farm direc-
tor, traveled to Littleton in 1919 to persuade Edwin and Alice to re-
turn, the children were delighted. Mabel correctly observed, however,
that as children they couldn’t appreciate all aspects of the decision
that the parents had to weigh. Edwin was the caretaker of a large fruit
and berry farm, work that was nowhere near as taxing as the farm.
They were living in a comfortable home in town with larger schools
nearby. But there was no LDS branch nearby—not even any other

111Mabel Fales, “Personal History,” 7.
112One child became inactive, but more from excruciating shyness
rather than apathy or lack of faith.
113“South Royalton,” White River Herald, July 19, 1917, 5/2.
members.\textsuperscript{114} They made their decision before Heber left, and nine-year-old Olive happily rode back on the train with him.\textsuperscript{115}

Four years later on June 11, 1923, the Cliffords left the farm for good. Heber C. Smith commented regretfully in a letter to the Presiding Bishopric: “I am sorry to report that brother Clifford and family who have been here for a long time and who are faithful members of the Church . . . have a position offered them in Connecticut [sic] and expect to leave here [sic] next month. I surely feel bad about this, and as yet do not know what I will do but trust the Lord help us out in the matter. Brother Clifford has been a very faithful man and we shall miss him greatly.” A month later, he was still “having considerable difficulty in obtaining a man to take brother Cliffords place it has certainly left me in a very bad position.”\textsuperscript{116} Edwin Clifford had no full-time successor. Heber Smith operated the farm with hired laborers and the occasional missionary. The farm ceased its operations in the 1940s, and the farmhouse was torn down sometime between 1957 and 1961.\textsuperscript{117}

During their eight years in the shadow of the Joseph Smith Memorial Monument, the Clifford family experienced social and spiritual growth. When they left, they took its influence with them, as they did the quiet courage and industry of their parents. In a narrative of Joseph Smith’s birthplace prepared by the missionaries in the 1990s, the Clifford family’s contribution was noted: “One of the dedicatory statements of blessing offered by President [Joseph F.] Smith comes to mind as we add the experiences of the Clifford family to this narrative. President Joseph F. Smith stated: ‘May those who dwell here pos-

\textsuperscript{114}Mabel Fales, “Personal History,” 4.
\textsuperscript{115}Hauet, “The Story of Olive Hauet,” 5.
\textsuperscript{116}Heber C. Smith, Letters to Presiding Bishopric, May 20 and June 20, 1923, Presiding Bishopric Collection.
\textsuperscript{117}I have been unable to date the demolition, but a 1957 photograph of my mother, Mabel, standing on Dairy Hill Road shows the farmhouse in the background. Erekson, “American Prophet: New England Town,” 2, gives a date of 1959. The farmhouse had definitely been razed by 1961 when the chapel and new buildings were dedicated. Moroni Johnson Jr., who lived at the farmhouse during the 1940s, indicates that they were not farming at that time. Elaine Chadwick Soule, email to Susan Fales, January 30, 2006; Elaine lives in Randolph Center, Vermont, and knows Moroni Johnson, who lived in the farmhouse as a boy.
sess the spirit of light and truth in their hearts... may their souls burn
with love for the salvation of the human family, and may they take
great pains in administering unto those that shall come.”118

Wallace Stegner reminds us that “no place is a place until the
things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads,
yarns, legends, or monuments.”119 Certainly Clifford descendants
have a sense that their family history is entwined in the history of the
Joseph Smith Memorial Farm where Edwin, Alice, and their children
contributed much to that spirit for eight years. Yet this important
place was less of a shrine to the past for the Clifford family than a ha-
ven for their present. These intimate family memories contain an
added dimension—a connection with and early influence on the de-
development of a historic site that has sacred meaning to millions today
who revere Joseph Smith as a prophet.

118“A Synoptic Narrative of the Joseph Smith Birthplace Memorial
Historical Site,” 5.
119Wallace Stegner, “The Sense of Place,” in Where the Bluebird Sings
to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West (New York: Random

**Reviewed by C. Brid Nicholson**

The traditional view of the American West is that of a frontier, a barrier, a living epic, a place of myth, individualism, and freedom of expression. Todd Kerstetter’s book promotes the idea that the West needs to be reexamined as a place where faith and government clashed, where the federal government decided that it was the only acceptable source of God, legality, and government, and which forcefully and violently confronted religious groups that would not agree (or appeared not to agree) to certain standards (1).

While the West was seen to be a place of refuge, perhaps even a utopia, a place of growth and acceptance for religious groups who did not fit into the Protestant mainstream eastern acceptability, and while state governments had none or at least few problems with the variety of religious groupings that called the West “home,” the federal government did. According to Kerstetter, associate professor of history at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, the West became a cultural and administrative battleground as the federal government sought to impose laws and a way of life on groups against which state governments were unwilling to take action or, after reflection, decided against reining in (1–3).

To examine this thesis Kerstetter points to three particular religious groups that he sees as receiving similar treatment from the federal government: the Mormons, the Lakota Indians, and the Branch Davidians. Kerstetter sees a number of similarities among the three groups: Each promoted and understood the specifically western American value placed on
the significance of the individual, the federal government saw each group as the enemy, and each group practiced plural marriage in some form. A fourth similarity is that the media played a major role in persuading the American public of each group’s danger. Furthermore, the followers of each supposedly anti-American leader (Joseph Smith, Wovoka, and David Koresh), were depicted as weak-minded people, incapable of making up their own minds; therefore, they needed the help and protection of the federal government (173–76).

Kerstetter organizes his book into five chapters: “God’s Country,” “Uncle Sam and the Saints,” “Uncle Sam and the Lying Messiah,” “Uncle Sam and the Sinful Messiah,” and “Uncle Sam’s Land.” In his first chapter, Kerstetter lays out his argument: Despite the surface reality that the West allowed, even celebrated, individuality, the deeper reality was that, in the area of religion, only mainline Protestant churches, doctrine, and outlook were acceptable. All other religious groups (he all too briefly mentions the Jewish experience in the West, [22]) were thought of as dangerous to the existence of the United States.

In Chapters 2–4, Kerstetter gives a brief history of the time just before and just after each group came into contact with the full force of the federal government. For anyone well-versed (or even distantly versed) in LDS history, nothing in Chapter 2, “Uncle Sam and the Saints” seems new or even mildly fascinating. The chapter condenses into forty-seven pages LDS history from its inception in New York State to Smith’s death in 1844 through Utah’s statehood in 1896.

Nevertheless, what is interesting is Kerstetter’s perception of anti-Mormon press and government policy as an example, not of religious intolerance, but as the federal government’s determination to create, unify, and Americanize all aspects of life including religion. Freedom of religion only went so far; once anyone passed a certain Protestant line of approval, something had to be done:

Despite the West’s well-deserved reputation for individuality and opportunity, the region had little room for certain types of dissenters. Despite its well-deserved reputation for separation of church and state, the United States operated under a social and legal system heavily influenced by Protestant ideals. As it incorporated the West, a region rich with resources and ripe with opportunity, the United States confronted communities with rival notions of family, social organization, and manifest destiny based on divine revelation, communities that made no pretense of separating church and state. Mormons, Lakota Ghost Dancers, and Branch Davidians fit into these categories. (12)

Thus, according to Kerstetter, the reason that Mormonism survived was that it changed enough to make it part of American life, modifying its own rules, doctrine, and attitudes (at least in public) so the federal govern-
ment eventually let it be. The Lakota Indians and the Branch Davidians did not succeed in making the same adaptations and therefore did not prosper as religious movements.

There is no doubt that Kerstetter’s thesis—that religion needs to be seen as playing a major role in Western history—has validity. The problem with his version of history is that he fails to see each of these events in the context of the complicated politics of the time, oversimplifies comparisons, and fails to offer the contrasting elements in these three groups that are as important as the similarities. That the early LDS Church and members were considered suspect in nineteenth-century American society is true. The ideas of Joseph Smith, even before the announcement of polygamy, had resulted in fear and persecution of the early Church, keeping it on the move from New York, to Ohio and Missouri, to Illinois, and then across the western wilderness to Utah. However, ultimately Mormons were white, not Native American; the federal government’s concern was keeping a united and ever-expanding United States, and so some sort of compromise or “live and let live option” was always a possibility in a country rapidly heading toward a Civil War.

This brings up the next weakness in Kerstetter’s argument: his direct comparison between the treatment of the nineteenth-century LDS Church and a twentieth-century cult. The federal government’s response to the Branch Davidians, according to Kerstetter, “appears remarkably similar to those involved in Utah and South Dakota” (125), as “more than a century after the massacre at Wounded Knee, the U.S. government again found itself at odds with a religious group in the West” (125). Once again, he defines the issues as “an armed, isolationist religious group led by a prophet receiving directions from God, practicing a communal lifestyle, and engaging in plural marriage” (125).

At first glance, Kerstetter is correct in all these factors, plus the colorful rhetoric in which the media described the happenings. However, can you really compare the internal politics of the United States under Bill Clinton with the political situations faced by Abraham Lincoln and James Buchanan? Simply put, Texas was never going to secede from the Union because of the Branch Davidians.

Nevertheless, the value in Kerstetter’s book and thesis is to again view the importance of religion, particularly LDS history, as part of the opening up of the American West and the expansion of the United States. In his final chapter, Kerstetter returns to his thesis and gives a summary of his argument: Religion played a major role in creating the American West, but it also played a vital role in the federal government’s declaring itself to be the protector of its people and way of life. Kerstetter hopes: “If other groups collide with mainstream values to the threat of nonmembers, the government
should exercise its duty to protect citizens. In such a case, however, it is to be hoped that future ‘barbarians’ perceived as threatening America’s garden will receive a more civilized response than their predecessors received” (177). After all, the existence of the Heaven’s Gate commune, initially in New Mexico and later in California, shows the American public that religious groups continue to grow and benefit from the protection of the West.

The value of this book for scholars of LDS history is, I suggest, as a tool for reviewing the history of Mormonism as part of the Second Great Awakening and then, not just as a factor in western history, but in studying how specific American western ideals were part of many religious groups. The West allowed the Mormon Church to survive because, geographically, it was too far away from the federal government to undergo a hands-on, minute scrutiny during a crucial formative period essential to its survival. Also, while the LDS Church may not have been considered “protestant” enough, it was white enough for the government not to risk a massacre along the lines of wiping out any Native American tribe. Finally, while LDS members have integrated into general American society, surviving Branch Davidians have remained aloof, distant, refusing to take part in American life.

C. BRÍD NICHOLSON {cnichols@kean.edu} is assistant professor of American history at Kean University, Union, New Jersey. She is presently working on an article on Mormon-Methodist relations in the nineteenth century.


Reviewed by David L. Bigler

George Q. Cannon, Utah’s delegate to Congress, denounced the author of this book as “one of the worst enemies” the Mormon people had (vii). And Apostle Joseph F. Smith once prayed he “should be made blind, deaf and dumb unless he repents” (xi). But Robert N. Baskin always insisted that he was the Mormon people’s best friend. And if the women of the Church, who prefer to be the only wife of one devoted husband, knew what he did to ensure that right, their united amen might be heard all the way to Nauvoo.

Baskin, a twenty-seven-year-old Harvard graduate, was passing through Utah in 1865 when he decided to stay and practice law. That year saw the end of the Civil War but the renewal of the nation’s other internal
conflict, the one between theocratic Utah Territory and the national republic. No longer would it be waged between the Nauvoo Legion and the U.S. Army, as it was in 1857–58. Over the next quarter-century, it would be fought in the courts, political arenas, and legislative halls.

One of Baskin’s first clients was a young non-Mormon physician who tried to claim land for a hospital at Warm Springs, north of Salt Lake, despite Utah laws designed to keep Gentiles from owning property. Dr. John King Robinson answered an appeal one night in October 1866 to help an alleged accident victim. His wife begged him not to go, but he never refused his help to anyone. Soon after, there was a horrible scream and a pistol shot. Robinson was found lying face down at the corner of Third South and today’s Main Street in a spreading pool of blood from knife and gunshot wounds. His killers were never found.

When he saw his client’s brutally injured body, Baskin vowed to do all that he possibly could “to place in the hands of the federal authorities the power to punish the perpetrators of such heinous crimes” (28). In carrying out that commitment, he made a contribution to modern Utah that is both profound and virtually forgotten. It can be seen in freedoms that Utahns of all faiths today take for granted. They include the right to vote in secret, to enjoy preferred family relationships, and to make the economic choices that decide their quality of life, among others.

In his early career, Baskin was anything but the kindly seeming gentleman who looks out from the cover of this attractive volume. He was brash, outspoken, combative, and absolutely fearless. As an acting U.S. prosecutor, he shocked the Mormon community in 1871 by indicting Brigham Young for “lewd and lascivious” conduct under a territorial law never meant to apply to polygamy. As other non-Mormons ran for cover, he stood his ground. “As a lion [Young] is not of much consequence,” he said, “and when he fails, as he will, to accomplish his purpose in the role of a lion, he will assume that of the fox, in which he is very formidable” (56).

As assistant to U.S. Attorney William Carey, Baskin also prosecuted John D. Lee in 1875 for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, attempted unsuccessfully to tie Young to the crime, and wrung a confession from the notorious Mormon executioner, William A. Hickman, for killing a trader, Richard Yates, with an ax in Echo Canyon during the 1857–58 Utah War. For the Yates murder, Baskin had Daniel H. Wells, Young’s second counselor, arrested with others, but they were never tried.

Such exploits won Baskin a national reputation, but his most lasting legacy came on the political and legislative fronts. With Patrick Connor, he created the Liberal Party, which grew into a formidable opponent of Mormon political control. In 1872, he wrote the Cullom Bill, proposed as legislation in the U.S. Senate, which not only levied draconian penalties for polyg-
any but also struck at the heart of theocratic political and legislative power. So alarmed was Brigham Young that he staged a protest by polygamous wives, who proclaimed Mormonism’s “principle” as “the only reliable safeguard of female virtue and innocence.” ¹ Senator James Nye from Nevada cooperatively bottled up the bill in his committee, but its provisions were later enacted in other measures.

In Washington, Baskin and others used polygamy as a wrecking ball to demolish theocratic structures in Utah and prepare for statehood. The blows came one after another until Wilford Woodruff issued the famous 1890 “Manifesto,” which gradually led to the end of polygamy, but, more important, acknowledged the primacy of federal law over divine rule.

Eventually, the federal laws he championed disenfranchised so many Mormon men that Baskin won election in 1892 as Salt Lake City mayor. The relentless foe of theocracy now found himself serving all citizens of a city with pioneer-vintage utilities. People drew water from wells near old cesspools and privies that were a menace to public health. Rising to the occasion, he led the city to issue long-term bonds which financed up-to-date water and sewer systems, paved streets in the business section, and laid miles of sidewalk. He went on to become associate justice of the Utah Supreme Court (1899) and its chief justice (1903).

Baskin was ready to forget the past and look forward, but his fighting spirit was activated by Orson F. Whitney’s four-volume History of Utah, published from 1892 to 1904. He produced his own reminiscences in 1914 to correct Whitney’s “glaringly false statements” which had “so wantonly be-mirched” him and others (3). Two years later, he added his “Reply to Certain Statements by O.F. Whitney,” both of which are included in this volume.

Baskin mounted his counterattack as if making it before a court, and his writing is legalistic in style. He organized his challenges topically, which makes his work at times difficult to follow in relation to current and prior events. And his memory is not always perfect. The introduction corrects some of his lapses, which are usually trivial (xvi). But his straightforward honesty and pugnacity come across on every page. Whitney’s works, though generally useful if defensive histories, suffer under Baskin’s withering rebuttals.

The old polygamy fighter and founder of modern Utah apparently left no papers when he died at Salt Lake City in 1918, which makes this book his only written bequest and adds to its value. It and Brigham D. Madsen’s splen-

¹ Edward W. Tullidge, History of Salt Lake City (Salt Lake City: Star Printing Co., 1886), 438–39.
did foreword make this volume a winner for Signature Books.

DAVID L. BIGLER (bigler@surewest.com), an independent historian, is author of Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896 (Spokane: Arthur H. Clark, 1998), and other works on Mormon and western history. He is an honorary life member of the Utah State Historical Society.


Reviewed by D. Michael Quinn

This extraordinary biography begins with an unusual “Publisher’s Preface” stating that Deseret Book “and the biographer do not agree on the interpretations or weight of importance given to a number of events” (ix), juxtaposed against the author’s prefatory criticism of “a sanitized version from which the humanness has been leached” (xvii). The result is an unprecedented attachment—“Spencer W. Kimball CD Library”—which contains the book’s original version (before the publisher’s one-third reduction). This review discusses the printed version, then briefly assesses the uncensored biography.

Having emphasized pre-presidency experiences in 1977, the biographer begins as Spencer nears death in 1972. Two pages after that crisis, the book moves to his becoming president in 1973. Then follow nine chapters on personal style and teachings, twenty-four about Spencer’s impact on missionary work, “Controversial Issues,” the policy against granting priesthood to males of black African ancestry, Church administration, finances, indigenous peoples (Lamanites), welfare, temples, and three chapters about physical incapacitation and death. One appendix has personal tributes; another gives chronology.

Throughout, the diminutive President Kimball looms large as a loving and loveable leader whose spontaneous affection and unpretentiousness inspire devotion, while bringing tears to hardened reporters and to strangers on planes. One stunning example: “Spencer greeted the former leper with a warm embrace and kissed his disfigured face” (428).

Nevertheless, the Church president did not always inspire. He “had a strained relationship with his eldest son” (61). He acknowledged privately (not publicly): “I might have been a little too strong about some of the things
I wrote in “The Miracle of Forgiveness” (80). He could be painfully abrupt with subordinates who made mistakes: “Maybe we can’t trust you” (316), and sometimes said “damn” in private irritation (59, 388).

The biographer achieves his promise “to describe the history of the institutional Church during that same period” (xii), with “determination to tell the story as fairly as I can” (xiii). In addition to heartfelt prayers, loving words, solemn consultations, and humorous asides by the Brethren during the weekly temple meetings, there were other realities. President Kimball was dismissive of “General Authorities . . . [who] are too negative” (131), and “leaned very heavily on the Twelve for more results and some were a bit offended” (19). He “once expressed concern about general Church leaders who used an authoritarian style” (38), and upbraided Apostle Bruce R. McConkie for dogmatic sermonizing (101). Spencer extracted an apology from next-senior apostle Ezra Taft Benson for speaking without authorization about political matters (159–60). When Benson nonetheless continued doing so, the First Presidency issued two rebuttal announcements and chastised him again privately (160–61).

Depending on readers’ perspective, some disclosures are startling. “Elder McConkie acknowledged that Brigham Young did teach the Adam-God theory” (96). Despite Kimball’s official statements to the contrary, he said privately that within marriage any sexual activity that was “mutually pleasurable and satisfying was acceptable” (172). An official declaration of the First Presidency reversed President Kimball’s statement against post-rape abortions “as simply a popular view, without directly repudiating it” (173). LDS Church president Harold B. Lee made a claim about Mormon history, “an assertion not supported by the evidence” (197 note 2). Contrary to the adage “when the prophet decides, the debate is over,” Florence Jacobsen, former Young Women’s general president and first director of the Museum of Church History and Art, successfully told two different First Presidencies that they would demolish historic buildings “over my dead body” (277).

The book is equally candid about the rank-and-file. Social practices, like contraception, “among Latter-day Saints tend to follow those of the larger community, but they lag behind” (83). In 1961–68 Spencer and Mark E. Petersen counseled “almost one thousand” Utah Mormons struggling with same-sex desires (86), an average of three homosexual confessions weekly to only two apostles. So many men asked to be called as mission presidents that the First Presidency had “a file bulging with letters” from these aspiring Mormons: “We don’t call any of them” (258). Devout but thoughtless Mormons injured the obviously frail president by manhandling him (317, 351).

Discussion of the long road (195–239) to ending the priesthood ban (including acknowledgement of racial prejudices among the Presidency and apostles—195, 210, 228) is the most insightful in print. This includes a denial
that they “heard an audible voice speaking specific words” at the crucial meeting in the temple—directly refuting Apostle Bruce R. McConkie’s more dramatic account (235).

Despite endorsing (xvi) the hierarchy’s public assurances that the physically debilitated president was mentally alert, the book gives counter-views. Spencer spoke to October 1979 conference after “slowly fight[ing] his way back from incoherence” following brain surgery (392). By November, he imagined himself in Australia, not Utah (392–93). After a recovery, his secretary reported in July 1981 that “the [mental] fog descended again” (399). By October, President Kimball’s “mental acuity was something like a radio signal, fading in and out” (401). At BYU in March 1982, there was “acute concern that he might become confused or fall asleep” during his first public appearance in seven months, “but with the help of a mild stimulant [Ritalin] he managed beautifully” (404). By 1984, “Spencer seemed to be nodding and uncommunicative” during temple councils, but uttered “Yes,” when asked specifically if he approved something (410). The book does not indicate whether the barely functioning prophet ever said “no” when given this prearranged signal of an already-made decision requiring his formal approval. Apparently his longest statement occurred “in one temple meeting [when] President Hinckley asked Spencer whether he had anything he wanted to say. ‘I’d like to be released,’ was his poignant answer” (403 note). That did not occur until his death in 1985.

With this book’s candor, does the CD-ROM have much of significance to add? Definitely.

Deseret Book’s massive editing leaves readers with a superior biography that almost fits the publisher’s typical hagiography of prophets, despite the book’s frankness and few surviving references to Mormon scholarship. The publisher’s book-deletions deprive readers of the most wonderfully erudite, personally inspiring, institutionally revealing, and culturally complex biography ever written about modern LDS presidents. The original version’s linkage of diverse Mormon communities and the rank-and-file with a prophet’s experience even excels the best biographies of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. In this CD-ROM, Edward Kimball achieves a nonpareil.

Shelve the book; read the CD.

D. Michael Quinn {mike.quinn@finefriends.net} is the author of Elder Statesman: A Biography of J. Reuben Clark (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002) and was Beinecke Senior Fellow and Postdoctoral Associate in Yale University’s Department of History, 2002–3.

Richard Lyman Bushman. On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author’s Di-
Richard Bushman, preeminent American historian and award-winning biographer, is a brave man. Throughout a storied career spanning five decades, he has successfully navigated the shifting boundaries of faith and skepticism and today stands as the de facto doyen of Mormon history. His newest publication, a carefully crafted “diary” of the months immediately following the release of his magnum opus, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, is, in part, a sometimes bracingly honest account of the creative person’s struggles with the burdens of ego. It is also a judicious, self-aware portrait of a compassionate, fair-minded man whose championing of belief and reason animate and compel his own occasionally tortured embrace of life.

Bushman knows that the publication of a confessional invites a particular kind of personalized consideration, one that engages the reader in a Rorschach-like dialogue with the author. To Bushman’s credit, it is an invitation he does not shy away from. In fact, given his own interest in psychologically informed history, that he encourages such an approach should probably not be surprising. Of course, publication also puts reviewers—critics and defenders alike—on notice of his works, including the present “autobiography”: You and I both know, he seems to tell us, that history (and biography), even at its best, is an impossible task, and the act of reading often reveals as much about the reader as about the writer.

In the summer of 2005, Glen Nelson (head of the New York City-based Mormon Artists Group) sensed that something important was underway and suggested to Bushman that he “keep a running commentary on my experiences as *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* came off the press later in the fall” (4). Thus, Bushman explains, modestly, “it seemed fitting to make a record of my own to deposit in the great trough where the raw materials of the world’s history are kept” (4). “I have a tendency to be too be [sic] diffident and overly modest,” he later confesses, then adds wryly: “Claudia hates that” (18). (Claudia is his wife.) “The diary,” he continues, “is raw material for someone else to comprehend. I feel like a player in the Mormon cultural scene who only vaguely knows his part” (4). The resulting first-person narrative covers the period from July 2005, when Bushman and his wife deliver the formidable 900-page manuscript to New York publisher Alfred A. Knopf, to late May 2006, concluding with a spirited panel discussion of the
Bushman writes knowing he will be read, and fully appreciates the value of calculated disclosure. He does not describe his own editing methods in transforming the “original” form to the published—how he decided what to include and what to omit (if anything), and decisions about the final wording. He intentionally situates himself as “always the historian and always the Mormon” (33) and terms Rough Stone Rolling his “brain child” (36). Currently serving as a stake patriarch, he spells out his stance: “Because I am a believer, I am not driven to find naturalistic explanations for Joseph’s emergence as a prophet” (46). This, of course, begs the question he does not address: Are believers driven to find supernaturalistic explanations? He sees himself as neither apologist nor cynic, a dichotomy that probably says much about his view of the world: “I have told the story as I see it. I haven’t bent the evidence. I have tried to see the world as Joseph Smith saw it” (6). He describes his approach as “empathetic” (28) and insists that his overriding concern “was how to make Joseph intelligible to all kinds of readers, not to confront them in battle” (56). “I tried to look at everything,” he says, “and then tell the truth as I saw it” which, as already mentioned, is as a believer. “Lots of people will disagree with where I came down, but I did the best I could as an historian and as a Latter-day Saint” (52).

Speaking as a believer, Bushman asserts, “It is possible that Joseph’s inspiration led him to interpret the ancient text [of the Book of Mormon] for a modern audience, for that is what all prophets do” (9). He believes in Joseph’s book, not because it is necessarily a factual history of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica (though he does not discount that perspective), but rather because “we find God in its pages—or inspiration, or comfort, or scope” (10). “The Book of Mormon inspires me, and so I hold on. Reason is too frail to base a life on. . . . I think it is far better to go where goodness lies” (10). Again: “What attracts me most strongly is the inspiration I find in the text itself” (75). And of Mormonism in general: “The Mormons are not the only source of light. Christ radiates throughout the world, through many voices. We need only to listen to one to set our foot on the right path” (40).

Years before Rough Stone Rolling, Bushman attempted another history of the Mormon Prophet, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism, which he completed in 1979. Though sponsored by the LDS Church as part of Leonard J. Arrington’s History Division’s sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history project, Bushman’s story of Smith’s early years was eventually published by the University of Illinois Press in 1984 after the Church withdrew its support of the mammoth series. Ten years later, in 1994, Ronald K. Esplin of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University (dismembered in September 2006) proposed to Bushman that he tackle a full-length biography of Smith. In considering the invitation,
Bushman says he realized that no biography “portrayed Joseph Smith’s religiosity or paid much attention to his thought” (1). He sensed early that the most troubling aspects—to believers—of Smith’s life are probably “the violence in Missouri and polyandry” (51), but became increasingly convinced that “we have to get these facts out to be dealt with; otherwise we are in a vulnerable position. It may be my job to bring the whole of Joseph’s story into the open. . . . We are not hiding anymore” (52; also 65).

Beginning the daunting project, Bushman asked for and received a blessing from Elder Boyd K. Packer (21), an intriguing choice given Packer’s well-known criticism of the New Mormon History (of which Rough Stone Rolling partakes freely). Bushman knows—but does not draw attention to it—that mentioning his visit with Packer places both men in an unexpected light. During their meeting, Packer handed him photocopies of the introduction to Frederic Farrar’s classic 1874 Life of Christ. Bushman notes that Packer “proposed Farrar’s attitude as a model for a believing historian” (22). Years later, as he now contemplates returning the favor and giving Packer a copy of his published biography, Bushman wonders if the senior apostle will conclude that he has “lived up to the Farrar standard” (22). For himself, Bushman assures readers he feels confident that, “insofar as I was worthy,” Packer’s blessing—the exact nature of which is never explained—was largely fulfilled (21).

Perhaps his only regret, Bushman says, is that he wished he had explored Smith’s thought more thoroughly (2), and then decides, “It could have been better with five years more work” (21). As he reviews his final set of corrections to the page proofs in July 2005, Bushman is generally pleased with the writing, but despite his editor’s emphatic instructions—“no rewriting!!!!!!!”—admits: “Of course, I could not resist a few stylistic alterations” (5). He also expresses appreciation for Jed Woodworth’s role as an “excellent copy editor who improved virtually every paragraph and raised questions about the argument in virtually every chapter” (3). He even calls Woodworth “my co-author” (7), a generous overstatement since Woodworth is not credited as such on the book’s title page, which reads: “in association with Jed Woodworth.”

As he labored on the biography, Bushman remembers: “I felt like a person sitting by a fire in the woods in the dark night. Out of the dark forest, figures emerged into the light. Where they came from, I could not say. . . . I hope that inspiration played a part in forming the figures who appeared. . . . I believe the Holy Spirit can help all of us to get the right ideas” (21). Later, while fine-tuning a presentation he would deliver on aspects of Smith’s life to a largely non-LDS audience, he adds: “Once again I feel inspiration working through revision, by which I mean help from heaven coming in small increments which I carry out in time” (26). He explains that he came to adopt—evidently as a response to the depression he sometimes struggles
with (more on this below)—as his daily “mantra”: “Today I will be a follower of Jesus Christ” (26): “The words bring me into focus and close the doors on extraneous excursions that lead into silliness and frivolity on the one hand or gloom on the other. What’s more I get useful ideas that seem to come from nowhere” (26). While Bushman no doubt intends this confession of inspiration as testimony, he must also expect that some readers—myself included—will wonder about the value of publicly invoking divine favor for a work he knows to be of some controversy.

Waiting for the first books to come off the press, Bushman calculates that Knopf must sell at least 15,000 copies to recoup its author’s advance before Bushman will begin to make money. (Once again, Bushman should know that this figure will invite speculation about his advance, which, based on the information he provides, was probably around $20,000-$25,000.) He also tends to keep a running total of orders, print runs, and the book’s sales ranking on amazon.com. He is impressed to find that his biography is out-selling Martha Stewart’s newest book (57). While he is interested in royalties and knows how he will spend them (to pay off two mortgages on a house he owns in Provo, Utah), he uses sales figures to gauge the book’s reception, a preoccupation that he realizes is “mainly vanity” (36). He is flattered to learn that the LDS Church-owned Deseret Book has advance-ordered 10,000 copies and plans to hold an author’s reception in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in downtown Salt Lake City (5). However, when he is later informed that the locale has been changed, he protests that he is “not surprised and really not disappointed. Having a reception in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building comes too close to an official endorsement, something the Church cannot and should not give” (26).

As he anticipates reader response, he wonders if Mormons will be “surprised or put off” by his “warts and all” treatment and conclude he has “abandoned the faith” (5, 77, 3). After some initial positive comments, however, he is hopeful that “Mormons may be more accepting than I had thought” (14). But later he vacillates, then fears—erroneously—that he will probably be ignored: “I realize a new biography of JS does not register with many Saints. They know his life; why read 500 pages to learn what they already know?” (38). He expects that the non-Mormon, especially scholarly, response will be “mixed” (6) and asks if Mormon liberals are going to wave the biography “under the noses of their conservative fellow members and say ‘I told you so?’” (7). (Though he treats both conservatives and liberals with an equally critical eye, his personal sympathies clearly lie—at least as I read him—with the former; though I suspect he would say I am being simplistic.)

When the first review (by Jeffrey Needle on the Association for Mormon Letters listserve) appears and is positive, a curious self-deprecating defensiveness surfaces. Bushman records that he “did not want to read the review,
even after the laudatory opening paragraph. I feel uncomfortable being examined in public, for good or ill. I can see I have to become hardened” (6). And later: “I realize I don’t like to read any kind of reviews, even the favorable ones. I am annoyed by what the reviewers choose to emphasize in Joseph’s life. Most of them pick up a few fragments and present them as if they were the key elements. There is something so cavalier about the implicit assertion that they have delivered the essence of the man” (21). Even so, he frankly admits to liking the positive reviews—“little buzz[es] of pleasure” (15), he calls them: “Karl [a son] said it [Rough Stone Rolling] is a page-turner, music to my ears since I tried to make it readable and interesting” (25). He also quotes, bemusedly, another reader who “compared it to Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’” (37).

Yet Bushman senses that “each of these little bits of praise reminds me that I will be subject to public humiliation too” (16). “Why do I care about this?” he asks. Not for himself, he answers: “I worry that my friends in the church will see their friend and champion struck down and bleeding. They may be crushed when they see that I cannot vanquish the disbelievers. They will lament the foul treatment and sympathize, but they will be less courageous as a result. They may worry that they may be hurt too. If they cannot be protected in their faith, are they safe? This will be a minuscule event in their faith history but it troubles me nonetheless. I have always feared that I will disappoint people” (17; and 23: the “old fear of disappointing”). Eventually he reassures himself, and us, that he is acclimating to the reviews: “I will be relieved to get out of the spotlight, but it is getting less uncomfortable. When people praise the book, I just let it roll off. I hope I can bear the criticism as well” (28).

As much as he may enjoy the positive reviews, Bushman is annoyed, frustrated, and disappointed with what he terms “the cynicism of so many readers. They must have a Joseph who is at least part scoundrel” (11). In response to non-Mormons who think he is “too sympathetic, bordering on the apologetic,” Bushman consoles himself that it is not his book they dislike: “In my heart of hearts, I say to myself, you don’t like it [Rough Stone Rolling] because you don’t like Joseph Smith. You want him to be an impostor and a scoundrel, and when I make him something more, you conclude I am an apologist. . . . Joseph Smith is simply too far off the map for serious consideration. Anyone who tries to bring him back on the map must be a partisan” (29). Later: “The people who think him a fraud can’t get beyond that judgment to assess him as a man. I am resigned to accepting this fact of life” (42). Again: “Those who think him a fraud can stop investigating and basically stop thinking. They don’t have to know more because they know enough already” (43). Finally: “I think . . . I am digging up the many layers of suspicion bordering on scorn. We [Mormons] get treated politely most of the time, so we live under the illusion Joseph is looked on respectfully. My serious effort
to present him as a notable and honorable man brings out the hidden disrespect. I still am searching for the curious reader who is willing to be impressed by Joseph’s achievements, but such a person may never show his face” (53). At one—evidently low—point, he even compares himself to Smith, who got “lambasted in very public places, . . . so why not me?” (20).

He also worries about the reaction from the Church’s leading authorities. “I can see resistance,” he writes, “on the grounds of my becoming too much of an authority on the Prophet. Whether or not they agree with the book, the General Authorities don’t like someone like me taking control of interpretation. They objected to FARMS [Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies] on those grounds after they seemed to be monopolizing Book of Mormon interpretation. The Brethren become uneasy when someone gets too many readers” (16). He decides to send a copy of the book to Elder Jeffery R. Holland, a supporter who Bushman hopes “can give the Authorities his reaction” (16), thus helping—hopefully—to prime the pump. After October 2005’s LDS general conference, he contemplates the challenges facing Mormon leaders of running a worldwide church and then in comparison “how far out on the edge of things I and my little book are. One tiny stroke in the whole picture” (27). “I hope,” he later adds, “I don’t cause the General Authorities too much trouble. They doubtless are getting shocked reports from conservatives. I would not want this to lead to debates among themselves and needless fears. I am confident that in the long run the book will prove useful” (52). Toward the end, he seems resigned: “The book exists and will do its work whatever happens. People will mull over the facts about Joseph and eventually accommodate even the tough parts. In the end we will be more stable for having assimilated all this material. I may get beat up a little along the way; it goes with writing about Joseph Smith. But the book will do its work” (55).

As Bushman knows, such confessions speak directly to his state of mind. He candidly owns to having a “sensitive temperament” (56) and to battling anxiety (18). He sometimes finds his “stomach in a knot” (21) and suffers periodically from “bouts of depression interspersed with a strange lassitude” (55), and what I tend to read as questions centering on self-worth and paranoid fears. He worries about negative non-Mormon reaction, confesses to “read[ing] trouble into nothing” (19), and fears that Knopf “is pulling back a tad . . . not promoting the book as hard as they promised to do at first” (19), leaving him “dangling on my own” (19), afraid that the “biography will be for the Latter-day Saints and no one else” (19). He realizes that such “reactions have brought out the peculiarities of my character. . . . My great fear is disappointment. I am supposed to deliver and don’t. That is the explanation for the false modesty that covers my vanity. I don’t want to appear bigger than I am for fear of disappointing” (20). And later notes: “When I wake with
pain in my heart, my mind starts reviewing the problems and seeking a

closer focus on Christ” (61).

By mid-October 2005, he begins to receive letters from some troubled
Mormon readers, and tries to respond personally: “I am not able to quiet all
their apprehensions but say what I can. We have to live with perplexities”
(34). He knows he is “asking a lot from church members. They want confir-
mation of their standard beliefs and I am forcing them to look at sides of Jo-
seph’s character they won’t like. Forced to choose between me and their own
ideas, I come out on the short end. They are better off for knowing these
things, but the transition to a fact-based understanding of the Prophet will
be painful. I just have to keep calm. I can see that I may have already passed
the high point of my popularity” (59). He bolsters his own resolve: “I need to
be perfectly honest when I speak, saying only what I believe and can truth-
fully speak before any audience, no matter how critical” (61). “I need not be
embarrassed about my Mormonism,” he tells himself; “it is a fact of my life. I
think it would relieve everyone to get this out on the table” (76). Such decla-
rations, he feels, “don’t assert that every[one] must accept my truth; they call
it my truth, implying you can have your truth. I am simply presenting my
point of view, take it or leave it. The advantage of listening to my point of
view is that you can come to understand what it was like to be Mormon or to
be Joseph Smith” (76).

When the “euphoria” eventually “fad[es]” (45), Bushman, more mel-
lowed, begins to appreciate that overall the book “is far more successful
among Mormons than I dared expect. I still worry that readers will be disap-
pointed as they read further. Mormons will be shocked by my revelations of
Joseph’s character; non-Mormons will think I am too partisan. I remain
wary. At the same time, the confidence base is firming up” (41). He decides
of the negative reviews: “The book must fend for itself. Reviews come and go
but the book can never be destroyed. It will sit on the shelf and speak to read-
ers for many years to come” (44). The “best defense to is remain unfazed”
(46). “Everyone is so hung up on the question of his [Smith’s] prophetic au-
thenticity,” he writes several weeks later, “that the new must bear on that is-
ssue or it does not count. Previously unexplored areas of his character, or a
new conception of his prophetic role, or a new explication of his doctrine is
not enough. As I wrote, I myself felt the lack of an overarching conception of
his character and career. . . . I feel strangely inhibited in locating some core
interpretive structure. I can’t seem to settle on anything. Is it my lack of im-
agination and analytical force, or am I being protected from making an error?”
(54). “I have a tendency,” he subsequently acknowledges, “to moan about the
inability of scholars to go along with my suspension of disbelief and com-
plain about the failure of secular minds to appreciate Joseph Smith. I think I
am secretly asking for pity. You don’t understand how hard it is for me, I
seem to be saying. Such whimpering is never good” (70).

By mid-February 2006, he is “ready to move on to other things” (69) and, with 66,000 copies in print (70,000 by May 2006; 80,000 by January 2007), he is relieved to come “to the conclusion that this is a phenomenon not just a successful book. I seem to have struck a chord. People were ready for this kind of Joseph Smith” (70). “After all these years of studying Joseph’s life,” he discovers toward the end of his narrative, “I believe more than ever” (72). He ends with a relieved account of the divided panel discussion of the book during that month’s Mormon History Association meetings in Wyoming (79–80).

Generally, Bushman reveals himself as a charitable, thoughtful, prudent man. He usually treats those writers (and reviewers) with whom he disagrees with civility, even respect. However, in two places he seems to adopt a stance that, at least as I read him, challenges the image of himself that I think emerges in his diary. In the first, during a reception for *Rough Stone Rolling* in late October 2005 in a Salt Lake City bookstore, he refers to historian Will Bagley as “the old gadfly” (38). In reference to no one else is Bushman so dismissive. In the second instance, Bushman writes in the epilogue entitled “The Balancing Act” (originally prepared for the on-line journal *Common-Place*) that unbelieving biographers—by whom he means Fawn Brodie and Dan Vogel—allow their disbelief in supernatural religious claims to “dampen this kind of inquiry, and for good reason. People with little concern for the plight of slaves do not scour the sources for clues to slave lives; and skeptics about Mormonism do not work at penetrating the mind of a pretended Prophet. It is less a question of intellectual perspicuity than of motivation” (82). The pairing of skepticism regarding Joseph Smith’s truth claims with a disinterest in the plight of African American slaves—to show how such predispositions may disincline one from exploring various aspects of his subjects—seems intentionally prejudicial. To my mind, it is like pairing acceptance of Smith’s visions with a belief in flying saucers to show how such faith opens one up to a broader spectrum of insights. I suspect that believers in Smith—or in flying saucers—might object to the analogy. While I think the point Bushman is making (the extent to which our beliefs may limit our perspectives) is interesting, he easily could have chosen another, less charged, analogy but for some reason did not.

No doubt I am mistaken or overly sensitive in my reading of Bushman, since my own experience with him shows the opposite. In early October 2005, shortly after *Rough Stone Rolling* appeared, I sent Bushman a letter expressing concern about his brief portrayal in it of Signature Books, Smith Research Associates, and the Smith-Pettit Foundation, three organizations of which I have some direct knowledge. I wrote that I was worried that readers, based on his description, would come to incorrect conclusions regard-
ing the organization, relationship, and activities of these enterprises. Shortly afterward, he responded kindly, then in May 2006, informed me that he was gathering corrections and invited me to rewrite the description in his book, provided only that I maintain the same number of typeset lines. I returned the corrected paragraph to him; and while the corrections have not yet been made, I much appreciated the magnanimity of the gesture. It is generosity of this nature that I most associate with Richard Bushman and, the impression of him most readers of his diary will probably have as they finish.


Reviewed by Robert M. Hogge

“I don’t want you to publish this book” (ix). Hugh Nibley’s declaration to his son Alex, the co-author, should not be surprising. Ordinary World War II veterans who have witnessed the vicious atrocities of front-line action on the battlefield and miraculously survived, not once but several times, usually returned home silenced and subdued by the waste land created by the Nazi Third Reich. “Everything happens to Nibley, and nothing ever happens to him,” commented Zilske, Nibley’s first sergeant (194). So it was only with a great deal of persuasion that Alex finally received his father’s permission to publish this book.

The memoir is, in many ways, an example of popular modernist literature, using a cinematic technique. Based upon interviews with his father fifty years after the war, limited prewar and postwar letters, and sparse self-censored diary entries, Alex assembled them and extrapolated fragments into a chronological narrative, a style of writing known as dramatic montage—interrupted, supplemented, even occasionally corrected by other images, along with a wide range of voices, resulting in a fun-to-experience
"documentary film memoir." 1

In his use of the dramatic montage, Alex assembles a variety of troubling anti-Jewish perspectives. He first quotes from a witty letter his father wrote in 1941 about Joseph Goebbels, German Nazi propaganda minister and ardent anti-Semite, who discovered from an archivist “the painful information that his family tree was to be examined not in the city archives but in those of the Synagogue” (17). Then Alex juxtaposes the Nibley ancestry with Goebbels’s discovery: “There’s an extra layer of irony in Nibley’s joke about Goebbels’ Jewish genealogy. In his letter Hugh Nibley threatens ‘personal violence’ to anybody who would accuse him of being Jewish. But, as he knew perfectly well, he had at least as much Jewish blood as Goebbels, since his own great-grandfather was a Jew. Alexander Neibaur, the first Jew to convert to Mormonism, was the first dentist to arrive in the Utah Territory and the maker of Brigham Young’s dentures” (17). Hugh Nibley, a pacifist, would execute “personal violence” only rhetorically with a small cadre of intellectuals interested more in debating fashionable issues than in creating scapegoats to further the goals of the Third Reich.

At this point in the narrative, Alex inserts a sidebar, entitled “Hitler’s Inspiration,” to interrupt the tedious anti-Jewish tirade of the next writer in the collage, Henry Ford Sr., reminding us that a young Adolf Hitler, while in prison, read Ford’s The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem, a salacious source for his own book Mein Kampf (19). It should be painfully embarrassing for Americans to realize that one of our most influential industrialists helped transform a youthful Hitler who was “horrified at disparaging remarks about Jews” (22) into a fanatical warmonger, the creator of the Holocaust.

The book contains ten chapters followed by an epilogue. The first chapter provides some necessary prewar background information on Hugh Nibley: a Mormon missionary to Germany (1927–29); a doctorate in history from the University of California at Berkeley (1938); and a lecturer in history, philosophy, education, Greek, and German at various colleges in California (1939–42). Other chapters describe his enlistment in the U.S. Army in 1942 as a private; his weather observer training at Chanute Field, Illinois; and his transfer to the Military Intelligence Training Center, Camp Ritchie.

1This technique is reminiscent of that perfected by John Dos Passos, an American novelist, in his U.S.A. trilogy of the 1930s, using the experimental devices of the camera eye, biographies, and newsreels both to interrupt and to supplement the main narrative. Alex also assisted in the video documentary of his father: The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley, directed by Brian R. Capener (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University/Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1985).
Maryland, where he completed two training programs and was promoted to the rank of master sergeant. Soon after arriving in England, he was assigned to the U.S. 101st Airborne (“Screaming Eagles”) where he conducted training sessions on German strategy and tactics. Later he drove one of the first jeeps onto Utah Beach during the Allied invasion of France (June 6, 1944), planned for and participated in the disastrous Operation Market-Garden invasion of Holland, and served in counter-intelligence in the Ardennes. He spent the occupation in Luxemburg, Belgium, Paris, and Heidelberg, returned to the United States, and was discharged at Fort MacArthur, California, on November 19, 1945.\(^2\)

After three years of loyal service in World War II, Hugh Nibley sought solace and “the long-delayed joys of solitude” (303), going through his own rituals of purification in Zion Canyon, near Hurricane, Utah. Writing to his friend Paul Springer, he said he was trying “to get as far from the post-war world as circumstances will allow” (302). Then he went to work, married, fathered a large family, and became the most prominent religious scholar at Brigham Young University, a defender of the faith.

Those reading about Hugh Nibley for the first time will find him “a walking jigsaw puzzle” (10), an engaging intellect, a man for all contradictions (youthful anti-Semitism, Jewish ancestry, and, with more experience, an ardent anti-racist), a critic of the war, and an observer. And even for Nibliophiles, there are a few nuggets to savor. He’s a man of paradox; Truman Madsen, a university colleague, later commented: “Is he a cynic and a pessimist with all kinds of negative things to say? Yes. Is he an optimist, an idealist with great hope for the future? Yes” (323). Although Alex’s cinematic technique has its appeal, other voices often overshadow Hugh Nibley’s: Dave Grossman on personal kills; Gwynne Dyer on firestorms; Stephen Ambrose on Jewish slave laborers who sabotaged German artillery shells; Winston Churchill on altering written history in a pro-British way; and Joseph Borkin on his exposé of the unsavory commercial relationship between Standard Oil of New Jersey and the giant German conglomerate I. G. Farben.

And, in some sections of the memoir, Hugh Nibley seems to disappear altogether because, according to Alex, the little snippets of information his father provided were “never enough to get a sense of what really went on” (323). For example, in Chapter 10, Sergeant Nibley travels during the occupation, returns home, and then, discharged from the U. S. Army, goes into seclusion while Alex focuses, in great detail, on the Nuremberg trial with

particular emphasis on Gustave Gilbert, the court psychologist, observing
the behavior of some of the prisoners: Hermann Goering, Rudolph Hess,
and Joachim von Ribbentrop.

The memoir is an action-oriented and well-researched documentary
about the development of U.S. Army Intelligence just before and during
World War II. But here is the central irony. We see what happens to Hugh
Nibley. And we see what he does. But we see only suggestions of who he is—a
man of integrity who lives his beliefs even when others of his faith fall into
dissipation—and what he really thinks—“Deep and devious thoughts ooze
through the dark phantasmagoric caverns of my twisted mind as I explore
the twilight zones of subhuman experience” (285). But those of us who have
read him through the years value him and know what he becomes.

ROBERT M. HOGGE {rhogge@weber.edu}, a retired career officer in
the U.S. Air Force and past president of the Association for Mormon
Letters, is a professor of English at Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

and Martin Handcart Pioneers*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006. xi, 540
8624-8

*Reviewed by Marshall Hamilton*

The outlines of the history of the two ill-fated handcart companies from
late 1856 are fairly well known. Almost a thousand emigrants, almost all
from Britain and Denmark, left late in the season from Florence, Ne-
braska, headed for Zion in the Salt Lake Valley. But winter storms inter-
vened, and they were stranded in Wyoming, with little protection against
the cold and with their provisions exhausted. They ran the risk of death
by starvation, exhaustion, and exposure to sub-zero temperatures. Help
was sent from Utah to rescue them, and the majority of the pioneers sur-
vived to reach Utah, although many of the survivors suffered the grief of
lost family members and physical disabilities: frostbite, amputations, and
other injuries.

In the last few years, these two companies—the Willie and Martin
handcart companies—have been much on the Church radar screen. General
conference talks, including President Gordon B. Hinckley’s major address at

---

3See [various editors], *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, 16 vols. (Salt Lake
October 2006 general conference, have recounted aspects of the journey and of the rescue. The Church owns some property and acquired a long-term lease from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management on other Wyoming sites where some of the pioneers sought shelter. Monuments and visitor centers help interpret the journey of the two companies. And youth conferences every summer haul handcarts along segments of the trail, giving the youth a feeling for some of the difficulties of the pioneer experience.

While recent comments generally concentrate on the rescue, in which Mormons from the Salt Lake Valley set out on an overland journey of hundreds of miles in bitter cold and early snows, other efforts in handcart misery scholarship have discussed the entire journey. Among the notable historians who have contributed to that scholarship are Wallace Stegner, B. H. Roberts, LeRoy and Ann Hafen, and Leonard Arrington and Rebecca Cornwall.

Now comes Andrew Olsen, manager of Curriculum Editing for the Church, with a new book promising the extraordinary story of the Willie and Martin handcart companies. He follows each company chronologically, starting in England, traversing the Atlantic, and moving overland to Iowa City and Florence, Nebraska. Quotations from journals and memoirs from members of the two companies are interstitched by Olsen’s explanatory notes.


> Ann Rowley was a widow who emigrated with her seven children and one stepdaughter from her husband’s first marriage. Part of her commitment to get to Zion was to “be among the people of my faith and [to] get the Temple work done for us.”

> The Rowleys suffered the same privations as everyone else on the journey. Ann explained how they endured the hunger, the illness, the exhaustion, the cold: [. . .] “I always thought, I shall be the happiest person, if I could reach Zion with all my children alive,” Ann wrote. It was not to be, however, as her stepdaughter died the day the first winter storm arrived. “Her long journey was at an end, but ours had a long way yet to go,” Ann wrote. Three days later when crossing Rocky Ridge, Ann’s two oldest sons, including 15-year-old John, whom she had relied on most heavily, were being overwhelmed by the exposure. Ann recalled:

> “In traveling at night, in the frost of that altitude, [10-year-old] Thomas’ right hand froze while he was pushing on the back of the cart, and when we stopped at night and his hand got warm, it swelled up . . . like a toad. John could finally go no farther, and I felt my heart would break as I saw him laying beside the trail, waiting for the sick wagon. By the time he was picked up, his body was frozen in two places. That night 12 people died, and the next morning 3 people joined them.” (153–54)
The quotations from many of the recollections are literate and sensitive in capturing the plight of hundreds of people who were not sure if they would survive, or if they would freeze to death, starve to death, or fall prey to a fatal accident. Olsen balances these accounts of faith and steadfastness with even-handed discussions of critical problems with the emigration. Patience Loader of the Martin Company recalled feelings that pulling handcarts would be degrading: “I could not see it right . . . to do such a humiliating thing. To be . . . harnessed up like cattle and pull a handcart loaded up with our bedding, cooking utensils, and our food and clothing and have to go through different towns to be looked at and made fun of as I knew we would be was very hurtful to my feelings” (30).

Another contribution is its comprehensive chronology for each company. Olsen also includes biographical notes about Willie and Martin, and of the captains of hundreds—six for Willie’s and two for Martin’s company. These biographies help supply context for the effort of the immigration.

Olsen does not hesitate to dispel the cherished myth that none of the surviving pioneers ever apostatized from the Church. Among others, Olsen documents that a sub-captain of a hundred in the Willie Company, John Ahmanson, left Salt Lake City after just a few months, and published an exposé of Mormonism in his native Danish language.

But there are flaws in the book. Because it is organized with separate chronologies for the two companies, some events which affected both groups are repeated twice—in some cases, more than twice. Olsen’s explanations, rather than smoothing the repetition, sometimes are also just repeated almost verbatim. At times, I wasn’t sure if I had read an account of a given incident in an earlier chapter, or if I was remembering a passage from some other book on the handcart companies. For example, in addition to quoting from Rowley’s account (above), Olsen also alludes to her five more times in almost identical language:

Ann Rowley was a widow who was emigrating with her seven children and one stepdaughter from her husband’s first marriage. (41)

For even the poorest of the handcart pioneers, such as Ann Rowley, a widow traveling with eight children, the luggage limit of 17 pounds meant leaving behind things they valued greatly. (65)

Ann Rowley, a widow who had eight children to feed, felt a mother’s pain in their hunger. (113)

Ann Rowley was a widow who emigrated with her seven children and one stepdaughter from her husband’s first marriage. (153)

Ann Rowley was a widow who was emigrating with her seven children and one stepdaughter from her husband’s first marriage. (195)

The book includes a six-page bibliography, a valuable tool for a re-
searcher who wants to learn more about the handcart companies and about
the Church’s reaction to it. But it is oddly incomplete. While there are two
pages of listings of unpublished journals, diaries, papers, and recollections, I
did not see a reference to the unpublished “The Story of My Life” by Michael
Jensen, my wife’s great-grandfather and a survivor of the Willie Company.
Since it is easily available (Church’s Family History Library in Salt Lake City
and Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo), I was left to wonder
what other works might be missing and what Olsen’s criteria were for includ-
ing some works and omitting others.

And I have a bigger concern about this book. Some readers feel that
it is unfair to hold an author to a higher standard than that which the au-
thor sets for himself or herself. In this case, the book is presented with what
I think are exaggerated claims. The dust jacket calls it “the most compre-
hensive and accessible account of these pioneers’ epic 1856 journey. . . .
Nor does the author flinch from difficult questions about the late migra-
tion of 1856. Based on thorough research into the diaries and other con-
temporaneous accounts of the handcart emigrants, the author’s thought-
ful examination of these and other questions provides important insights
as it builds faith.”

William Hartley praises it, also on the dust jacket: “The narration
moves smoothly and addresses challenging issues thoughtfully.” I have al-
ready identified what I consider to be glitches in the narrative smoothness.
But my real problem is with those “challenging issues.”

Someone who sets out to publish a book, especially a history, needs to
anticipate reasonable questions and strive to answer them. In the case of the
handcart companies, there is an elephant-in-the-living-room question that
Olsen never comes close to asking, much less answering. I think this book is
much weaker than it should be because he does not make that effort.

The “elephant” is the shameful effort by Church leaders, especially
LDS mission president Franklin D. Richards and his counselor John Jaques
in Liverpool, Iowa City emigration leader Daniel Spencer, and George D.
Grant and William H. Kimball in Florence, Nebraska, to urge the handcart
companies to press on to Utah in late 1856.

Hundreds of emigrants, who could not have known what they faced in
terms of terrain, weather, Indian attacks, or food shortages, heard pleas from
Levi Savage, an experienced frontiersman, not to go west so late in the season.
According to Savage’s diary, Captain James Willie was “evidently dissatisfied
(with Savage’s warnings), and said that the God he served was a God that was
able to save to the uttermost, . . . and he wanted no Job’s comforters with him”
(81). William Kimball then delivered a speech in which “he sternly rebuked
those of little faith, and he promised that he would ‘stuff into his mouth all the
snow they would ever get to see on their journey to the valleys!’”(83)
The empty encouragement and false promises from their leaders persuaded the Willie Company to leave Florence on August 16, 1859, with disastrous consequences. Depending on the source, between sixty-seven and seventy-seven from that company died en route.

Without discussing the responsibility of Jaques, Spencer, Grant, and Kimball, Olsen gives Franklin Richards a pass, saying that his "character" was inconsistent with fraudulent motivational tactics (94). Brigham Young freely blamed Richards: "A spirit of pride and arrogance is what had caused 'men and women to die on the Plains, by scores'" (167). In speaking of Daniel Spencer and Franklin Richards, Young commented, "I do not know that I will attach blame to either of them," but promptly continued in the next sentence: "But if, while at the Missouri river [Florence], they had received a hint from any person on this earth, or if even a bird had chirped it in the ears of Brothers Richards and Spencer, they would have known better than to rush men, women, and children on to the prairie in the autumn months . . . to travel over a thousand miles. [If] they would have stopped and considered for one moment, they would have stopped those men, women, and children there until another year" (291). Olsen suggests that Richards's numerous and lengthy missions should absolve him of any real blame for the deaths (168–71).

The question of responsibility is a complex and difficult one, but it merits thorough and thoughtful consideration. Instead, Olsen makes comments like this: "Even among those who died, there was a kind of triumph. Most who paid with their lives 'lay down with their faces Zion-ward, in full faith and fellowship'" (p. 470). Trivializing suffering and loss in this manner hardly seems to be giving them the honor they deserve.

The suffering is especially tragic when it appears to stem from the "unrighteous dominion" exerted by Church leaders. Those leaders abandoned persuasion, long-suffering, meekness, and such, and resorted to questioning the faith of anyone who would challenge their advice, regardless of how well-founded those questions might be.

Such willingness to sidestep assigning responsibility is, in my judgment, incompatible with the author’s attempt to provide a witness of the power of faith and sacrifice. In short, this book’s most glaring weakness is its author’s real refusal to honor the sacrifice of life, limb, and health by the pioneers. Such honor would require an accounting of those who sent them on a fatal errand. Despite the book’s title, the price they paid was much higher than the price we paid. But if the Church cannot admit to and learn from its mistakes, others down the road may be forced to pay similar high prices.

MARSHALL HAMILTON [Marshall@fred.net] is the proprietor of Harpers Ferry Books, a used and rare bookshop in historic Harpers
Ferry, West Virginia. His main interest in Mormon history is the Nauvoo period. An earlier version of the review was posted on the Association for Mormon Letters listserv (AML-List) on January 23, 2007, http://mailman.xmission.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/aml-list.


Reviewed by Jad Allen Mills


Hatch begins with an analysis of the psychology and motivations of what he calls the “Southern Mind” and by explaining how central Mormon tenets and practices tended to clash with this mindset. Hatch then introduces a cycle of “Reciprocal Retaliation” as his model for understanding Mormon non-Mormon conflicts in the South. Chapter 3 briefly recounts the Church’s Missouri period (1833–39) in terms of this cycle, with each party violently lashing out to redress perceived wrongs.

Chapter 4 picks up almost twenty years later with the May 1857 murder of Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas. This chapter serves as Hatch’s introduction to his climactic presentation in Chapter 5 of the massacre of the Fancher/Baker wagon train at Mountain Meadows in September of that year. Chapter 5 then overviews the effects of the massacre on Mormon missionary efforts in the South.

The book’s final five chapters detail five murders of Mormons by Southerners during the late nineteenth century: (1) Joseph Standing on July 21, 1879, in Whitfield County, Georgia; (2) the “Tennessee Massacre” at Cane Creek, Lewis County, that slew two missionaries (John H. Gibbs and William S. Berry) and two half-brothers in the family giving them shelter (Martin Condor and James Riley Hudson) on August 10, 1884; (3) Alma Pascoe Richards on August 2, 1888, in Lauderdale County, Mississippi; (4) George P. Canova on June 5, 1898, in Baker County, Florida; and (5) John Dempsey on August 16, 1900, in Mingo County, West Virginia.

In his preface, Hatch explains that his continued “interest in the Mor-
mons and their perplex [sic] religious views, in part due to family ties, has continued to haunt me” since graduate student days (i). Hatch extended his research about post-Civil War persecution of Mormons in the South to include Pratt’s murder and the Mountain Meadows Massacre because, “oddly, during my tenure at Utah State University, no mention was ever made, in or out of class, of the ‘Mountain Meadows Massacre’” (160). In his conclusion, Hatch describes his fascination with and perspective on Mormon history. “Even today, after thirty-five years of continuous study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, I never cease to be amazed at how little is known or understood about this church, its secular beliefs, rites of passage, spurious doctrines and violent history” (159). These motivations helped him to produce this “life’s work and a labor of love” (ii).

Hatch’s documentation is fairly extensive. The appendices, endnotes (mislabeled footnotes and comprising sixty-eight pages), bibliography, and index take up almost as many pages as the text of the book. His extensive citations in the Mountain Meadows Massacre chapter frequently reference Juanita Brooks’s classic *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987) and sometimes David L. Bigler’s *Forgotten Kingdom* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1998), but his most frequently cited sources are *The Confessions of John D. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry), a photomechanical reprint of the 1877 edition of *Mormonism Unveiled*, newspaper articles, numerous unpublished sources, and the unpublished John H. Gibbs diary. Although Will Bagley’s *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002) came out when Hatch’s project was already completed, he notes: “We apparently are of like minds” (iv). In addition, the bibliography references numerous interviews that Hatch conducted in 1964–65 and the 1990s. There are twenty-three pages of illustrations.

Throughout the book, Hatch is consistently sympathetic to those suffering at the hands of their fellow citizens, whether Mormon or Gentile and, for the most part, describes the suffering of victims on both sides without regard to personal biases. For example, his sympathies are definitely with the victims at the Haun’s Mill Massacre: “It was hardly a battle. The Mormons were completely surprised, caught unprepared, then were shot, shot at, cut down and butchered like cattle. Screaming women and children ran helter-skelter, some attempting to seek safety by crossing a walkway over the mill pond into the south woods” (40).

However, despite Hatch’s empathy for the victims, his explanation of the causes underlying the offenses committed by both sides frequently leads him to fault the Mormons. For example, the Battle of Crooked River “was brought about from the hysteria created when Mormons burned and pil-
laged several towns and villages, including Gallatin, Millport and Grindstone Fork in Daviess County” in retaliation for previous mistreatment in Carroll County (8). In addition to the governor’s extermination order, Hatch sees the “Mormon attack against the Missouri State Militia at Crooked River” as the direct cause of the Haun’s Mill Massacre (8).

From a historical perspective, positioning the Mountain Meadows Massacre in the early decades of almost a century of strained Southerner-Mormon relations is a very important context. Unfortunately, Hatch’s goal of unfolding the “violent history” of the Mormon Church frequently leads him to both understate the complexity and controversial nature of his “facts” and to overstate his degree of certainty.

In describing the Mountain Meadows Massacre, he initially concedes a lack of evidence that Brigham Young was implicated but explains this lack on an official cover-up: “For whatever reason, the Mormon church has a history of losing, changing wording, or misplacing important documents” (79). In his final conclusion, Hatch compensates for this evidentiary lack with even stronger allegations based on his own beliefs:

The Mormon Church has always denied that Brigham Young was involved in the massacre. My research has proved otherwise. Brigham Young was totally involved in the planning and implementation of the massacre; however, Young’s plans went astray, that is, the Indians proved unreliable, being unable to follow through with their instructions from Young. Thus, the Indians fell back upon their local Mormon agents to come to their assistance. The Mormons reluctantly did so, but only because their leadership knew that it was Young’s plan. It is preposterous to entertain that any high priesthood holder would give orders to kill 120, or more, human beings on their [sic] own authority regardless of cause unless those leaders knew beforehand that the prophet, or perhaps through his agent, the apostle, George Albert [sic] Smith, had so commanded. (163)

With the Mountain Meadows Massacre as a backdrop, Hatch details five post-Civil War attacks against Mormons committed in the South and speculates on the motives for each. Joseph Standing’s murder “was probably brought about by his own brazen and bravado behavior” (164). Rumors about sexual misconduct by one of the elders prompted the Cane Creek Massacre, probably by the Ku Klux Klan (135). Both Richards’s murderers and their motives are “unknown” (165). George Canova was the local branch president, and Hatch attributes his murder to his extreme position on Democratic Party politics. John Dempsey’s murderer was a Campbellite minister, prompted either by a personal dispute between the two or because of the minister’s hatred of the Mormons (154–55). Each of these stories is interesting and somewhat shrouded in mystery. They are presented mostly as continuing fallout from the Mountain Meadows Massacre.
Although this book touches on some important and troubling aspects of Mormon and American history, Hatch’s book fails to be a substantive or valuable contribution toward an objective analysis of the most controversial events it discusses. However, *When Push Came to Shove* does offer some interesting insights into how southern history and culture influenced Mormon-southern conflicts during Mormonism’s first century in the American South.

JAD ALLEN MILLS (jadmill@hotmail.com) grew up near Portland, Oregon. He and his wife, Kristen, currently live in Provo, Utah, where he is studying biochemistry and philosophy and preparing for law school.


Reviewed by Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp

In a painstakingly documented and elegant narrative, Kenneth Owens, the author of this latest volume in Will Bagley’s projected twenty-volume documentary series on Mormons in the American West, chronicles the participation of Mormons in the cataclysmic events surrounding the California gold rush, 1848–56. To see it as a limited story of regional importance, however, would be to miss its broader significance and scope. Owens’s skillful integration of original documents and historical context provides a readable and comprehensive roadmap of the region’s early years of discovery and settlement and also offers a portrait of the emerging relationship between Utah Mormons and their migratory brethren on the Pacific Coast.

The volume begins with the departure of the ship *Brooklyn* from New York in 1846, a journey that delivered the first group of LDS settlers to the Pacific Coast; it chronicles the tension-fraught and shifting relations between Saints in California and the newly established church in the Great Basin; and it culminates in memorializing Mormon participation in the gold rush in the late nineteenth century by some of the early participants. The volume is structured straightforwardly. After a brief introduction, its nine chapters interweave authorial commentary with selections from documents. Along the way, Owens gives us context for the excerpts, as well as lessons in archival research that will be of help to other researchers and of general interest to those curious about the afterlives of historical accounts. For exam-
ple, in prefatory comments to the account of Henry William Bigler, a member of the Mormon Battalion, Owens provides a lengthy explanation of the status of Bigler’s original diary (lost), the disposition of the one remaining remnant, and the fate of the various transcriptions Bigler made in the following years. In one of his extant accounts, later published in the *Juvenile Instructor,* “Bigler half-humorously assumed the pen name Henele Pikale, a transliterated Hawaiian version of his name that he brought back from missionary service in the Sandwich Islands.... Bigler added details and retrospective explanations that are missing in his other, more literal transcriptions” (82). Not only do such details demonstrate a prodigious capacity for research, but they also greatly enrich the story that Owens tells, drawing the reader into the life of characters both before and after their California sojourns. We are made conscious of the ongoing re-creation and narration of the California gold rush in the decades following the events.

Owens begins the narrative on the eve of the *Brooklyn’s* departure as Mormons in Nauvoo and on the eastern seaboard simultaneously set out to locate a safe haven for their religious experiment. That the ship with 240 men, women, and children embarked on the same day that the first contingent of migrants headed west from Illinois is no coincidence, the author reminds us. Indeed, it becomes an integral part of the story and presages the trajectory of the volume: The reader is continually reminded that the fate of California Mormons was intimately and literally bound up with the fortunes of the Church further east. That back story—of families separated, of Church offices filled from afar, and of the reminder of the deprivations of the early Utah settlement—continuously joined the interests of gold seekers with the destiny of the Mormon Zion.

The following chapters detail the arrival of Mormon Battalion members, the discovery of gold, the establishment of a mining community in the foothills, and the adventures of Mormon entrepreneurs in the booming mercantile centers of Sacramento and San Francisco (including welcome accounts of several Mormon women, a scarce commodity in a nearly all-male environment). Most noteworthy through all of the tumult of the era was the determination by Church members to regularize and regulate the religious community. This was no easy feat, with characters such as Samuel Brannan, a Church leader and businessman who aroused considerable internal opposition with his autocratic and controversial attempts to control the community. Although Brannan became the state’s first millionaire and ultimately abandoned the Church, leaving the community in the hands of more stable administrators, tensions between California Saints and the Utah Church continued. Increasing numbers of West Coast members did travel to Zion, either to reunite with families or to deliver oxen, horses, tools, seeds, and plant cuttings to their struggling brethren. Their migration opened up new
wagon roads across the Sierra Nevada and established valuable trade routes between Utah and the Pacific.

Meanwhile, Brigham Young and other Church leaders had to devise a policy that would clarify the official stance on the wealth being extracted in California. The lure of gold ran strong among the deprived and outcast Saints, and the first job of the leadership was to prevent a mass exodus to the West Coast. Their second, less public concern was to find ways to harness California profits for Zion’s welfare. As relations between the U.S. government and the Utah Mormons deteriorated in the 1850s, Young issued cautions and then appeals to the California Mormons, urging them to avoid the material temptations of “Babylon” and to help the community in Salt Lake. Owens carefully describes the balancing act required in Young’s approach as well as its long-term consequences:

In part, President Young used the example of California to help direct Zion’s society toward righteousness, portraying the rapidly developing region beyond the Sierra Nevada as the social and moral antithesis of the LDS heartland in Utah. At the same time . . . he saw California as a refuge for dissident members of the Mormon faith and a haven for those Saints who opposed for one reason or another his management of the Church. Brigham Young’s Zioncentric view of California as a hellish place set a powerful precedent not only for his LDS followers but also, in later years, for others who settled the interior West and adopted a similar jaundiced, illiberal view of the diverse society and mixed cultural ways that characterized the golden state. (244)

In a final reminder that the California gold rush ranked as one of the most significant and wide-reaching events of the nineteenth century, Owens concludes with the creation of memory among California Saints in subsequent decades, including a poignant description of the parade and celebration marking the fiftieth anniversary of the gold discovery. Four aged Mormon pioneers were transported from Utah for the occasion in 1898. They posed for pictures, signed autographs, and occupied prominent seats in the parade. But despite those fleeting attentions, Owens reminds us, Mormons had been written out of the state histories and other official narratives of the gold rush, representing as they did, by the late nineteenth century, a marginalized religious community that most Californians would have preferred to forget. In a powerful and insightful presentation, Owens has now given them their due.

LAURIE F. MAFFLY-KIPP (maffly@email.unc.edu) is an associate professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has written extensively on the California gold rush and the history of Mormonism in the American West, including a collection of essays co-edited with Reid L. Neilson, Proclamation to the People: Nine-

The printing history can be a little confusing. The title of the first edition is *Uncle Nick among the Shoshones*, yet Charley Wilson, in this 2005 paperback edition, uses only *The White Indian Boy* as the title. Elijah Nicholas (“Uncle Nick”) Wilson, was born in Nauvoo in 1842 where his uncle, James Wilson, was one of Joseph Smith’s numerous bodyguards. His family settled in Grantsville, Utah, and settled down to farming; but at about age twelve or fourteen, Nick ran away with some Shoshones whom his family had hired as farm workers so that he could keep a pony the Indians had let him ride. Known as Yagaiki, Uncle Nick became an excellent rider and lived with the Washakie tribe for a year or two.

In the rest of the book, Uncle Nick describes the Echo Canyon segment of the Utah War, losing his first love to a polygamous suitor, riding for the Pony Express, and General Albert Sidney Johnston’s battle near Fish Spring west of Camp Floyd with the Parowan, Pocatello, and Gosiute Indians in 1860 in which every “Indian, squaw, and papoose, and every dog was killed.” Uncle Nick was shot in the arm during this fracas. The next spring the Civil War broke out, and Johnston sold government supplies and equipment at bargain prices in Camp Floyd. When he left, he asked Uncle Nick to go with him. Nick declined.

Nick took a trip to Soda Springs, Idaho, helped an Indian agent at the Fort Hall Reservation, had many more experiences with Indians, and died in 1915 at age seventy-three in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Wilson, Wyoming, is named for him. His conclusion is a lament for the vanishing way of Indian life:
It is a sad thought with me to see the Redman giving way so rapidly before our advancing civilization. Where thousands of the Indians once roamed free, only a scattered few remain. The old friends of my boyhood days with Washakie have almost entirely passed away. Only once in a great while do I find one who remembers Yagaiki, the little boy who once lived with their old chief’s mother. But when I do happen to meet one as I did last year when I found Hans, a wealthy Indian, who lives now on his ranch at the Big Bend in Portneuf Canyon, then we have a good time, I tell you, recalling the days of long ago when Uncle Nick was among the Shoshones. (146)

Nick’s son Charley wrote *The Return of the White Indian Boy* to provide further information about his colorful father, particularly during the last ten years of his life. Charley’s 1985 book, which included both books bound as one, went through two printings. John J. Stewart, who wrote the foreword to the 2005 paperback, encouraged the reprinting of the 1985 version.

In *Return*, the first chapter is titled “Polygamy” and tells the unhappy ending of Nick’s first love affair when his unnamed sweetheart married into polygamy. Uncle Nick’s mother, Martha, who had great influence over him, was eventually able to ease her son’s distaste for the Mormon Church. He became a bishop and, ironically, also a polygamist, marrying three wives. He served a year in the federal penitentiary for unlawful cohabitation. At his trial, he was ordered to keep only his first wife, and Charley gives some details about the effects of this decision on some of the children born to the other two wives whom Uncle Nick sent away.

Charley also provides some information about the popularity of the first (1910) edition of *Uncle Nick among the Shoshones*. The print run of this first edition was 1,500 copies. For three summers, he and his father peddled the books from town to town from a wagon. The publisher, Skelton Publishing Company of Salt Lake City, had gone bankrupt publishing it, but Charles claims they sold so many books that Skelton went back into business. In 1919, Howard R. Driggs, a professor at New York University and president of the American Trails Association, by agreement with Nick, brought out an edition in 1919 titled *The White Indian Boy* for Driggs’s Pioneer Series (2005, xiv).

But this 1919 edition severely condensed a crucial incident from the 1910 edition. The 1985 and 2005 editions by the University of Utah Press restore this intriguing tale.

When Uncle Nick was about twenty, he met “one of the sweetest creatures I ever saw” (107), in Cache Valley, Utah, when he was visiting his mother. Nick, who was recuperating from a head wound, was re-injured when his horse slipped on some ice. For the next month, this unnamed girl nursed him devotedly. They planned to marry, but Nick needed money to finance this venture into matrimony. In the spring, he got his job back driving
the overland stage and saved his money. The following winter, he invested all his money in cattle, which he left with a herder for two weeks while he went to Cache Valley for the wedding.

These plans were interrupted by a threatened Indian raid on Cache Valley cattle that were wintering at Promontory; and Nick, taking the place of his brother, whose wife was sick, kissed his girl goodbye and rode off with the other men for the five-day expedition. The Indian threat fizzled, but the militia captain ordered Nick and some other men to stay until spring. Nick resisted and, according to Nick’s somewhat vague account, the “Brother Benson” whom the captain contacted to see if Nick could leave early, passed back word from Nick’s bishop that Nick was “nothing but a renegade” (108). Two weeks later, Nick’s mother told him his sweetheart was marrying “an old man that stood high in the church” as his second wife (109). Nick’s attempts to write to her were thwarted. When his own cattle herder informed him that the Indians had run off his cattle, Nick defied the captain and returned to Cache Valley where his sweetheart’s mother prevented him from seeing her and confirmed that she was going to marry the well-to-do “Brother Frost.”

To make the tale more complicated, the bishop denounced Nick from the pulpit as unreliable. Heartbroken, Nick left Cache Valley, averring, “I knew that I had never wronged a man in my life, and I knew that all of this talk was to get my girl from me” (110). A year later, he encountered his former sweetheart. In tears she told Nick how sorry she was. For his part, though Nick confirmed his own love and desire to marry her, he sorrowfully said it was too late (112).

This romantic tale from the 1910 edition is condensed in the Driggs 1919 edition to a mere paragraph: “Our intention was to get married; but before we could realize our hopes they were blighted and destroyed by certain men who should have been our friends. These men poisoned the minds of her parents against me, while I was away driving the stage and guarding the cattle of the people against the Indians; her parents refused to allow her to answer my letters; and finally they succeeded in making her give me up and marry one of the men who had turned them against me.”

The details that the successful rival’s name was Frost and that Nick’s sweetheart became a plural wife are missing from the 1919 edition.

I agreed with Nick that he had been set up; but where, after more than a century would corroborating evidence lie? I speculated that the girl’s mother-in-law considered Uncle Nick an undesirable son-in-law because he had lived with the Indians for two years and was a stage-driver. I found a Burr Frost, born in 1816, a blacksmith, who was in Brigham Young’s 1847 vanguard company. He served a mission to Australia from 1852 to 1854, was a president of a seventies’ quorum, and married three wives: Mary E. Potter in
1845, Eliza Nash in 1852, and Caroline Triplett in 1863. Caroline was born in 1843, which would have made her a year younger than Nick, and had come to Utah in 1862 with the Horton D. Haight Company. I could not confirm her presence or Frost’s in Cache Valley, but these details do not disconfirm Nick’s story.

An online book dealer quotes Nick as stating, about the 1910 edition: “When the book was in sheets, ready for binding, objection was made to the passage beginning on page 194. Under pressure I rewrote that part and added 25 pages to the original but had 20 copies bound as originally written. These I kept for the members of my family.” As a result, one of the twenty copies containing the more complete account of his betrayal in love would be a great prize for any book collector.

In 1908 when Nick was bishop in Wyoming, a delegation of unnamed visitors from Salt Lake City took sharp exception to the fact that he smoked a pipe. According to Charley’s version in *The Return of the White Indian*, Nick reviewed his life for them starting with his birth in Nauvoo, then asserted:

> I have lost everything now but my two little boys. I have smoked a pipe ever since I rode for the Pony Express, and now it’s about the only means of relaxation and peace that I have left. I never smoke my pipe in church, and I am not going to give it up now! This Revelation is nearly a hundred years old! The Church surely could find something more worthy of the ‘Word of Wisdom’ than waste a year trying to enforce this old ordinance! Why! It’s like trying to enforce the Revelation on polygamy again!”

When the delegation’s unnamed leader insisted that he must either give up his bishopric or smoking, Nick icily told him to take the ward records from the bookcase “and get out.” Charley quotes a “Mr. Allen,” a Salt Lake man who spent summers in Jackson Hole, as calling it “the shabbiest deal I think the Mormon Church ever pulled!” Nick never mentioned the incident again before his death seven years later, but it was the end of Charley’s involvement in Mormonism (263–64).

The University of Utah’s publication of both books provides a more complete portrait of this interesting, unorthodox, but loyal Mormon. I found the new edition to be a great read and a wonderful story. I recommend it to anyone with an interest in the beginnings of Utah, the West, Indians, Mormons, the Pony Express, injustice, or adventures in yesterday’s world.

MARK CARTER {markbook@cheerful.com}, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, raised in Washington State, and lives in Sandy, Utah, with his wife, Carolyn, and son Garrett. His hobby is collecting books on Utah and the Mormons.
Letters to Mollie includes 111 of those letters, along with annotations and supplementary material that effectively bring to life the concerns, events, and personalities connected with the correspondence. The earliest letter in this collection was written to Mollie in August 1860 when she was fifteen; the final letter is dated December 1920 when Mollie was seventy-six, eight years prior to her death. While neither Mollie nor the majority of the correspondents are commonly known to historians, several of the people mentioned in the letters are, including Ebenezer Robinson (typesetter for the second edition of the Book of Mormon, coeditor with Don Carlos Smith of the Times and Seasons, eventual Rigdonite, cofounder of the Church of Christ, and Mollie’s uncle), and Zenas Hovey Gurley (RLDS missionary, lobbyist for the Edmunds Act passage, Iowa legislator, and husband of Mollie’s cousin Grace Robinson Gurley, a frequent correspondent).

The letters themselves are interesting because they capture the impressions of everyday people, many of them even teenagers, about the important events occurring around them: a relative traveling to Utah to convert the Brighamites, for example; cousin Amulek complaining about bleak conditions in a Civil War hospital; and friend Eunice speculating about the Civil War being the beginning of the world’s latter days. Their observations are engaging, for the most part, because they offer fresh perspectives on oft-told events.

The majority of the letters were written between 1860 and 1869, spanning the years during and after the Civil War, the formative years of the RLDS Church, and the period prior to and just after Mollie’s marriage in
1866 to George McNutt, who partnered with Mollie’s cousin in a lumber business. Fifteen letters dating from the 1880s to 1912 explain what happened to the people who wrote to Mollie during the 1860s. The letters are presented chronologically, grouped in eleven chapters under such categories as “The LaGrange Folks 1865” and “Old Friends, Settled Lives 1870s.”

Vitale standardized spellings and salutations and closings. He also organized the letters in a standard format, contributing to easier reading and the book’s overall attractiveness. He deleted nothing from the letters but added punctuation and capitalization where required, and paragraphing (which he numbers) where appropriate. For further clarity, he added in parentheses the full names of individuals who are referred to in the letters by only a first name or a pronoun.

“Because it is necessary to read the letters with Mollie’s memory, not ours,” Vitale writes, he included a “Chronology of Past Events” that would have affected Mollie’s family or Mollie’s correspondents. This is an indispensable addition to the book because it charts the involvement of Mollie’s various friends and relatives in family, Church, and national events. Also helpful is the author’s inclusion of family trees, photographs of key personalities with extensive explanatory captions, and photocopies of several actual letters. The photocopies not only help “personalize” the letters, they illustrate the magnitude of Vitale’s transcribing task.

By far the most helpful and interesting portion of the book is Vitale’s extensive introductions to the letters. In many cases, the letters would be puzzling and of limited value without that commentary. He provides background about people, explaining their relationship to Mollie, their involvement in the RLDS movement, and their relationship to local or national events, footnoting information where appropriate. For example, in an introduction to cousin Joe Bonney’s letter, Vitale writes:

In [the letter], he tells about those who have gone to “the Valley,” meaning the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, home of the rival Mormon sect, the LDS. Mollie’s uncle, James Works, whom Joe mentions, was the youngest Works, six years younger than Mollie’s father. But unlike any of the other children of Asa and Abigail (Marks) Works, Uncle James was a Brighamite. For a time he lived in the “Lion House,” the home of many of Young’s wives, doing odd jobs such as helping with the laundry by pounding clothes and carrying basketsful to be hung on a line. (41)

Vitale’s introductions place customs and concerns referenced in the letters in their historical context. For example, several correspondents request that Mollie send them her photograph or “likeness.” Vitale discusses the development of this custom and explains the cost and difficulty of fulfilling such a request when one has to travel “twenty-six miles north to Leon, Iowa, just to get a photograph taken” (117). In another introduction, he ex-
plains the meaning of “mittening,” mentioned in an 1865 letter from Emma Johnson: “The custom of ‘mittening’ that Emma mentions is an ancient one. After rural church services, the young men of a congregation would line up outside the church door, each offering his hand to a young woman of his choice in order to escort her home. If she accepted, her hand would stay in his; if not, she would yank it back, leaving him—figuratively—with her mitten only. To ‘mitten’ a young man was to reject him” (171).

Though Mollie was orphaned as a girl, raised and taken to church by various relatives who were members of the early RLDS Church, for reasons not explained, she was never baptized. Vitale writes, “From the day of her birth to at least the day of her marriage, Mollie’s life would be affected most by the forces that were unleashed by the visions of the Mormon Prophet from Palmyra” (6). Here lies one of the book’s weaknesses: While Vitale is fairly scrupulous about citing sources for the background he provides about events, customs, and correspondents, he fails to credit sources for what he says about Mollie’s life. His introduction includes an extensive list of libraries, public records, and relatives (people with a “long memory and willingness to share”), but there is no attribution to any of these sources for such statements as: “Few of her husband’s relatives remembered her childhood friends, and Mollie, who had never been Mormon and felt a certain embarrassment about the more scandalous aspects of the religion, rarely talked about her very early life” (2). This is one of many such examples that appear throughout the book, undermining the author’s otherwise scholarly approach to this project.

Gary Vitale is the publisher and owner of Mill Creek Press, a professor of English and speech at Springfield College in Illinois, and the author of two previously published books about acting and public speaking. In his introduction to Letters to Mollie, he expresses the hope that “in the imaginations of [the book’s] readers, these very real people will live again” (9). The letters and their introductions perform this task well. But readers need a more authoritative accounting than he presents about the recipient of those letters.

DAWN PARRETT THURSTON {dlthurston@roadrunner.com} teaches life story and family history writing at Santiago Canyon College in Orange, California, and the University of Utah. She and her husband, Morris, coauthored Breathe Life into Your Life Story: How to Write a Story People Will Want to Read (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2007).

John W. Welch, with Erick B. Carlson, eds. Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young Univer-
This collection of documents is based on various supernatural occurrences in the life of Joseph Smith Jr. The seven sections are “The First Vision,” “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon,” “The Restoration of the Priesthood,” “Visions upon Visions (Joseph Smith’s Seventy-six Documented Visionary Experiences),” “The Restoration of Temple Keys and Powers,” and “The Succession in the Presidency (The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Passes to Brother Brigham).” A concluding section is “Further Early Church Historical Documents Originally Published in BYU Studies.”

Each of the first six sections is preceded by one or more introductions. The section on the First Vision is introduced in articles by Dean C. Jessee and by James B. Allen and John W. Welch. The section on the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is introduced by John W. Welch. Brian Q. Cannon and the BYU Studies staff deal with the restoration of the priesthood; Alexander L. Baugh introduces the visions of Joseph Smith; Steven C. Harper leads into the restoration of temple keys and powers; and Lynne Watkins Jorgensen does the same for succession in the presidency.

As might be imagined, the editors used a great number of primary and secondary sources. The impressive range of materials includes previously published histories, biographies and autobiographies, scholarly articles, diaries and journals, contemporary newspaper accounts, published accounts of interviews, and transcripts of speeches.

In addition to numerous materials from the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, other repositories include Brigham Young University’s Religious Studies Center and its L. Tom Perry Special Collections of the Harold B. Lee Library, the LDS Family History Library, and the Library-Archives of the Community of Christ in Independence.

Of course, Church-sponsored works and the writings of Joseph Smith are extensively quoted, as are some well known anti-Mormon classics like Eber D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled*. Numerous newspapers are cited, most notably western New York papers from the time of the Book of Mormon’s publication. Other intriguing and rather diverse sources include archives such as the Jonathan Goings Collection of the American Baptist Historical Collection, the Centennial History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, *The Episcopal Recorder*, and *Western Illinois Regional Studies*.

This book can serve as a handy resource for the historian and as a source of inspiration for LDS believers. The categorizing of a large number of primary sources makes it easy to analyze the particular events that are so
crucial to an informed study of Mormon origins.

While clearly intended to enhance the faith of believers, the editors are honest enough to include contemporary assessments of Joseph Smith Jr. that portray him in a less than favorable light. For example, Hiel Lewis is quoted as stating, in 1879, that “Smith translated the Book of Mormon by means of the same peep stone, and under the same inspiration that directed his enchantments and dog sacrifices; it was all by the same spirit” (193).

Since *Opening the Heavens* is designed to focus on supernatural aspects of Joseph Smith’s life and career, it might be helpful to keep this volume on the shelf as a companion to Dan Vogel’s *Early Mormon Documents* (5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003]). It would provide more balance and a larger context for the reader or researcher.

In perusing the various eyewitness accounts of “Divine Manifestations” to be found in this volume, one cannot help but realize that believers and outsiders will come away with different perceptions. For example, among the accounts of Brigham Young receiving the “mantle of Joseph,” the LDS believer will undoubtedly be moved by testimonies such as that of nineteen-year-old Sally Adams. She stated that she had seen Brigham Young assume “the form and appearance of Joseph.” Nor was she alone in making such a claim. Yet someone from outside the tradition might note that she also stated: “Many thought he [Joseph Smith], like the Savior, would rise again to become their leader” (443). Certainly, people who were disappointed and bereft might be susceptible to imagining things and then reinforcing each others’ selective memories of the event. But the same can be said of the Christian belief in Jesus’s resurrection. These are hazardous grounds for an objective historian.

To cite another example, how does an outside historian evaluate statements such as those found in this 1835 letter of Benjamin Brown who described the dedication of the Kirtland Temple: “On the Pentecost evening the west end of the House was illuminated by a light from heaven seen on the outside by many (336) . . . the heavens was opened two saw the savior some saw chariots and other thing [sic] one lay about half an hour & saw from Eternity to Eternity many Miraculous Experiences told Many Visions told” (337).

The historian has to view such alleged miracles as he or she would those put forth by any religious tradition. By way of comparison, in 1917, an eyewitness to the alleged apparition of the Virgin Mary at Fatima in Portugal wrote of solar activities supposedly witnessed by a multitude of people: “Suddenly, one heard a clamor, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed all at once to loosen itself from the firmament and, blood red, advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. The sensation during those moments was
truly terrible."\(^1\)

Did the sun approach the earth? Is there scientific proof? Did multitudes experience this phenomenon as some reportedly experienced Brigham Young’s taking on the mantle of Joseph Smith Jr.? Could both events, from different traditions, be true? The historian, in reading Opening the Heavens, will always be posing natural explanations for the seemingly “divine manifestations.” He or she, if from outside the LDS community, will take the same approach to statements in this work as in investigating the claims of some Catholics about apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

This observation is not meant as a criticism but as an acknowledgment of the challenge and fascination that come from analyzing peoples’ most cherished beliefs. And the stakes here are high, for, unlike many religious traditions, Mormonism had its origins in fairly recent events—events more than usually susceptible to historical investigation.

Unlike the case of the alleged apparition at Fatima, which is not central to Catholic origins or existence, these “manifestations” go to the very raison d’être of the Restoration movement.

Perhaps this book should have the same epigraph with which the 1943 film version of Franz Werfel’s Song of Bernadette began: “For those who believe, no explanation is necessary; for those who do not believe, no explanation is possible.\(^2\)

Because of the necessarily repetitive nature of many of the entries, this book would not be of interest to the general or casual reader. For those who seek inspiration and for the historian, it is a valuable resource.

DANIEL P. DWYER, O.F.M. \{ddwyer@siena.edu\} is a Catholic priest and a Franciscan friar. Born in Schenectady, New York, he earned his doctorate in history at Tulane University in New Orleans in 1995. He is a member of the Mormon History Association and an associate professor of history at Siena College in Loudonville, New York.

---


\(^1\)Dr. José Maria de Alemeida Garrett. The Miracle of the Sun http://www.fatima.org/essentials/facts/miracle.asp (accessed March 31, 2007).

\(^2\)The Song of Bernadette, produced by William Perlberg, directed by Henry King, 156 min. Twentieth-Century Fox, 1943, videocassette.
Reviewed by Michael Van Wagenen

The overland trek of the handcart pioneers has proven such a defining and compelling event in Mormon history that it has become the subject of countless Latter-day Saint conference addresses, Sunday School lessons, and testimonials. The symbolic power of the journey inspires thousands of Latter-day Saint youth to reenact the journey each year. The experience has taken on mythic proportions in the Mormon collective memory and has come to define all that is admirable about Mormonism and its adherents.

Lee Groberg and Heidi Swinton are to be congratulated for a work that will continue to help Mormons define themselves both in terms of the past and the present. *Sweetwater Rescue: The Willie and Martin Handcart Story* is the fifth collaboration of this filmmaking team focusing on Latter-day Saint history and culture. The film tells the story of the Willie and Martin handcart companies. Hampered by a late start in the summer of 1856, the companies unwisely pushed across the Overland Trail facing brutal storms and starvation. While some two hundred people perished, hundreds survived through the heroic efforts of rescue parties from the Salt Lake Valley.

Were this film made entirely for a devotional Latter-day Saint audience, it would be enough to praise the filmmakers and move on. Produced under the auspices of the Public Broadcasting Service, this film is by nature held against a more rigorous standard. As such, this KBYU production needs to be critiqued at three levels: as a documentary film, as western history, and as a manifestation of Mormon memory.

Taken cinematically there is much good to be said of this and other films by Lee Groberg. The subject matter is compelling. Technically the film is polished and professional, the match of most of what is being produced for public television today. Groberg wisely drafted his crew from the large Utah talent base that usually works anonymously on LDS Church films. His work continues to speak well of the aesthetic accomplishments of the Mormon filmmaking community.

Nonetheless, as a film this work is not without flaws. The style is highly derivative of Ken Burns’s 1990 *Civil War* and relies on his conventions of chapter headings, flat file mixed with historical reenactments, and narrated journal accounts set to a neo-Celtic soundtrack. The repetitive identifying of each speaker and his or her handcart company proves tedious as it hits the viewer on average every forty to forty-five seconds. Perhaps it would have been better to cast actors as specific historical players. As it is, none of the nearly three hundred actors and extras in the film stand out at all and are merely anonymous props trudging endlessly through the sixty-minute production. They never despair, never quit, never question, and are as faceless as bees in a hive.
The film is also lacking any sort of dénouement. What was the fate of the survivors? In particular, what became of Susannah Stone, James G. Bleak, and the handful of individuals repeatedly quoted throughout the film? Did any great leaders evolve from this disaster or were these impoverished immigrants destined to populate the same lower social strata they filled in Europe? Is there any sense of how many apostatized or became embittered by the experience? These are a few of the loose ends that the film fails to tie up.

As a work of western American history, the film proves most problematic. In our age of mass communications, filmmakers have become the world’s most powerful historians. For historians, this status poses a professional and ethical challenge. If not for the fact that thousands of viewers will learn the story of the handcart pioneers through this film, it might be easier to dismiss its historical applications. The reality is that, with its inferred PBS stamp of approval, the audience expects to be educated according to the historical profession’s modern standards.

In the case of this film, the issue is less about its content than what Groberg and Swinton have omitted. First, the program contains little historical context except that European Latter-day Saints in the 1850s sought to gather in Utah. Brigham Young was anxious to find a less expensive way for them to travel, and the handcart solutions proved to be his solution. That is the extent of the viewer’s introduction to the Mormon handcart companies.

Historians, by necessity, need to push deeper to give the event its proper context. Why did Mormon converts need to flee into the Rocky Mountains to begin with? Absent is any significant discussion of the political and social conditions that led to handcart migration. The year 1856 proved a particularly tumultuous time given the Utah War just one year later. While the film briefly mentions the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, it does not discuss how the immigrants would be placed into Salt Lake City’s public works projects to pay off their debt and provide labor for Young’s ambitious building schemes. Is this just another example of the exploitation of immigrant labor or did ideology play a role?

Commendably, Groberg draws upon some of the shining stars of the 2006 Mormon History Association’s conference on handcart migration. He uses historians Lyndia McDowell Carter, Michael Landon, and others as well-edited talking heads. However, while utilizing some of the scholarship of the MHA program, Groberg addressed none of the controversy.

This omission is particularly obvious when dealing with blame for the disaster. The film merely ends with a quotation from survivor John Jaques, “I blame nobody.” It is hard to imagine that answer as satisfactory were an equivalent disaster to occur in the Mormon community today. The reality is that more than two hundred individual human beings perished because
somebody made a mistake. At the time, there was plenty of criticism to go around. Many people blamed Brigham Young, and Young in turn blamed Apostle Franklin D. Richards. Contrary to criticism, Brigham Young clearly emerges as the hero of the film for sending out the rescue party that does in fact save the surviving immigrants.

The subject matter also begs for an investigation into the role of class and ethnicity. Had the immigrants been wealthy Anglo-Saxons or native-born Americans, would Young have required such sacrifice of them? Looking at ethnicity even more closely, the film fails to quote a single Scandinavian, Scottish, or Welsh immigrant in its eighty or so sound bytes.¹ There is clearly one voice in the film, and it is Anglo-Saxon. Is this somehow a reflection of the larger Mormon culture both then and now?

These omissions may be glaring, but they are not surprising. Both KBYU and Lee Groberg have faced criticism from historians in the past. Groberg is best known for his 1999 PBS documentary, *American Prophet: The Story of Joseph Smith*. While applauded by the Mormon community, the film suffered poor reviews in major newspapers as being little more than self-serving Mormon hagiography.² Indeed, the film avoided the fundamental controversies of Mormonism and clearly oversimplified the life of Joseph Smith. If Groberg falls short as a historian, then what is the value of such work?

As human beings, we need storytellers. Throughout time we have entrusted our sacred stories to the memory of an elite and venerated few. As guardians of our collective memory, their mission is to help us as a people define our present in the context of the stories of our past. This is not history, but rather the equally important role of myth and memory-making. Lee Groberg has proven himself to be one of Mormonism’s most important “memory men.” Like the tribal elder around the evening campfire, Groberg weaves a tale of Mormonism in the flickering image of the motion picture. Through his stories, he celebrates the ancestral traits of perseverance, faith, sacrifice, and obedience, and gives them life in the present.

A problem arises when memory cloaks itself in the rhetoric of history. The critical questions posed by history are sacrificed to the preservation of


sacred stories. Ultimately, I do not fault the filmmakers. Lee Groberg and his team are doing what they do best—telling a story. In presenting these types of productions to the PBS community, however, KBYU ought to reconsider its approach. It’s hard to imagine that the station would produce and broadcast a physics program based on incomplete research. Doing so would open itself up to the ridicule of the scientific community. Of course, KBYU has no theological or cultural stake in the field of physics. Ultimately, memory is best left to the private sector where it can continue to serve private interests. National Public Television, funded by all Americans, ought to reflect a higher historical standard.

MICHAEL VAN WAGENEN (UofUHistory@aol.com) is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Utah where he studies the American West and the Borderlands. In addition to his historical research and publishing, he is an award-winning ethnographic documentary filmmaker. See www.imdb.com/name/nm1876889/


Reviewed by Lavina Fielding Anderson

These two books together are narrow but revealing windows in the nineteenth-century culture of Mormon women in Utah and the fabric art they produced. The samplers were, essentially, produced a generation earlier than the quilt, but the reader will find a surprising amount of continuity in the emphasis on high-quality craftsmanship, expressions of religious and community sentiment, and even personnel. Both books were produced with equal care, using glossy paper for the best reproduction of the numerous color photographs.

Although no author is identified for Pioneer Memorial Museum Samplers, Loree Ann Romriell is acknowledged for “research, writing, technical evaluation,” and the Swan Sampler Stitcher’s Guild of Salt Lake City, of which she is a member, is thanked for “their interest and support of the . . . catalogue on needlework samplers” (unnumbered page facing inside front cover). She is also the author of the introduction, so it seems proper to
credit her as the book’s guiding spirit. This book painstakingly documents thirty-two samplers now held by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Pioneer Museum. Forty-five color photographs (where illustrative, also some sampler backs) and black-and-white photographs of the stitchers where available are also shown along with biographical sketches and analyses of the technical qualities of the samplers.

They are arranged in chronological order, beginning in 1797 (samplers usually bore the date of creation) with Eliza Ann Miller’s and concluding with Johanne Marie Thomassen’s (ca. 1850s). The stitchers range from such well-known women as Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young to one by a woman known only as “Isabella.”

A typical entry shows the front of the sampler, gives the dimensions, thread count per inch, materials, type of stitches used, date and age of its maker, the complete text, the name of the donor, and the date of donation. The accompanying text combines material about the stitcher’s life and her creation. For example, Ann Miller Keep, who joined the Church with her husband in 1836 in England, where she probably completed her sampler in 1824, struggled financially but finally emigrated to Utah and settled in Cache County. Her sampler is a three-verse tribute to her Bible, possibly prompted by receiving a special Bible for learning the most verses in a specified time as a child; her descendants still have it. Its “many religious motifs” include Adam, Eve, the snake and the tree of life. . . . As a wonderful touch, Ann even included belly buttons on her Adam and Eve” (17–18).

Thanks to the excellent quality of the photographs, a captivated reader can follow, line by line, Romriell’s descriptions, as in this analysis of Emeline Hickman’s (1830) sampler: “Emeline stitched eight bands that are completed with the following stitches: first and second bands stitched in rice-stitch, the third in cross-stitch over one, fourth in cross-stitch over two, fifth and sixth in eyelet stitches, seventh in satin stitches, and the eighth in cross stitch over two” (25).

An unusual glimpse into a “sampler” family is three samplers created by sisters Ann and Jean Eckford. Ann did two (now housed at the Pioneer Memorial Museum and the Museum of Church History and Art) while Jean’s is in the Beehive House. They finished these samplers ca. 1851, while they were in their teens. Both reproduce the Nauvoo Temple, taken from a commemorative plate made in England, and bordered with the names of the LDS apostles. Ann misspelled “Azra T. Benson” on one (probably the first) but “Ezra” on the other (52).

Although most of these samplers were created by young girls, often before they came to Utah, an exception is Rebecca Hill’s second sampler (the museum has both), sewed after 1854. In it she includes the name of her bishop and her baptismal date (54). Another sampler made in Utah was
that of Sarah Jane Rich (Tobin Miller), daughter of Charles C. Rich and Sara-
rah deArmon Pea Rich, completed sometime in the 1850s (61–62).

Helpful supplementary material is a history of sampler-making in
Romriell’s introduction. The first written mention of a sampler was in Eng-
land in 1502. At sampler “schools” in the American colonies and United
States until about 1850, well-educated girls completed a marking or train-
ing sampler and even went on to more advanced schools where they mas-
tered such stitches as “cross-stitch, backstitch, satin stitch, tent stitch, eye-
lets, buttonhole, long-armed cross, bullion knots, etc.” (2). One of these
schools, Cream Ridge Seminary in New Jersey, had such distinctive motifs
that its students can be identified. (The DUP Museum has one such sam-
pler, Sarah T. Wikoff’s, created in 1832.) A typical sampler would include
at least one alphabet and set of numbers and figures like houses, people,
trees, flowers, animals, vines, border motifs, and other shapes.

Another introductory item is a remarkably detailed description, un-
dated, by Sarah Eggertsen Cluff of Provo about growing, harvesting, and
transforming flax into cloth (5). A clue to pronunciation is that Sarah
called “hackling” “hickling.” One page describes the 1947 DUP sampler
project that includes instructions and an elaborate pattern of handcarts,
an ox-drawn wagon, a log cabin, the Salt Lake Temple, the Seagull Monu-
ment, sego lilies, beehives, and Eagle Gate (6).

The glossary defines common terms and briefly describes stitches.
The “queen” or “rococco” stitch, for example, was “one of the most compli-
cated needlework stitches because it needs eleven passes of the needle to
complete” (67).

The second volume reviewed here focuses with equal care but at
greater length on a single piece of fabric art, a quilt created in the summer
of 1857 by the Relief Society of Salt Lake City’s Fourteenth Ward and raf-
fled off as a fundraiser before the disruption of the move south. Carol Hol-
indrake Nielson tells an engaging story about what her mother-in-law re-
ferred to only once in her hearing as “The Quilt.” Without daughters, Dor-
othy Nelson Nielson, gave the quilt to her son, Dan (Carol’s husband), in
1996 along with a history written by her own mother, Pauline Harston Nel-
son, the quilt’s fourth owner. Richard Stephen Horne, age about twelve,
had been the lucky raffle winner but had cut the quilt in two when his first
wife died and gave half to his two oldest daughters. Carol Nielson, dumb-
founded at the sight of the sacrilege, spontaneously exclaimed, “Only a
man could do that” (9).

Some research at the LDS family History Library provided a list of de-
cendants of the other sister, and a few evenings on the telephone took Carol
to Shirley Knibbe Mumford, guardian of the other half of the quilt, who had
been displaying her half for years, “confident that the rest of the heirlooms
was preserved and would eventually be found” (10). Nielson does not say whether the “reunited” quilt was stitched back together and, if so, to whose keeping it was entrusted. But this book is part of a larger reconstruction: the lives of the sixty-seven women who contributed to this album quilt.

Prefatory material, in addition to Nielson’s personal story, includes a somewhat defensive exposition of Mormon history and doctrine and an extremely interesting history of Fourteenth Ward, which had one of the earliest of the interim ward Relief Societies (organized September 17, 1856) between the disbanded Nauvoo Relief Society and the societies that were formally reestablished in 1867.

Although a reader might be tempted to skip a discussion of album quilts, it is not only rewarding reading but also illuminating for the block-by-block discussion that follows. The Baltimore Album style concentrated on appliqué designs, motifs of which appear throughout the quilt. In broderie perse (Persian embroidery), a flower or other shape was cut from an expensive, imported, Oriental fabric, then appliquéd to a plain background, often enhanced with additional embroidery. Nielson identifies several designs from the same piece of fabric that the women obviously shared among themselves. She also identifies popular quilt designs such as Rose of Sharon, Carolina Lilies, Mariner’s Compass, and Broken Star.

A frontispiece photograph showing the whole quilt enables the reader to identify each individual block and see it in context. Because the blocks were set in a diagonal arrangement, running between strips of blue cloth, the edges were finished with half-pieces, frequently a whole block that was simply cut in half with the other half sometimes, but not always, appearing elsewhere on the quilt border.

Greatly enhancing the reader’s appreciation of the achievement is Nielson’s analysis of the fine work and quilting techniques employed: “Englishwoman Leonora Cannon Taylor’s block combined patchwork with embroidery to write a bold motto. In the first blocked letters of the first two words, ‘In God,’ there are eighty-nine separate pieces of cloth; the finished size of the smallest is only one-quarter inch. Mary Edwards White Cannon Taylor’s block is appliquéd overworked with fine embroidery. The silk threads on the basket design were painstakingly twisted between each stitch to give definition and depth to the threads” (33). The photographs of individual blocks with accompanying analysis encourage lingering over each in admiration. Each is signed. Some are also dated and have inscriptions or mottoes.

The core of the book consists of a full-color photograph of each block with a written description of the block’s contents, then a biography of each quilter. The entries are arranged beginning with the Relief Society
president, Phoebe Whittemore Carter Woodruff, wife of Wilford Woodruff, whose block appears in the center of the quilt, but above the cutting line. From Phoebe, the next blocks discussed are those made by her three daughters: Phebe Amelia, Susan Cornelia, and Bulah Augusta, who was only nine in 1857. Thus, Nielson arranges her biographical sketches and analyses by family relationships, rather than by the block’s position on the quilt.

Those relationships were fascinating in their complexity and suggest dimensions of intimacy that far surpass the modern geographical accidents of ward membership. Biological sisters, plural sister-wives, mothers-daughters, aunts and nieces, sisters-in-law—every permutation of female kinship but grandmother-granddaughter—appears on this quilt. Three of Parley P. Pratt’s twelve wives lived in Fourteenth Ward, two of them also biological sisters (151). “The greatest joy for me,” writes Nielson, “was discovering the many connections and kinships between the women” (204), connections that became only more complex over time as their daughters married into other Fourteenth Ward families and their husbands formed partnerships, were missionary companions, and shared ecclesiastical assignments.

Nielson’s research has provided interesting and significant insights into Salt Lake City’s social history. For instance, she explains that when Henrietta Rushton Bullock signed her block as “Mrs. T. Bullock,” she was identifying herself as the first wife. Her two sister-wives, who also contributed blocks, are “Mrs. Lucy Bullock and Mrs. Betsy Bullock” (80). Elizabeth Whitaker Cain’s feathered star block, unusual on this quilt because it is patchwork (145 pieces) rather than appliqué, has a “centered nameplate, fastened by parallel rows of sewing-machine stitches....A proud reminder that the owner was lucky enough to have the new invention” (85).

Nielson half-apologizes that, for some women, she found “only fragments of their lives...[that] were episodes best forgotten,” but she tells their stories anyway, “not as a summation of a woman or to show her disrespect, but rather because each incident I discovered added to my collective admiration of the Latter-day Saint pioneer woman” (ix). This is a decision readers of the Journal of Mormon History must applaud, especially since the incidents she mentions are more sorrowful than blameworthy. Agnes Taylor Hoagland (Schwartz), a sister of Apostle John Taylor, married Bishop Abraham Hoagland as his third plural wife after two marriages failed. They were divorced (Nielson gives no cause) in 1861 (188). John R. Winder divorced Hannah Ballantyne Thompson after believing unproved gossip about her and a hired man (142). Joseph Horne’s third wife, Elizabeth Ashford Thimbley Horne, joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Beaver in 1870 (114). Ann Carrigan Elmer separated from her husband, apparently over polygamy; they divorced. Two sons committed sui-
cide, one after being jailed for severely beating his seventy-two-year-old mother while drunk (89).

Some of the vignettes are poignant. Lovina Chandler Taylor was pregnant as she stitched on her quilt. She had two sons, ages nine and seven, but had buried three babies since reaching Utah. In December 1857, both she and her newborn baby died (186), leaving her quilt block behind as a reminder of a hopeful summer activity.

The prose is marred by occasional sentimentality and rather strained symbolism: “Like the leafy green vine encircling her [Willmirth Margaret Greer East’s] red and pink appliquéd flower, her trust in the Latter-day faith remained unbroken” (100). “The effort that created [Mary Edwards White Cannon Taylor’s quilt block] beauty and perfection reveals the type of woman she must have been” (179). The index seems inconsistent. Agnes Taylor Hoagland Schwartz is indexed under both Taylor and Hoagland with a cross-reference from Schwartz to Hoagland, but Ann Scothan Carrigan Elmer is indexed or cross-referenced under Carrigan and Elmer but with no entry for Scothan.

Such lapses are easy to overlook, however, given the undeniable affection for and connection to these women that Carol Nielsen obviously feels. Both this book and Loree Ann Romriell’s sampler book are labors of love by modern women who have re-created bonds of admiration, respect, and identification with their spiritual foremothers through the cherished fabric art they left behind them.

LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON {lavina@elavina.org}, president of Editing, Inc., in Salt Lake City, edits the Journal of Mormon History and enjoys women’s history.


Reviewed by Dawn Hall Anderson and Dlora Hall Dalton

The five volumes in Dean Hughes’s HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN constitute what the author calls a “sequel series” (viii) to his popular series THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE, a family saga that chronicles the lives of stake president and Utah businessman “Al” Thomas, his strong-minded
wife Bea, and their six children who come of age during World War II. This sequel tells the tale of the next generation of Thomases during the turbulent, eventful era of the 1960s and early 1970s. Gene, Kathy, and Diane, three baby boomer cousins raised in Utah, and a fourth German-born cousin, Hans Stoltz (his aunt married Al and Bea’s oldest son), take surprisingly divergent paths into adulthood despite their common religious roots and family traditions.

Hans’s moving and suspenseful tale centers on the predicament of a young Latter-day Saint trapped behind the Berlin Wall. His cousin Gene’s journey includes a fascinating mission to post-war West Germany and a series of harrowing adventures in Vietnam as a member of a long-range reconnaissance patrol team. Of the girls, Diane may be best described as the exquisitely beautiful ingénue princess in a blandly witch-free LDS fairytale. Her most severe trial is deciding among suitors—that is, until the handsome prince morphs into an abusive husband. Her struggle to find her way when life no longer matches her scripted Mutual Improvement Association expectations is gripping reading. At the opposite pole from Diane is her brash, bright, compulsively argumentative cousin Kathy who follows the course of political activism in the 1960s from involvement in the civil rights movement in the South and Students for a Democratic Society in college “back east” to campaigning for Eugene McCarthy and finally serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Philippines. Kathy’s quest to “make a difference in the world” mirrors what has been called “the youth culture” of this era from the viewpoint of an engagingly passionate, yet thoughtful and observant participant. All four cousins are appealing, believable, vividly realized personalities whose lives are suspenseful both in terms of action and in the drama of their developing relationships and nascent spirituality.

These five volumes are also well worth reading as retrospectives on a fascinating and formative period of American history. Adjectives such as turbulent and tumultuous invariably surface in descriptions of this era, along with disruptive or liberating, depending on your point of view. After the halcyon and relatively wholesome early 1960s (think Doris Day/Rock Hudson or “The Andy Griffith Show”), the winds of change in America began to blow, often at gale force, on many fronts: race relations, women’s rights, the sexual revolution, student protests, the counterculture, and the ever-widening generation gap; the cold war, arms race, and Vietnam debacle; plus the emergence of the media (television, music, movies, journalism, and photo-journalism) as a potent social and political force.

Few reminisce about the years from 1964 to 1974 exactly as “the good old days”; they were too confusing and conflicted for comfortable nostalgia. As Hughes observes: “World War II was a trying time, but most people love to read about it. After all, good triumphed, we feel, and people joined arm in
arm to win the victory. It wasn’t really quite that simple, but it seems so, and
we like to think of it that way. But the sixties and seventies were times when
families were torn apart and people tended to split into factions. It’s not an
easy time to write about”—or, as we found in conversing with neighbors, find
readers along the Wasatch Front eager to read about it, as a sampling of our
acquaintances seemed to indicate. One neighbor who loved the World War
II series but quit the sequel after Volume 1 confided, “I’ve had a hard enough
time with my own problem children without reading about other people’s
bratty kids.” Perhaps she had skipped the preface in which Hughes reassures
us that “through it all, Latter-day Saints found their way and families sur-
vived” (x).

In Volume 1, The Writing on the Wall (1961–65), both world events and,
on an individual level, the cousins’ personalities signal dangerous shoals
ahead, but such scrawled portents are always easier to decipher in retro-
spect. Certainly in this first volume, the Utah cousins’ trials and family conf-
licts are typical of younger teens and not deeply troubling. All the heart-rac-
ing, hold-your-breath suspense centers in Hans’s story, beginning in this vol-
ume with two failed attempts to escape from East Germany, first at fourteen
with a Church friend, Berndt, across the Baltic Sea on air mattresses, and
then a year later, by train and on board a freighter with his mother, father,
and little sister Inga. The family make it as far as Gdansk, Poland, but are be-
trayed before the freighter sets sail for Sweden.

Miraculously, they evade the ubiquitous Stasi military police and make
it back to Schwerin undetected, no small feat without travel papers or
money. Hans’s father is convinced that God, who has brought them safely
home, has a purpose for their remaining in the GDR. But things appear oth-
erwise to Hans, who has been dropped from Oberschule and thus his chance
for university. “He was left with nothing to look forward to but working six
days a week at a job he didn’t like and using the other day to attend a church
he no longer believed in. At least he knew better than to pray. Hope was his
enemy now. He was better off when he merely accepted his fate and went
about it thoughtlessly” (164).

The following year, Hans renounces religion and is readmitted to
Oberschule. Hans’s prospects improve until a visit home when Hans very re-
luctantly agrees to a father’s blessing along with Inga. Part way through his
blessing, something unusual happens: “A vibration moved through Hans. . .
. He felt for a moment as though he were rising, floating above the chair. . . .
He wasn’t sure what else he heard after that, but he felt something familiar
inside, as though he had returned to himself” (453).

Meanwhile in Utah, Hans’s cousin Gene first learns about the Berlin
border closing (August 13, 1961) while listening to music on one of the three
Salt Lake/Ogden area radio stations (9). Singing “Sweet Mary Lou, I’m so in
love with you” along with Ricky Nelson, Gene is changing his tan summer suit—“polished cotton” and easily wrinkled—for Levi’s and Converse hightops to watch the Yankees and “his hero” Mickey Mantle (6) on television before he has to suit up again for sacrament meeting. Music, dress, hair styles (the “Beta” look; the beehive, of course; the “bulldog”; teasing and ironing), and slang (“Jeez Louise”) return the reader to that era even more quickly than world events. Even the volume titles are derived from songs of this decade, beginning with “The Writing’s on the Wall” by Three Dog Night. The preface and lengthy author notes (actually descriptive source essays), which describe the resources Hughes has combed for historical details and color, are almost as fascinating as the actual novels.

Gene’s struggles with faith don’t begin until he leaves on his mission in Germany. Popular, good-looking, and athletic, he excels at everything he sets his hand to and expects to follow the same success track as his father, a stake president and soon-to-be U.S. senator. Yet in high school, Gene is inexplicably drawn to loner Marsha Hammond, a girl much like his opinionated cousin Kathy, who regularly critiques his hidden assumptions, ego, and superficial values. His interest in Marsha continues into college. Although their attachment deepens, Hughes admirably resists the Harlequin Romance tradition, inadvertently begun by Jane Austin, which requires that the couple who most overtly detest one another end up together. Gene and Marsha are an intriguing pairing with plenty of fireworks, but they do not ultimately unite, volumes later, in improbable marital bliss. When Gene returns from his mission (Volume 2), chastened and with the depth of character that would make him a better match for Marsha, she has drifted away from the Church and is dating a nonmember. He does not rescue her.

Of the four cousins, Diane’s personality—yes, it’s bratty—provides something almost like comic relief in the first two volumes. Though presumably intelligent (both her parents are professors at Weber State), Diane is preoccupied with her social life, not unusual for a thirteen-year-old; but, alas, Diane is also cursed with extraordinary beauty, an endowment that stunts her spiritual and intellectual growth. She resents her bright and well-educated mother for pursuing a career but is first shocked, then angry, when she finds out that her mother is pregnant at forty-three. What irks her most is that her mom “was too busy as it was. Diane could guess already who was going to end up doing a lot of the baby-sitting” (159). Ironically, she announces to her cousins and later to Grandma Bea (the dislike for baby-sitting evidently forgotten): “I just want to be a mom. What’s wrong with that?” (32). Volume 1 concludes with Diane’s break-up with her steady boyfriend, Scott, a handsome Church investigator who seems at first to be exactly what she is looking for: “A guy who is really cute but a little bit bad. You know... in the Church and everything, but sort of dangerous at the same time” (42). In
short, an LDS James Dean.

At the opposite extreme from Diane, though no less bratty, is precocious, outspoken Kathy. Though only fifteen, she has the social conscience and reading habits (William J. Lederer’s *A Nation of Sheep*) that Gene and Diane—and, truth be told, probably most Utah Mormons—lacked in the 1960s. Already an activist, Kathy embodies the optimist idealism of the early 1960s, when many baby boomers felt they could and should “make a difference” in the world (43, 177). In the family, Kathy’s “idol” is her Aunt LaRue, an economics professor at Smith College in Massachusetts (7), who has never married because “I just don’t fit any of the molds Mormon men are used to. I have too many opinions” (170). Kathy visits her for several weeks each summer. The 1964 visit is purportedly to look at colleges, but she talks LaRue into volunteering with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) “Summer Project” in Mississippi registering black voters and setting up freedom schools. The next year (1965), Kathy, after watching the televised clash between protesters and Alabama state troopers, defies her parents, sneaks out her bedroom window, and joins the march in Selma.

Family ties and tensions, a central theme of *Hearts of the Children*, intensify in Volume 2, *Troubled Waters* (1965–68). “One of my interests,” states Hughes, “is the way that the influence of a generation, or of a specific married couple, extends to its children, and then, to their children” (I:viii). These aren’t just the cousins’ individual stories, then, but a study in family dynamics and the legacy of faith. Gene, for instance, feels compelled to duplicate his father’s achievements, a tall order, while Hans’s attitude toward his father and the Church vacillates. Diane and Kathy decide they would be much happier if they could swap parents, especially mothers (1:435).

All the cousins have issues with their outspoken, curmudgeonly Grandpa Thomas. Kathy’s remark reflects something of the distance all of them feel from his generation: “I love Grandpa. I just disagree with almost everything he says” (1:392). Yet the grandparents play a key role at certain moments in each of the cousins’ lives, particularly Grandpa Thomas in Kathy’s, reaching her at a time when no one else can (5:413–14).

In *Troubled Waters*, the cousins enter college and are engaged in deciding who they are, where they fit, and who they want to be. On his mission in Germany, Gene, as senior companion, is hard pressed to keep a cynical new elder from going home. Dealing with Elder Russon’s objections leads Gene to notice that he pads his own tracting hours, competes for leadership positions, and, with his next junior companion, pushes for baptisms at the expense of true, lasting conversion. Gene finally sees how deeply that trait of “wanting to look good” (9, 65) runs in himself when he is passed over for assistant to the president, the anticipated final arrow in his quiver of mission achievements. “Time and again, his experiences in Germany had been a sort
of magic mirror to him, showing him who he really was” (114). Gene returns home humbled and less certain of himself. Working at his Uncle Wally’s car dealership, he meets and falls in love with his future wife, Emily.

As the chapters alternate from one cousin to another, the stories often act as foils for one another. Kathy also has a magic mirror of sorts: Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the activist organization which she joins her first year at Smith. At Thomas family gatherings for holidays, she is dismissive and impatient with everyone’s backward attitudes and “amazingly simplistic comments” about social and political issues (131). For their part, they are alarmed at her radical views and “hippie” look—the long, straight hair, long skirts, and sandals. Back at school, her SDS affiliation leads to a tiff, first with her roommates, then with Aunt LaRue who accuses her of “spouting clichés” and wasting her parents’ investment in her education (287). Booed down at a rally when she argues for nonviolence, Kathy unexpectedly finds herself at odds with her SDS friends as well.

Wondering where she does belong, Kathy decides to stay a few months with her friend “Sugar” in San Francisco. It’s 1967, the Summer of Love: tunics and beads, bell-bottoms and headbands, LSD and giddy flower children “Feelin’ Groovy” (Harpers Bizarre). She soon discovers that, with her Mormon upbringing, she doesn’t belong there either and heads home to Utah as a last resort.

Diane’s ever-present mirror is, sadly, not at all magical. She remains the fairest of them all and hilariously preoccupied with her own and everyone else’s appearance, though she studiously avoids labeling anyone as either ugly or fat. For example, Lauren, the “rather big” other girl on a double-date to the BYU prom, “was wearing a powder-blue satin dress, with a scooped neckline, almost a little too low for BYU standards. The outfit seemed just a little too dainty for such a strong-looking woman. Still, she was pretty, with brown hair, teased rather high” (135). Also reflected in the mirror that weekend is her date, Kent Wade. In addition to his sartorial perfection, he excels in grooming, wearing his “hair quite short, parted, and merely combed over, with no little waves,” showing his superiority to the other “guys at the Y” who were “still wearing crew cuts—not the latest look” (137). This brief excerpt shows how wonderfully adept Hughes is at revealing personality through the cousins’ thoughts and conversation. Diane’s shallow waters become troubled at the end of her first year at the Y when she dear-Johns the adoring and sincere Kent, now on his mission, and agrees to marry self-assured and manipulative Greg who pressures her with his personal revelation, following prayer and fasting, that she is the one the Lord wants him to marry. Though family and friends warn her that Greg seems too “slick,” Diane likes the idea of marrying someone so much more “spiritual” than herself. She only regrets that now she won’t have a chance to run
Meanwhile in the GDR, Hans’s friend Berndt talks him into helping with yet another escape attempt. Berndt is shot and killed, and Hans comes under suspicion as an accomplice. The Stasi have no proof, however, so they enlist Rainer, Hans’s college roommate, asking him to befriend and report on Hans (338). Though an avowed Communist, Rainer’s loyalties become complicated by a growing attachment to Hans. Rainer even attends church in Magdeburg with Hans and has dinner with the branch president’s family, including sweet, pretty, thirteen-year-old Elli, who has a crush on one of the American Beach Boys and on her Sunday School teacher, Hans. Rainer eventually admits he has been asked to be an informant (337–39) but assures Hans, “I’ve always told him that you are silent, that you’ve told me nothing.”

“Rainer, I’ve told you everything” (339).

Hans is arrested soon thereafter and accused of treason but convicted of “a vague and less serious charge—‘Actions against the State’”—and sent to “work camp” rather than prison. Perhaps Rainer has been true to his word (398).

The title of Volume 3, How Many Roads, is taken from the highly relevant first lines of Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind”: “How many roads must a man walk down / Before you can call him a man?” The problems the cousins wrestle with in 1968–69 test their mettle and define them as adults. To his credit, Hughes does not sidestep hard questions like how a good, temple-married girl deals with divorce. At the University of Washington, Diane’s marriage to Greg, who is in law school, moves slowly and painfully toward the unthinkable, despite all her efforts to conciliate him and blame herself for his insults and indifference. Emily and Gene, married and with a child on the way, have their own quarrels to negotiate, beginning with Gene’s unwillingness to try to avoid the draft. Issues raised by the tumultuous (and yes, liberating) women’s movement also lead the young couple to question beliefs they had taken for granted about traditional gender roles and marriage. Another prickly question: How did and do faithful Mormons honestly address these potentially unsettling and difficult topics? Feminism—still something of an “f” word in Utah—taints even Diane, who secretly peruses The Feminine Mystique behind Greg’s ramrod Republican back.

Gene’s story raises several other troubling questions which persist to our day. How does a loyal citizen and/or draftee deal with misgivings about war? How is a soldier affected by the atrocities of even a just and unavoidable war? Boot camp, where Gene is singled out as a Mormon for extra abuse, is merely challenging; but his experiences in Vietnam confuse and unmoor him. Hughes’s description of Gene’s sense of disorientation and loss are poignant: “He felt as though he weren’t the same person. . . . He wasn’t sure he could ever feel the same way he once had. He missed himself: the young mis-
sionary who had returned from Germany emotionally attached to the Lord. He hadn’t thought of himself that way at the time, but when he compared the memory of his present self, he felt the loss” (371).

Through Kathy’s narrative, Hughes invites us to consider our duty and desire to reach out to others. How do we fight injustice, poverty, prejudice? Is there a way to alleviate human suffering? How can one person make a difference? Disillusioned with SDS, the counterculture, and antiwar activism, Kathy decides to try working “through the system”...as [her] father and grandfather always told her she should do” (3). She campaigns for McCarthy at the urging of Professor Jennings, a young, dynamic instructor, whose interest in Kathy goes beyond professorial. But the political process also disappoints Kathy, capped by the student riots and police brutality at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, and she graduates from Smith still with “no clear direction.” She wishes she could start over “and make a few choices along the way that wouldn’t leave her feeling so estranged from others and uncomfortable with herself” (141). In terms of faith, Kathy is learning toward Jennings’s existentialism and joins the Peace Corps, another of his suggestions. The novel ends with her stationed in the Philippines, still looking for a way to make the world better.

In the GDR, Hans’s immediate concern is simply survival. He has been transferred from work camp to solitary confinement in prison where a sadistic interrogator, Herr Felscher, attempts through deprivation and trickery to break Hans and extract information that will implicate either Hans himself or his friend Rainer. Through his long, tortuous incarceration, he is sustained by a growing spirituality and faith. He reads the Bible, the only book he is allowed; after his Bible “disappears,” he engaged his mind with composing and then memorizing sermons. His most difficult decision is an offer, which appears genuine, to be released to relatives in America, arranged by his uncle, an American congressman (295).

Longing for home, a place of refuge or respite from life’s problems, threads through Volume 4, Take Me Home, covering Christmas 1969 to the spring of 1971. But being at home isn’t always feeling at home. This is especially true for Gene who longs to escape the nightmare of the Vietnam jungles and the anguish of watching the men in his close-knit five-man Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol die horribly and too often pointlessly. Critically wounded during an ambush, Gene is sent home, survives a long series of operations and hospitalization, and returns to his family lethargic and irritable, unable to connect with his wife and toddler, who is afraid of him. His father and uncles, World War II vets, try to intervene as Gene’s flashbacks, bitterness, and flares of rage seem certain to destroy his marriage.

In Seattle, Diane, now with a baby to factor into her decisions, walks on eggshells, always anxious around Greg, trying to anticipate whether it might
be “one of those delicate times when she would have to build him up a little but not say anything that might irritate him” (110). Not doing as well as he expects to in law school (he’s still in the top 10–15 percent), Greg seesaws between episodes of violence and abject apologies to Diane, promising never to lose control again. But when she finds a suggestive note from a female law student, an argument ensues that ends with Greg pushing Diane down while she is holding the baby and punching her face. Coming home to Utah is humiliating. “She had always imagined a perfect life, a perfect family, and now it was gone” (123). Though the failure of her temple marriage feels like the ultimate defeat, Diane is at last seeing past the glittering surfaces that used to define and entrap her. She still bristles at her mother’s advice to “stop looking for your identity in some man’s eyes” and “start moving ahead with [your] life” (240), but she takes it. Working in the Weber State Union kitchen and going to school while her mom tends Jennifer, she begins to find “some real satisfaction in thinking for herself” (328).

Far from home, Kathy doesn’t miss it, but she does experience an oddly tender longing for the “disapproval” of her family. As usual, she zealously sets about improving the San Juan barrio where she is assigned as a teacher’s aide but quickly becomes frustrated when the courteous Filipinos, who “cared more about getting along than about being right,” agree to everything she asks but do nothing (27). After home visits to teach basic hygiene, she often felt “as if she had spent an hour punching a giant marshmallow... What she wished more than anything was that she could go home... She wanted to hear someone say, ‘You don’t know what you are talking about...’ She could shout at someone like that. Here, there was no one to shout at, not even anyone to dislike” (31). But she does her best. She argues with the teacher she is to assist, insults the school principal, and finally “explodes” at the mayor for stalling on his promise to construct public toilets. But no one shouts back (173). With nothing to show after a year—no hand washing, no friends or enemies, no public toilets—and relations with the mayor ruined, she plans to quit. On a vacation visit to the Bataan Peninsula, however, she reflects on her father’s war experiences there—how he had not only survived but was “so kind and caring after all he had gone through” (220)—and decides to finish out her two-year commitment, and maybe be a little less pushy.

The next year, she accepts a calling as choir director in the Makati Branch in Manila, which she had attended sporadically. Music becomes her bridge back to faith and forward to love for the Filipino people. “If you think we’re going to make the Philippines better somehow,” she tells a new Peace Corps recruit, “and do it in two years, you really should go home. The only change comes in people, and it happens one at a time, not en masse... Tamra, I’ve seen changes in some of the people in this barrio... [but] it’s
only come after I started to love them. That’s the only thing that has ever made a difference” (373–74).

Meanwhile Hans in the GDR has been released from prison on probation. Living alone in a small apartment in Leipzig, employed as a low-level draftsman, he is still a designated “enemy of the state” under unrelenting surveillance. He again teaches a youth Sunday School class, and his long evenings alone are filled with lesson preparations and reading Church-related books and old manuals that his branch president loans him. He loves learning and is getting a reputation among the members as a gospel scholar. Hans saves money out of his meager food budget for train fare to travel home to Schwerin or to Magdeberg to visit Elli, now a lovely young woman, who has written to him in prison. She is being courted by Rainer; but when she makes her interest in Hans obvious, he feels “a surge of joy and an equal stab of panic. He absolutely couldn’t encourage this girl to think that way. She had no idea how limited his future was” (79). Over the next two years, this predicament is the central, seemingly insoluble problem facing Hans. Not only does his income worsen, but the Stasi seem bent on proving Hans a traitor, and Rainer becomes a pawn in their plot to implicate Hans as an accomplice in yet another escape attempt, this time Rainer’s. Hans’s chances for marriage and family seem nonexistent until the district president calls him to be a counselor in the branch presidency and urges him not to wait too long to marry. “I promise you the Lord will open a way for you” (382).

So Much of Life Ahead, the fifth volume, covers the years 1971 to 1974 that are still fraught with ideological tension and political sea changes (Roe vs. Wade, Vietnam war escalation, Watergate, oil embargo, terrorist murders of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics), but the cousins now move forward to more spiritual depth and with hearts turned back to their parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles. Fittingly, the volume ends as the extended family gathers at Grandpa Thomas’s funeral. This is not to say life is easy for any of them. Diane is divorced, lives on Kraft macaroni and cheese, drives a beat-up Toyota, and tries to support herself and little Jenny on an elementary school teacher’s salary. When a humbled Greg—missing Jenny, still in love with Diane—begs her for another chance, she must decide if he has changed as much as she thinks she has, or if the same patterns will reassert themselves. Writing articles about Vietnam and politics, Gene finds a career path as a reporter, but his anger is still festering and barely contained. Tired of his self-pity and his refusal to get counseling, Emily leaves him. The impetus to change comes only after Gene almost kills a man who storms into the newspaper offices to rail about Gene’s anti-war editorials.

And Hans is still Hans. He vacillates between rising hopes and angry despair over every change in his fortunes: “Hans was weary of relying on faith. For so many years, every time he raised his head a little, he had gotten it
beaten back down” (128). He gets a better job and proposes to Elli; then he is demoted and breaks off the engagement, not wanting to consign her to a life of misery and poverty. This roller-coaster of hope and angry despair is frustrating to the reader, and it seems unrealistic that Elli remains committed. More upbeat, Kathy, home from the Philippines, is dating and trying to be less fiery and opinionated, not always successfully. Older, strong-minded, a Democrat, she is, understandably, having trouble finding a mate in Utah. She tries to connect with indecisive Marshall, the only beau she has ever (sort of) had, but Marshall is already engaged (sort of). Cousin Diane advises Kathy to employ her feminine wiles—and helps her invent some.

Besides recommending HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN as superlative fiction from an experienced, gifted writer, we also found it to be a potent apologetic for the virtues of the Latter-day Saint faith. Dean Hughes’s fiction shows the nitty-gritty process of saint-making at work. The cousins’ stories realistically illustrate people grappling with universal themes: How does war affect people? Is change possible for society and/or individuals? Do family/Mormon values sustain or hinder individuals when they experience the wider world? What is a proper, healthy balance in a husband-wife relationship?

Beyond these virtues, Hughes’s lengthy bibliography (located in the preface to The Writing on the Wall and in the author’s source notes in subsequent volumes) is also impressive. In addition to his general background reading, Hughes sought out LDS perspectives and experiences through interviews, books, and articles, researching topics such as Latter-day Saints in the GDR, the Peace Corps, and in Vietnam. He perused old BYU Banyans and high school yearbooks, asked Darius Gray to review and correct his use of black dialect (1:xi), and studied domestic abuse patterns as the LDS Church representative on the state Domestic Violence Coalition (4:435). This series is as much nonfiction as fiction can get and still be a terrific read.

DAWN HALL ANDERSON {dawnhall78@hotmail.com} is a business manager and freelance editor/writer. She earned a master’s degree in American literature from Brigham Young University, pursued doctoral studies at Penn State, and edited the BYU Women’s Conference volumes for more than ten years. She and her husband, Richard, have four children and two grandchildren. DLORA HALL DALTON is a medical transcriptionist, freelance editor, and voracious reader of all kinds of books. She has a bachelor’s degree in English from Brigham Young University. She and her husband, Greg, have five daughters and ten grandchildren.

Reviewed by Joe Geisner

When I was a young man, I read *Tom Sawyer* and then *Huckleberry Finn*. I found myself living with Tom and Huck, rafting down the Mississippi, whitewashing the fence, or wandering in the cave. Reading *Stories of Young Pioneers* by Violet Kimball was pretty much the same kind of an experience because these are the stories of children and youth under eighteen crossing the plains, Rocky Mountains, and Sierra Nevadas. Kimball quotes from almost a hundred journals, diaries, autobiographies, or reminiscences. These sources are interwoven by a master historian of the pioneer migration to the American West.

Kimball begins the book (Chapter 1) with the preparations these young pioneers’ families made to head out for the West. Kimball allows us to feel what it must have been like to leave all of your possessions behind and travel to an unknown land. Many times the children could not take a doll or pet because of the room and/or provisions. In Chapter 2, Kimball gives an overview of daily life, including descriptions of the different modes of transportation: the ox-drawn wagon, the horse-drawn buggy, or the human-drawn handcart.

Chapter 2 overviews the three major trails: California, Oregon and Mormon. She vividly records such landmarks as Independence Rock, Scotts Bluff, or Chimney Rock that the pioneer children would see, explore, and leave graffiti on. The next seven chapters discuss themes of the trail experience: activities and recreation (Chapter 3); work habits, schooling, punishment (Chapter 4); interaction with Indians (Chapter 5); courting and marriage (Chapter 6); pioneer dangers and death (Chapter 7); animals, both wild and domestic (Chapter 9); and the adventure and difficulty of trail life.

Many children died before reaching their final destination. A particularly moving story is that of Nancy Hill, about age twenty, traveling from Missouri to California. Nancy died in Wyoming in 1852. Her sweetheart, identified only as Mr. Wright, stayed at the gravesite for two days while the wagons traveled on. He visited the gravesite at least three more times, the last time when he was in his eighties. He asked a local person to care for the grave, and today it is guarded by an iron fence (116–17). Kimball tells another story about a dog that protected his master’s wagon near Independence Rock. Even when the dog was dying from starvation and thirst, he growled as other pioneers tried to approach the grave (156–57). These stories are incredible but true. Their impact makes history important for all of us.

In an epilogue, Kimball concludes by explaining what these young people found when they reached their “paradise” in Utah, California, or Oregon.
Kimball is writing this book for children, trying to give them the feel of what it was like to travel across the American West to a new home. She also dedicates the book to her grandchildren: “May you meet life’s challenges with the courage and fortitude of the young people featured in this book.” I am not a child, but I was captivated by the stories these young people tell of their joys, adventures, isolation, and loss. Kimball’s deep knowledge of trail history makes this book a page turner for both child and adult readers.

There are some real treasures in this book. One of my favorite comes in Kimball’s conclusion: “These young emigrants helped change history. They saw major changes over their lifetimes, going from the covered wagon to the steam-powered train, the automobile, and the airplane. In the 1920s Benjamin Bonney looked back to his trail days of 1845 and 1846 with nostalgia: “When I tell my grandchildren about the old days, about the plains being dark with buffalo, about the Indians and mining camps, they look at me as if I could not be telling the truth. These old days are gone forever, and the present generation can never know the charm and romance of the old west (203–4).

I have two wishes that would have made this book perfect. First, I wish it had been done with a cloth binding instead of as a less permanent paperback. Second, I wish Kimball had included source notes. Thanks to the comprehensive bibliography, most of the quotations can be identified, but a few items are elusive. While these two wishes reflect a professional desire, perhaps more important is the accessibility of this book, aiding it in satisfying the young among us and the young in all of us.

JOSEPH GEISNER (rbssman@hotmail.com) and his wife provide residential care for the developmentally disabled. He is a lover of books and history.


Reviewed by Neal Chandler

As the title clearly implies, We Were Not Alone is an affirming and reassuring book. It is also appalling. In no small measure this is due to the terrible time and circumstances it recounts. The story begins in the spring of 1938 in Leipzig from which the Hilbert family—parents Paul and Maria, four daughters, and two sons—is preparing to move. Five and half years
earlier, Paul refused to join the Nazi Party, declaring that his life’s allegiance was to Jesus Christ. That statement cost him his job, and ever since then he has been without regular employment.

Now the family anticipates more security as they move to Berlin where Paul has found a permanent position. But by the fall of 1939, the war has begun, both sons have been drafted, and Paul, who has been called as branch president, has also had to conduct dicey negotiations with an older sister who wants to hang a picture of Hitler in the meeting hall. The family hunkers down and prays for a quick end to the war and the boys’ return. Then, of course, things get worse.

As the conflict drags on, both sons are transferred to the eastern front, and the family learns to its horror that Germany has invaded Russia. Then the Allied air raids begin. By page 42 Paul announces that, because of the bombing, his company will be moving to Thuringen but he cannot take the family. So begins the bulk and the strength of the memoir: Mother Maria and the four daughters (Karola, Edith, Esther, and Ursula), ranging from eleven to eighteen in 1841, are a household struggling through the remaining catastrophes of World War II, keeping the fragmented family together, keeping up Church activity and faith, finding work and food in the collapsing economy, surviving the air raids and terrible carpet bombing, and then overwhelmed by the apocalyptic end-game as the victorious Russian army secures the German capital with a tidal wave of rape. The long dénouement shows the city and people in ruin, under constant threat from marauding Russians, dangling over the edge of starvation.

In the end, all of the Hilbert men return home alive and uninjured—an uncommon blessing—but Paul Hilbert is unwilling even to talk about how he spent the final years of the war. After the opening chapters, the men in the book recede before the strong voices and developed characters of the women who carry the narrative. The story ends with the Berlin blockade, but also—and in counterpoint—an inspiring visit from Apostle Ezra Taft Benson. A brief afterword reports that all family members lived through the war and escaped the Soviet occupation; several emigrated to the United States.

For all the weight of the subject matter, the book reads easily, making use of the tools of fiction to enact its true-life account. Written largely in vividly set scenes, the story is often driven by dialogue. We see and hear and come to care about developed characters in direct interaction with each other. The first-person narrator, Karola, youngest of the Hilbert daughters, gives us access to her young mind through extended interior monologues. This means, of course, that the nonfiction story has been fictionalized. No one remembers word-for-word a conversation from last week or last month, let alone dozens of conversations sixty or more years ago. And the child-
hood thoughts recounted here are not the thoughts of then, but a reconstruction, reshaped by the maturing, the musing, the memory losses, additions, and distortions of six decades, something rather like a game of telephone played with one’s changing self and, in this case, with the cooperating coauthor, Karola’s daughter, Patricia Reese Roper.

In the book we also see the ragged, quotidian progressions of life reshaped by exigencies of plot. By telescoping time and by other techniques, the authors maintain a high level of suspense that keeps us turning pages. These are a novelist’s techniques but not foreign to memoir, and they account for a great part of the pleasure we take in any literary writing. In a late chapter of the book, Karola, now fifteen or sixteen, follows a tip and takes a train far out into the countryside to look for food among the farmers. When she arrives, she strikes off on a different, far less traveled path than the many others who’ve traveled out with the same intention. After a long, discouraging march, finally she spots a “clump of trees and red rooftops” signaling a village in the distance.

That was wonderful, until to my horror I noticed the large cluster of buildings between the village and myself. The structures were made from a reddish brown brick and looked like a former German army garrison. I knew that the garrison would now be occupied by Russian soldiers.

I was stunned. We needed food desperately, but I wasn’t willing to walk by the garrison at the risk of being raped or murdered. It was too late to return to the end station and try going another way. Everyone would have come to the farms long before I did and I wouldn’t have a chance to trade for food. There simply wasn’t time for all that and making the evening train, too.

I sat on a tree stump by the roadside to think of a solution. I was thinking so hard I didn’t hear the farmer until he was almost next to me. He was driving a broken old cart pulled by a slow gray mule that was flecked with dried mud. . . . The smell of manure came from the cart. (185–86)

Karola has an idea, a solution to the immediate crisis; but that idea will surely not make it easier for her to present herself to a farmer and convince him to sell her food for money that is next to worthless now that there is almost nothing to buy, nor will it guarantee her safe passage past the same menacing Russian garrison in time to meet the only train. And should she succeed, she and we know that she cannot take this risk just once. Her family is starving. Her mother, frantic over her hungry children, refuses to eat. Karolina will have to place herself in jeopardy again and again. This cannot go well. So even if it’s past your bed time, even if this is foolish and you have an early meeting in the morning, you will just have to stay up and read the chapter to its end.

Here and throughout the book the yield of memory is shaped by the story teller’s craft; but as with all our memories generally and with conscious
rigor in the writing of memoir, it is shaped as well by other factors. The memoirist’s work, writes Swen Birkerts, is a “braiding of circumstance and reflection,” the goal of which is “to give the reader both the unprocessed feeling of the world as [she] saw it then and a reflective vantage that suggests that these events made a different kind sense over time” (Memoir succeeds when the author’s way of making sense of experience resonates with the reader. When it does not, it seems flat or rings false.

In We Were Not Alone the applied framework of meaning is already explicit in the title. It is faith and, pointedly, in this personal history published by Deseret Book, the LDS faith. From the outset we encounter, on the one hand, the upright, faithful, and often courageous behaviors of the Hilbert family and, on the other hand in evident response, the merciful, intervening hand of God.

Beginning with an insistent and, as it turns out, life-saving prompting about which Berlin apartment the family should take, the family is carried forward on a wave of divine interventions: sudden intuitions to flee to the bomb shelter, to avoid a street or building, to seek out a Church member in unannounced crisis. Neighbors come to believe that so long as the Hilberts are present, their apartment building will be safe from bombs. And indeed, it is on a Sunday when the family chooses, despite the dangers, to attend church that the neighborhood is devastated by an air raid. Even then, they return to discover their own building still standing among the ruins. Again and again new perils confront them, and again and again providence intervenes. Even fortuitous changes of the general circumstances are “no accident” (126). And when a Russian soldier pursues Karola’s sister Edith through the cellar, intent on raping her, a virtual “heavenly being” (121) steps in to stop it. The god-from-the-machine who eventually snatches the young narrator from the jaws of that Russian garrison performs a miracle of Old Testament dimensions.

At another point, Karola finds herself deeply disheartened. She questions God and is struggling to accept the family’s suffering when suddenly her anguish is stilled by revelation. The answer to her own questions startles her: “If Hitler hadn’t come to power, we might never have had the opportunity to show the Lord how much we would endure because we loved him and would stand up for his gospel” (69). Tearfully, she thanks God for providing this opportunity.

It is, of course, gratifying to learn that a good LDS man had the courage to stand up in some small way to the totalitarian politics of Nazism and

---

that he and his family endured the consequences of this decision with grace and devotion to their convictions, fiercely protecting one another and, where possible, aiding others around them. This is a deeply admirable family, and it is comforting to think that, because of their particular faithfulness, they received divine protection.

On the other hand, it is deeply disturbing to believe this. When Edith is so miraculously saved from the drunken rapist, he simply seeks out a different victim. Soon her desperate pleas and screams fill both the building and the page, mixed with the harsh laughter of soldiers. This girl, we learn from Karola, is only thirteen. “After the darkest eternity, it was finally over” (123). The silenced victim disappears from the book. She will not, however, easily disappear from the reader’s mind, which must ask what she had done—in fact, what other neighbors, those who’d lost children or siblings or parents or limbs or their homes with all their possessions—had done or not done to be left to these terrible fates while one family was repeatedly preserved from such harm.

There is certainly no hint of condemnation from Karola, who expresses only sympathy and concern for these others, but what else are we to conclude from the frame of understanding that she uses to make sense of her experiences: that, had the others managed to get life’s formula right—the one true church, the restored gospel, acceptable prayers, the proper intensity of faith—they, too, might have been spared.

This is not moral condemnation. Their sin would be one neither of commission nor omission, but rather of ignorance. The perpetrator here, the character who turns out mean and unsavory, is God, who reveals himself partisan and tribal, a legalistic respecter of persons after all and tolerant of the sacrifice of virgins, at least if they are Gentile. It is here, navigating toward understanding with a familiar, correlated compass, that the memoir runs aground on the problem of evil.

And still, though flawed, I believe We Were Not Alone is valuable, not merely as an engaging story but as a document of the time and underreported circumstances of Germany’s destruction, especially its cities, in the closing years of the war. This is one of very few books, all either long neglected or appearing some six decades after the war’s end, to tell the story of the air raids and the razing of German cities. Over 600,000 civilians died. More than 3.5 million homes were destroyed, yet for over half a century in Germany this devastation remained largely unexplained and well beyond any national capacity for reflection.

On my shelf, We Were Not Alone stands next to a published diary

whose author remains anonymous: *A Woman in Berlin* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003). It is the account of a sophisticated young journalist who finds herself very much alone during and after the conquest of the city. Much of what she writes confirms Karola Hilbert’s experience, often in such closely parallel detail that one wonders if these women might not have been neighbors. Unlike the Hilberts, however, this woman is not preserved from rape. Like most attractive younger women, she is raped and raped repeatedly. When she deliberately identifies a Russian officer and entices him to become her “protector” and save her at least from sexual turf-battles among soldiers and noncoms, we can’t help applauding her pragmatism. Later in a subsequent strategic refinement, she moves on from a sexually avid lieutenant to a slightly wounded and more inhibited major. “I am essentially living off my body,” she writes at one point, “trading it for something to eat” (116). She has become sexual flotsam, but is managing as best she can to stay afloat and to feed her landlady as well as her landlady’s hypochondriac lodger. Soon, the opening question among Berlin’s women has become, not Were you raped? but rather, How often? (147). And the subsequent options are either daily cooperation with rape or starvation. To the divinely protected who are “preserved” from such choices, starving might seem appealing, but such subjective perspectives have, according to W. G. Sebald, “only qualified value, and need to be supplemented by what a synoptic and artificial view reveals.”

Here he means a more objective and systematic, scientifically or historically constructed view. If all the women raped immediately after the conquest of Berlin had chosen “virtue” over life, civilian deaths in that city alone would have soared, according to best estimates, by another 95 to 130 thousand; many thousands of them children; and meanwhile, the number of orphans would have risen exponentially.

There were, of course, women who survived the city’s conquest with “virtue” intact, though not all were virtuous, some not remotely, and many, including the un- and the irreligious, escaped, as they themselves conceded, though blind luck. Surveying such circumstances, the author of *A Woman in Berlin*, who is youngish but well beyond “childhood piety,” offers her own framework of explanation:

> The sum total of tears always stays the same. . . . No matter what flag or system of government, no matter which gods are worshipped or what the average income is, the sum total of tears, pain and fear that every person must pay for his existence is a constant. And so balance is maintained: well-fed nations wallow in neurosis and excesses, while people plagued

---


with suffering, as we are now, may rely on numbness and apathy to help see them through . . . . [It] is all part of natural law. (174)

Hers is a secular and roughly scientific view, a quantum way of making sense of catastrophe, and paradoxically it requires no pointed fingers. It makes room even for God to stand and look on in heartbroken sympathy with the fallen world.

The books named here are best read, I believe, together and in context with some few others for counterpoint and corrective. There are important areas of agreement. Almost all, for instance, confirm that Berlin during the Allied air raids was a city of women and children. German men were at the front. In the last year, at the pinnacle of the bombing, even very old men and pre-adolescent boys had been drafted into the Volkssturm and marched off to be ground up by the advancing Allied troops. When the British and Americans chose to carpet German cities with incendiary bombs, transforming whole districts and suburbs into crematoria, women and children were the principal targets. This is one reason these horrific raids did not, as Allied commanders learned but ignored, materially effect German military resistance nor even morale.

The women themselves, exemplified in both autobiographical works discussed here, show amazing courage and resilience under unthinkable circumstances. It is impossible not to admire them, those fortuitously or divinely “preserved” but also and sometimes especially the ravaged, as we perceive, not surprisingly, that their wisdom and character and human value have nothing to do with coerced sexual violation. It is surely a mark of the still-arrested development in “enlightened” Western culture that the author of *A Woman in Berlin* felt constrained to remain anonymous. I suspect that, within our own conservative Mormon culture, had one or more of the Hilbert women been raped, Deseret Book would not have published *We Were Not Alone*. Karola would likely not have chosen to write it. I believe the truth of this statement is self-evident as is also the truth of its shadow corollary: that these women would remain no less admirable and their story no less worth telling. Sometimes—more often and more inescapably than we would like to admit—even the best of us is alone.

NEAL CHANDLER, a one-time German professor and, with his wife, Rebecca Worthen Chandler, a past co-editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, directs the creative writing program at Cleveland State University.
The *Journal of Mormon History* invites contributions to this department, particularly of privately published family histories, local histories, biographies, historical fiction, publications of limited circulation, or those in which historical Mormonism is dealt with as a part or minor theme.


This young adult novel, winner of the “Mayhaven Award for Children’s Fiction,” is set in Springville, Utah, but has no identifiable Mormon elements, despite meticulously recreated settings (including one map of the village and another of “Wild Bunch” country taking in parts of Wyoming and Colorado.

“The tale of six boys, two dogs and a passel of impulsive detours started during the fourth grade” (10) on Thanksgiving day, 1951. The fourth-grade narrator’s father tells the story of his own grandfather, Joseph Allen, who was part of a posse trailing three bandits who robbed the local bank in May 1898. Allen killed one but a bullet wound to his leg later necessitated its amputation. A third bandit escaped leaving $600 unaccounted for. Tip becomes obsessed with finding the missing treasure.

The other members of the gang are his best friend Deej, slow-talking Nat, compulsively spitting Tom, ambitious Bungy, and mama’s boy but intellectual Bernie, whose grandfather had also been in the posse. Deej has a dream of his own—building a boat with which to explore the local lake. When one of their “detours” uncovers a piece of a saddlebag in the muck along the lakeshore, they combine both dreams.

Enough entertaining detours have intervened that by then that it takes them to the sixth grade: chewing raw wheat into gum (95), hypnotizing frogs (99–100), stoning hornet nests (105), stealing fish from the hatchery (75), making and becoming adept at slingshots (115), experimenting with what a goat...
would eat (120–21), building a treehouse, messing with fireworks (171–78), and finally developing qualms of conscience when they steal enough lumber to build Deej’s boat. The ending combines a satisfactory conclusion to their treasure quest and poetic justice.


*From Plowboy to Prophet* begins with Joseph Smith’s birth, relates his adolescence, time of religious discovery, adult trials, and his hardships as translator of the Book of Mormon and founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It closes with his martyrdom. This book was written for a young audience with short chapters and an interactive style. Morton typically addresses the reader directly about certain ideas and prompts the reader to look up scriptures.

For example, Morton talks about Martin Harris’s trip to New York to meet with Professor Charles Anthon about the scriptures translated by Joseph Smith. Morton prompts readers to turn to Isaiah 29:11: “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.” Morton then goes on to talk about how Martin Harris’s trip fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy (24).

As another example, in writing about Joseph Smith’s ability to withstand persecution as news first spread of Joseph’s first revelation Morton states, “The courage which the boy displayed was truly marvelous. From every quarter he received bitter persecution, but as the Prophet Daniel stood undaunted in the midst of lions, so Joseph Smith stood in the midst of his enemies. He never flinched from his position” (12).

Pen and ink illustrations by well-known artist L. A. Ramsey depict eight landmark occasions of Joseph Smith’s life. While the illustrations appeared to be detailed and carefully constructed, the copies in this book are not unclearly reproduced.

The paperback gluing and binding were inadequate. During reading, several pages broke loose from the binding and the book cover came unglued from the spine.


An important part of intelligence operations during World War II was avoiding code-breaking by the enemy. A secret weapon in America’s arsenal was the “code talkers,” young Navajo men who were recruited to communicate with each other in Navajo and in code, making it impossible for the Germans and Japanese to decipher the messages. In *The Warrior’s Code*, Victor Bishop, a young Navajo re-
turned missionary, discovers that his deceased grandfather, Lee Benally had been a code talker during World War II. Victor pieces together the friendships and bravery of his grandfather’s life in the military, an experience that Lee never spoke of in his lifetime.

The emphasis is on the human interest story of Victor’s quest to reconstruct his grandfather’s life, rather than on the history of this group, who were often treated as foreigners in their home country. Lee had been present to see the American flag raised at Iwo Jima and had even held the bag of the photographer who took the famous picture.

Victor puts the story together through reading his grandfather’s old letters, questioning his mother (Lee’s daughter), and experiencing dreams. A white owl guides Victor through these revelations, and each appearance of the owl brings Victor closer to knowing his grandfather’s life.

What he finally puts together is a story about comradeship among soldiers. Lee is someone special among the Navajo code talkers for he can act as a medicine man on their behalf. White soldiers also respect him because, as a code talker, he can call for life-saving air strikes and backup.

Mormonism does not play an important role in the book. Although Victor is a returned missionary, Lee is not. Lee carries a Book of Mormon in remembrance of his older brother, who died in World War II, but it receives little attention and the brother’s possible religious feelings are not developed. Lee displays no real interest in Mormonism.

Victor views some Navajo traditions as simple superstition but respects others as ancestral beliefs, partly because they are vindicated through enriched experience with his grandfather. By the end of the book, he sees much of worth in his grandfather’s religion and even begins to see the white owl as associated with his grandfather’s spirit.

That enriched relationship is the novel’s emotional center. Lee had earlier commented that Victor “has been away too long” and is “forgetting where [he] came from” (60). Although at the beginning of the story, Victor thinks that he “has heard all of the stories” (61), he comes to understand that his grandfather was not naïve, but that “his heart and spirit were always here [in Arizona]. And here they will stay. Forever” (131).


He tells twenty stories, ranging in length from two to six pages. Each story gives full names for some of those involved, locations, and dates. The stories do not form a connected narrative or attempt to re-
port the history of the Church in Samoa. Shute explains: “I don’t intend this little book to be as comprehensive as the history [of the Church in Samoa] by the Harrises [Carl and Melonie Harris]. Rather, I wish to tell a few stories, providing more detail that can be included in a more comprehensive book; there is a place for both kinds of history” (2). From each account, Shute draws lessons that he learned from each episode.

Some of the stories give example of clash points between the different cultures, sometimes between the matai chief system and the priesthood or between Samoan and American culture, even by those who share the same faith. For example, President Shute once needed to go to the west side of the island, planning to return quickly to Faaala on the east side. He took his first counselor, Wallace Ualifi Tauailii, for the two and a half hour drive; but a violent rainstorm had caused the river to rise, flooding the road. The two men were stranded, waiting for the river to go down.

After we sat for a bit, I began feeling a bit impatient. In his characteristically direct but nonoffensive way, Ualifi observed, “You know, President, there are times when there is no other recourse in life but to be patient. This is one of those occasions. We must sit here and be patient.”

He’d assessed the situation perfectly and shared a perfect statement of fact at the perfect place to make the statement. There are times when we can do nothing but wait, no matter how much we want to get going, speed up things, or do something. There are times when you might just as well calm down, sit down, and wait it out. This was one of those times.”

I did tease him a little though. “Ualifi,” I said, “if you had greater faith, say like Moses, you would go out there, find a staff, a branch or something and you would part these waters so that we could cross.”

He responded with a thunderous laugh and said, “President, with our luck, the staff would turn into a snake!” (54–55)


This book focuses on places and events important during the New York period of Mormonism’s development. Each of the twelve chapters focuses on a different topic: “sacred gardens” (the Garden of Eden and the Sacred Grove), Joseph Smith’s foreordination, the First Vision, the visitation of Moroni, events at Hill Cumorah, Joseph’s obtaining the gold plates, seer stones and other revelatory instruments, items viewed by the Three Witnesses, other heavenly messengers, and marvelous experiences near Cumorah.

Dana explains his purpose as “present[ing] unique teachings and doctrines that are not widely known” concerning “sacred places, angelic visitations, and instruments of revelation” (preface).

This book was a conglomeration
of interesting tidbits designed to
pique the casual reader's interest but
without lingering on any one topic.
For instance, during Zion's Camp
(which was nowhere near Cumorah,
since it occurred between Ohio and
Missouri), Dana spends only one
page on the skeleton of Zelph, whom
Joseph Smith identified as a Nephite
prophet, leaving unanswered such
questions as when and how Joseph
Smith learned about Zelph and what
influence the episode had on those
who witnessed it.

The prose was quite repetitive.
The morning of the First Vision is de-
scribed as a "beautiful, clear day
early in the spring" four times in five
pages (15, 16, 18, 19). Efforts to pro-
mote a positive image of the Church
yields such logical lapses as his argu-
ment that Joseph Smith must have
had a right to visit Cumorah: "Be-
cause the Lord and his Church re-
spect the legal rights of ownership,
we may properly suppose that no one
owned this hill."

Steven L. Olsen. The Mormon Ideol-
ogy of Place: Cosmic Symbolism of the
City of Zion, 1830–1846. Ph.D.
diss., University of Chicago, 1985;
printed, Provo, Utah: Joseph Field-
ing Smith Institute for Latter-day
Dissertations in LDS History Series.
vii, 139 pp. Illustrations, town and
temple plans and layouts, maps,
notes, bibliography, and index. Pa-

The dissertation is organized into
six chapters. Author Steven L.
Olsen explains in the first chapter,
"Given the number, variety and
quality of studies of Mormon set-
tlement, one would naturally ques-
tion the value of yet another ap-
proach to this phenomenon. How-
ever, several important limitations
characterize the existing literature.
These could be corrected by an an-
thropological perspective" (14),
which this dissertation supplies.

Chapters 2–5 examine the sym-
bolism of Mormon settlements in
Independence, Kirtland, Far West,
and Nauvoo respectively. Chapter 6
summarizes the shift in symbolism
from one settlement to the next.
The epilogue finishes the story and
begins another by introducing the
territorial symbolism of Salt Lake
City.

Culturally, this study is very sig-
nificant as Mormons still wait the
establishment of a city of Zion in In-
dependence, Missouri (25). In fact,
establishing this city is doctrinally
considered one of several necessary
preparations for the second coming
of Jesus Christ (Moses 7:62).

Olsen examines the symbolism
of the city of Zion between 1830
and 1846 in each of the Mormon
gathering places listed above in
terms of the cultural significance of
the location ("centripetality"), lay-
out ("cardinality") and social orga-
nization ("inductance"). Olsen uses
these three characteristics to ex-
plore shifts in the cultural and sym-
bolic significance of the Mormon
ideology of place.

In the first chapter, he briefly ex-
amines Book of Mormon center
places, each built around a temple
(20). Chapter 1 also describes Mor-
mon efforts to lay claim to Zion in
the promised land of Independence,
Missouri. Zion was to be the
ideal in location, in layout, and in social organization. Yet, “Zion’s ideal urban society would be permeated by religion. Religion, not the government, would ensure domestic tranquility. Religion, not the military, would provide for a common defense. Religion, not the market, would promote the general welfare” (25).

However, the ideal Mormon society "was fundamentally opposed to the individualistic and materialistic society of frontier America. The ‘law of consecration and stewardship’ eliminated property rights in fee simple, which ran counter to the deeply felt American right to own property. The absolute authority claimed by Smith violated the sacred American right to self-determination” (33).

Failure to establish their communitarian utopia resulted and successive gathering places lost ground symbolically. For example, although Kirtland, like Independence, was centered around a temple, it was secondary to Independence in terms of symbolic location. As Gentiles mixed with and were increasingly allowed to integrate into the society of each gathering place, the symbolism of layout was interrupted by more typical American town patterns, interfering with the city of Zion’s revealed layout.

Socially, the Saints were forced to redefine their cultural identity and their personal perspective of their own status and relationship with God. By 1839 they saw no hope of redeeming Zion in territorial terms to secure themselves as the covenant people of God and establish the order of Enoch. A resulting shift in symbolism and validation occurred as a result with more emphasis being placed on temple work. Sealing families became a higher priority in the work of salvation and redemption than physically securing Zion.


Although Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy has written two previous books based on his personal experiences,1 Anytime, Anywhere is an unprecedented look into the day-to-day life and travels of a modern-day General Authority. Although not an autobiography, the book is arranged chronologically and presents diverse reflections and spiritual experiences covering almost thirty years of Elder Groberg’s life of service to the Church from 1976 to 2005. Many intimate experiences included in this book appear to be verbatim copies from Groberg’s personal diary. This thirty-two-chapter book is written to inspire and uplift the reader. “I dedicate this book to the youth, including my own children and grandchildren, and say: You are sons and daughters of God. You are the hope of the world. Resting upon your shoulders is the

---

1In the Eye of the Storm, reprinted as The Other Side of Heaven: The Memoirs of John H. Groberg (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993); and The Fire of Faith.
future of the Church and the world. I know that with God’s help you and your future families can and will live the gospel fully and carry off this saving assignment with dignity and success. Never question your heritage, your ability, or your destiny” (v–vi).

In *Anytime, Anywhere*, Groberg openly shares spiritual and even mystical religious experiences and miracles, including experiences with the dead. For example, Groberg states: “Many years later, I was walking through downtown Hong Kong with nothing particular on my mind when I suddenly felt the presence of Asi [a Tongan friend who had died some years earlier]. While totally unexpected, her presence was very real. I was excited to visit with her once again. Everything seemed so natural that I immediately began a conversation with her in Tongan. She asked about my feet. I told her that we were fine and that I often walked to work. She smiled. For some reason, I had a great desire to show her around Hong Kong. She sensed my desire and said, ‘Ta o!’ (Let’s go!”) (62). Groberg then describes the tour that followed, and their shared pleasure at the city’s beautiful and curious items.

Although Groberg’s focus is on spiritual experiences and his service as a General Authority, he also comments briefly about the difficulties of devoting full-time service to the Church, especially the resulting demands on his family. “Sometimes storms come with little or no warning—no one is immune,” he acknowledges (101) and comments on sacrifices required of his wife in raising their large family during his service as a General Authority. In addition, Groberg comments briefly on death threats directed at him in Hawaii (102). However, these difficulties receive much less attention than the spiritual gains of serving in the Church and serving others.


In his prologue, Werner Klein explains, “The Lord did watch over me and my family during times of often unbelievable agony, trials, and tribulations. . . . I will be ever grateful to my Lord and Savior—The Shepherd—who kept a lonely boy ever within his sight and under His protecting care” (xi).

This memoir of Germany during the second World War begins with the poverty that afflicted the Klein family in the aftermath of the Great Depression. He was the third of Emil and Emma Klein’s four children: Horst (born 1924), Siegfried (1926), Werner (1929), and Elsa (1932). Emil and Emma had joined the Church in East Prussia thanks to the efforts of American missionaries, and were baptized in the Baltic Sea. They moved to Landsberg, Germany, where their children were baptized at age eight. Their small LDS branch had about twenty members.

Klein describes Nazi indoctrination efforts in public schools, the Hitler Youth organization, and the increasing desperation of the Ger-
man government as the war continued. Werner’s father and two older brothers were all drafted between 1939 and 1944. This left Klein, at age fifteen, to care for twelve-year-old Elsa and their mother. The important roles played by his faith in God and the prayers of his mother are strong themes throughout his narrative.

The worst experiences of the war began shortly after December 1944 when the Russian army reached Landsberg. “They caused terror wherever they went. Many homes that had escaped the bombings were burned down. The men plundered the houses and raped young girls and old women” (18). He continues:

One morning, a Russian soldier came into our house, walked into the bedroom, and motioned for Elsa to come in. He put his rifle down, leaning it against a chair, and again motioned for my sister to come in. My mother and I watched in horror, not knowing what to do. I could see and hear my mother praying with terror in her eyes. I concluded that I would grab the soldier’s gun and shoot him. No matter what, I would not stay there and let him rape my little sister. Some kind of miracle took place. The man picked up his gun and left the house without saying a word. We felt that, once again, we had been protected by a higher power. (20)

Shortly after the soldiers’ arrival, Klein was sent to a Russian concentration camp in Schwiebus with the other young men and women of his city. “In a concentration camp, there is daily a fight for existence, a continuous struggle for something to eat that will keep you alive” (34). Some-time before May 1945, Klein escaped from the camp and made a harrowing journey back to his mother and sister. The war ended soon thereafter, but “the peace that followed was worse than the war…. People suffered even more because of starvation, suppression, oppression, and all kinds of inhumanities” (55).

At the end of the war, Werner, Elsa, and Emma were forced out of their home by Polish troops who occupied the region. With the help of the Church, the family relocated to the city of Cottbus, where they were reunited with Emil. They never located Horst or Siegfried or even had news confirming their deaths. From 1956 to 1958, Klein served as a full-time missionary in East Germany. During this time, “the local governments watched us closely, hoping to find some reason for shutting the Church down. We therefore must be doubly careful of what we said and did” (98). After his mission, Klein joined the Circus Busch as an assistant animal trainer and traveled to the Czech Republic.

The autobiography concludes with only a sketchy summary. In 1961, four months before the Berlin Wall was erected, Klein escaped from East Germany and moved to Heidelberg where he made maps for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and later worked as an illustrator for the University of Heidelberg. He eventually immigrated to the United States where he currently lives with his wife Linda. He does not provide any more information about his current location, children, profession, etc.

Robyn Heirtzler’s novel, *My Spiritual Trail,* takes young adult readers on the emotional journey involved in finding one’s place in the world. Cast in the form of a diary beginning in 1862, this novel recounts the experience of fifteen-year-old Cateline Fortier, an orphan raised on a farm in an unspecified locale by her aunt and uncle. When she wishes to learn more about her mother and escape the small confines of the farm, she takes a train to find her mother’s sister, Jolie, also in an unspecified locale. When she learns that Jolie’s family is all dead of illness, she seeks work and is hired to travel across the plains, caring for the children of a newly widowed Mormon father, Kirk White. In addition to homemaking skills and establishing quick rapport with four-year-old Martha and year-old Samuel, she shoots game to help feed the family and other travelers.

But once she reaches Utah, she still wonders about her place. Is it with this family? With Colier, a trail friend her own age who now wants more than just friendship? Or perhaps it might be with these “religious kind of people” (23), the Mormons. Raised without religion, she observes the Mormon way of life: “They say prayers over everything and they all call each other Brother and Sister even though I don’t think any of them really are. They even have their own book, the *Book of Mormon*” (28). She refuses invitations to attend services, explaining that religion is fine for some people, “but it’s not for me” (38). When reading the Book of Mormon aloud to Ashley, the dying wife, Cateline finds its language and ideas confusing.

In Salt Lake City, she helps in the polygamous Pratt family’s store in exchange for room and board. Although she rejects the idea of sharing a husband, she has to admit that the wives live together in love and happiness. At age sixteen, she begins building her own home and is pleasantly surprised by assistance from Mormon neighbors. She becomes a successful trader with Indians and travelers but admits she is “not completely” happy (79).

During long, lonely months in her isolated cabin, she begins reading the Book of Mormon again and experiences peace. She corresponds with Kirk White, who reports that the children still miss her. He brings the children south for a joyous reunion, Cateline is baptized, and they marry. She happily records in her diary: “I have never been happier in my life, and I know this is what God wants for me” (153).


Despite the generalization in the title, the book concentrates on Fawn Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith,* the
Mormon Prophet (1945, 2d ed. 1971), analyzing her biases, techniques, and achievements as a historian. "While Fawn Brodie did not appear to write with malice," Wixom summarizes, "the bottom line is that she was never able to write from the eyes of her subject’s followers with as much zeal as she did from the eyes of his severest critics. That cripples her work from the first page. Cloaked behind an aura of superior scholarship, Brodie not only affixed the barnacle of an occasional bias on the good ship History but also sank the entire vessel. Or rather, she tried to keep the ship from reaching water" (183).

Wixom, a journalist, deals with, among other issues, Brodie’s psychological analysis of Joseph Smith as an imposter, his apparently overwhelming charisma, the First Vision, her treatment of the Bainbridge hearing, the Book of Mormon (she saw A View of the Hebrews as a source), and Brodie’s looseness in generalizing beyond the documents, not treating critically chains of hearsay sources, confidently explaining what her characters were thinking, and creating conversations.

Unfortunately, as an example of Brodie’s “silly conversations,” Wixom cites Joseph’s agonized outcry when Martin Harris confesses that he has lost the 116 pages of Book of Mormon manuscript: “Brodie has Joseph saying, ‘I must return to my wife with such a tale as this. . . . I dare not do it, lest I should kill her at once.’” Wixom notes that Brodie does not footnote this statement, which he finds an illogical “benign innovation” (67). It is not, however, Brodie’s invention but appears in Lucy Mack Smith’s narrative of Joseph Smith, which Wixom lists in his bibliography in two different editions (RLDS 1912, and “Book-craft 1901”).

Rather puzzlingly, considering that Wixom faults writing techniques more appropriate for a novel, he recommends: “As a sleuth for truth, she must do as the great London detective Sherlock Holmes did” (106). Holmes was, of course, a fictional creation.

In a future printing, he will want to correct the typographical errors of “Brighurst” for “Bringhurst” and “LeSueaur” for “LeSueur” (186).


This book is the Mormon offering in a series on American religions with general editors Jon Butler and Harry Stout. “The aim of this book,” say the authors, “is to explain how Mormons feel about their religion and how they hold on to their faith in the modern era” (xi). Without notes, the briskly paced and concise narrative is organized in eight chapters: “Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” 1820–30, “Zion, 1831–37,” Nauvoo, 1838–46, “The Westward Trek, 1846–69,” “Building the Kingdom, 1847–69,” “Mormon Women, 1831–90” (the first date mentioned in this chapter is 1842), “Mormons in the
The chapter on “Building the Kingdom” covers the early (pre-railroad) pioneer period, describing the arduous trek and suffering from short rations in the early years, exacerbated by attacks of the crickets and rescues by the seagulls, a brief description of early Church services, and the process of “calls” to found new colonies in irrigable valleys and along transportation routes. “The area within this ring stretched for a thousand miles north to south and eight hundred miles from east to west, encompassing one sixth of the present area of the United States” (51). It continues with conflicts with federal officials, the Mormon Reformation, and the Utah War. The description of the Mountain Meadows Massacre is a traditional but even-handed account:

At this time of fear, suspicion, and extreme feelings, as the Mormons prepared to defend themselves, a disastrous massacre occurred at Mountain Meadows, two hundred miles south of Salt Lake City. The Fancher company, a party of Missourians migrating to California, angered some local Native Americans, who accused them of poisoning their meat and water. The Mormon settlers, preparing for war, refused to sell supplies to the company, whereupon the migrants, enraged, simply helped themselves. For reasons that have never been fully understood, Mormon leaders in southern Utah proceeded to order the destruction of the company. The Indians and the Mormon settlers therefore killed 120 people, virtually everyone in the company except for a few young children. Brigham Young heard of the attack too late to stop it. This tragic incident, the legacy of suffering in Missouri and of grim paranoia of the time, is a dark blot on the history of the Mormons. (55)
toration,” begins with statements by Bruce R. McConkie, James E. Talmage, Joseph Fielding Smith, and the 1978 First Presidency (Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney) to, in the compilers’ words, “provide perspective and to show just how seamlessly such events fit together in the grand panorama of the Restoration” (69–71, quotation from p. 69). Spellings are usually standardized (acknowledged in the notes), and some accounts are “combined…to create the following narrative” (120).

Although most of the anecdotes and testimonies are well known and have been frequently reprinted, one of the comparatively rare manuscript sources is the conversion story of David Pettigrew, a Methodist class leader and seeker in an unspecified locale. In 1831 he met an unnamed man who loaned him a Book of Mormon. Pettigrew’s interest in it brought down the circuit preacher’s wrath. When Pettigrew persuaded the preacher to take the book, read it, and then identify its errors, the preacher agreed but returned to say, “It is not worth reading, it is the most unmeaning thing I ever read. I can show you in a minute.” When he failed to find the places, the preacher concluded his sermon by exclaiming: “Brother Pettigrew, I now exhort you to call in your neighbors and take your Book of Mormon and burn it a sacrifice to old Molock and let all witness the right.” This gave me peculiar feelings to see a man in the high standing of [the preacher] to treat so lightly upon things which I knew he did not understand.”

Pettigrew resigned as class leader, was given a spiritual witness “that he [God] had now begun his work for that last days, and that the Book of Mormon was the true book. . . . I had heard that the people that believed in the Book of Mormon were gathering in the upper part of the state of Missouri, thither I was determined to go” (221–22).

A reprinted edition should correct numerous small but annoying errors. For example, “cite” is misspelled as “site” (69), the Community of Christ Library-Archives are misidentified as the “RLDS Archives” (v), a 1930 statement by Church president George Albert Smith is illustrated by a portrait of his grandfather, Apostle George A. Smith (76), Janath Russell Cannon’s first name is rendered as “Jonathan” (218), Emily Coburn’s name is misspelled as “Corburn” (317), Benjamin F. Johnson’s experiences in northern Missouri in 1838 are attributed to events in Jackson County in 1833 (397), and Reynolds Cahoon’s name, though correct in the text, is indexed as “Calhoon” (404).

The index is both incomplete and inaccurate. For example, one item is “Doctrine and Covenants: revelations in,” 284, 285-87. Page 284 is completely blank page, and the actual quotations are on pp. 286–90, interspersed with other quotations. Other revelations quoted from the Doctrine and Covenants appear on pp. 103, 163–64, 256–57, 321, 330, and 401–2 but are not cited in the index.


This collection of essays is “Utah” history, rather than “Mormon” history, but it is not irrelevant to the second topic. Editor Gary Topping presents an engaging introduction:

Curiously, the lake is at the same time both famous and obscure. Few visitors to Utah can resist the temptation to stand on its shore, to marvel at the anomaly of a huge lake in the midst of a desert, and perhaps to dip a finger into its brine to verify its high salinity. But native Utahns take the place almost totally for granted. Except for a few sailors, hunters, bird watchers, and those employed in the brine shrimp or salt industries—a total comprising less than a handful of the state’s two million residents—most Utahns view the lake only while flying into or out of the airport or speeding along Interstate 80 to risk their money in the gambling emporiums of Wendover, Nevada. (1)

The essays are bracketed with similarly well-written introductions by Topping including, where necessary, corrections to the author’s statements, and concluding each with suggestions for “readily accessible and relevant literature” to advance deeper study of the topic.

The book is organized chronologically into seven sections. The first, an overview, is Dale L. Morgan’s “The Mountain Sea.” The second section, “Natives and Newcomers,” offers David B. Madsen’s “The Human Prehistory of the Great Salt Lake Region” and two personal accounts by mountain men Jedediah S. Smith and Osborne Russell. “Explorers and Emigrants” includes John C. Frémont’s exploration of the island that bears his name, Howard W. Stansbury’s survey around the lake, and Gary Topping’s essay on “The Infamous Hastings Cutoff.”

Among the possibilities of “Settlers,” the fourth section, those selected include Wallace Stegner’s portrait of Corinne, “The Burg on the Bear,” Martin Stum’s essay about living on Antelope Island, and artist Alfred Lambourne’s first-person account of attempting to homestead Gunnison Island.

One of the most interesting essays is “A Pleasure Palace on the Great Salt Lake” (Saltair), by Nancy D. McCormick and John S. McCormick. This social history points out the paradox of Saltair in the 1890s: “Mormon leaders wanted to have the best of both worlds—Saltair was to be both a typical American amusement park and a place that provided a safe and wholesome environment for Mormon patrons. In less than a decade, though, the first goal had clearly triumphed over the second. Nevertheless, initially Saltair signified the Mormon Church’s intention at the turn of the century to join the world and at the same time minimize its influences and avoid its excesses” (169).

Other essays in this section are Jessie Embry and Ron Shook’s intriguing history of speed-racing on the Bonneville Salt Flats, and lake’s checkered association with boats and boat-building, 1847–1901, by Peter G. Van Allen.

Section 6 is a hearty dip into the fantastic: a reputed monster in the lake, the genuine oddities of fireballs and a Chilean flamingo, escaped from Liberty Park’s aviary,
and grave-digger Jean Baptiste, exiled to Fremont Island in 1862 for stripping the corpses he buried but who disappeared without a trace three weeks later. Dan Egan has written an absorbing account of the creation of a unique artwork, *Spiral Jetty* by Robert Smithson. Equally distinctive is *Tree of Utah* by Karl Momen.

The book concludes with two ecological studies: Terry Tempest Williams’s study of birds threatened by rising and falling water levels, and “The Lake at a Crossroads” by Jim Woolf, Heather May, and Glen Warchol, which begins with the question of whether the causeway is “killing the lake.”


The year 2004, the bicentennial of Eliza R. Snow’s birth, called for a series of “Women’s History Initiative Seminars,” sponsored in 2003 and 2004 by the now-disbanded Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University. Including introductory and concluding material, the twenty-four essays are bookended by two surveys: the first on Mormon women in the Progressive Era (1890–1930) by Thomas G. Alexander, and the second an analysis of Mormon women and American culture since 1950 by James B. Allen, both of them senior historians at Brigham Young University.

Rebekah Ryan Clark explores Mormon women’s continued commitment to suffrage between 1896 and 1920, noting the distancing tactics used by national suffrage leaders who “at times sought to maintain some distance between the movement and the image of association with Mormonism, more often through pragmatism than through prejudice” (32). Kylie Nielson Turley has prepared a careful textual analysis of the different versions of Mary Woolley Chamberlain’s term as mayor of Kanab with outstanding analysis of variations in the story, in which she concludes: “Perhaps history’s way of remembering this election has been almost as political as politics itself” (46). Karen I. Pare presents an insightful analysis of the mixed messages that Susa Young Gates had to live with, which produced an “unsettled, neither wholly collusive nor wholly defiant quality” (54).

Two articles focus on Relief Society president Amy Brown Lyman’s presidency (Dave Hall) and her founding of the Child Placement Agency (Mary Jane Woodger), precursor to LDS Social Services, now LDS Family Services. Tona J. Hangen wrote on Belle S. Spafford, the Relief Society general president with the longest term, whom she calls “a cultural broker for Mormon women” on the women’s rights movement (92). Interestingly, during Spafford’s tenure as the president of the National Council on Women in 1970 when she was also Relief Society general president,
the council’s report “urged support” of the Equal Rights Amendment “and encouraged its members to write their legislators” endorsing its passage (89).

Two essays looked at women’s contribution in wartime. Sarah A. Schmid’s “Behind the Lines: Relief Society during World War II” contextualizes the dilemma faced by the First Presidency in 1942 when the Church took a “self-proclaimed patriotic position,” which would not allow it to condone women’s employment out of the home. Its strategy was to focus on the importance of motherhood (“...the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind [sic]”) and to “avoid any official statements about the employment of women in wartime industries” (104).

Considering its often emotional material, the chapter on “Latter-day Saint Nurses at War” by Lynn Clark Callister and Patricia Rushton was stodgily written with heavy reliance on the passive voice. Carol Clark Ottesen explores a very contemporary situation in her description of LDS women teaching in China, often with their husbands, but many alone: about 235 out of the total 500 Mormons sent to China to teach.


Ethnic women are represented by Margaret Blair Young’s “Martha Stevens Perkins Howell: Granddaughter of Slaves, Mother of Saints” and by Benjamin Layne’s “Among Latter-day Saint Women in America: Saints in Transition.”

Material culture was the focus in Jessie I. Embry and Loree Ann Romriell’s chapter on samplers and Jennifer Reeder’s on quilts as cultural artifacts.

Among other papers in this publication are Carol Cornwall Madsen’s editorial introduction, Cheryl B. Preston’s, “Mormon Women in the Second Wave: Refusing to Let Patriarchy or Feminism Separate Us from the Source of Our Liberation,” a sketch of gaps in sociological research on Mormon women in the United States by Marie Cornwall, and a useful outline of women’s collections at L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, by Connie Lamb, Jennifer Reeder, and Kylie Nielson Turley. Among the collections are more than a million photographs, an online “Guide to the Women’s Manuscript Collection” which includes brief biographies and summaries of the material in each collection, resource guides to scholarly material, and an index to the Relief Society Magazine, also available on the library’s website, which also has a link to materials on the Women’s Studies subject page.

The volume begins with a personal essay by Harriet Petherick Bushman, “The Flaw’d Heart . . . Too Weak the Conflict to Support?” (the keynote address) and ends with a “Scholarly Overview” by Jill Mulvay Derr.

These minutes begin March 8, 1840, and conclude on October 18, 1845, thus forming a valuable window into the deliberations of one of Nauvoo’s official ecclesiastical bodies, particularly in resolving conflicts over money and property between members, dealing with cases of sexual misconduct, and hearing complaints by members that required disciplinary action.

Joseph and Hyrum Smith frequently attended these meetings and addressed them, but Collier points out: “This is not to suggest that the Nauvoo High Council as per se was on the inside track with the Prophet, for they were not, at least not as a quorum. It would seem that as of this time the Prophet kept his own council, for even those who became members of the Holy Order and Council of Fifty were not always informed with regard to his teachings and doings” (vii).

Collier explains his editorial procedures, which include correcting misspellings, standardizing name spellings, adding minimal punctuation (sometimes in brackets), and removing redundant punctuation. Interpolated material “needed to complete sentence thought and structure” appears in brackets and “all struck out material has been retained as a strike out” (ix-x). In addition to the five bound volumes of minutes, Collier has also added some minutes that appear on unbound sheets.

These minutes contain a number of items not included in the official multi-volume *History of the Church*. For instance, on September 10, 1844, when *History of the Church* was relying on Brigham Young’s history, the minutes note: “The faith, principle and pursuit of Elder [William] Marks [Nauvoo Stake president] was called up—When it was found that he imbibed a notion different from the Apostles or Council—and was voted that the Council (in future) do business without him at their head” (146).

Nor does the November 30, 1844, entry in the *History of the Church* contain any mention of a lengthy meeting on that date attended by “Father John Smith” and Apostles John Taylor and Orson Hyde in which Marks expressed his satisfaction with the Church’s “present organization” and the high council unanimously voted to “give him our heart and hand for his Spiritual and Temporal welfare” (154). Since Marks had been one of the three high councilors to reject the revelation on plural marriage when Hyrum presented it in August 1843, this reconciliation was only temporary.

Neither editor nor publisher is identified by name, but the original publisher explains in a brief preface that "most young people" find doctrinal exposition "uninteresting, to some positively distasteful" but the same principle can be easily and attractively taught "in the form of narrative.... There is no more sure way of instilling into the mind of a child faith in God... than by illustrating it with incidents from actual experience" (n.p.). This instructional purpose is stressed in the nine "experiences" that follow.

The first, "Help from the Lord," is the missionary experience "by C." in Illinois in 1845 who received divine aid in identifying a crucial biblical scripture with which to refute a Presbyterian deacon who challenged him. "C." successfully discomfited the deacon a second time, then cautions: "How much good I did on that mission, I cannot guess. One thing I do know, as a general rule not many are truly converted by the clamor of crowds, or the frenzy of debates" and encourages young men to earnestly study the scriptures (11).

The second sketch, by "Elder Robert P—k" of Salt Lake City describes his steadfastness as a Glasgow convert in the face of hostility from his mother, who stopped speaking to him, and his four brothers who not only hid his clothes but also physically attacked him when he tried to go to meetings.

The third sketch consists of six chapters from Lorenzo Dow Young's "narrative" describing his own conversion and missionary labors. He also records a "peculiar" dream in 1816 when he was nine:

I thought I stood in an open, clear space of ground, and saw a plain, fine road, leading, at an angle of 45 degrees, into the air as far as I could see. I heard a noise like a carriage in rapid motion. . . . It was drawn by a pair of beautiful, white horses. The carriage and harness appeared brilliant with gold. The horses traveled with the speed of the wind. It was made manifest to me that the Savior was in the carriage, and that it was driven by His servant. The carriage stopped near me, and the Savior inquired where my brother Brigham was. . . . He further inquired about my other brothers, and our father. After I had answered His inquiries, He stated that He wanted us all, but He especially wanted my brother Brigham. The team then turned right about, and returned on the road it had come. (25)

William Budge, a missionary in Southampton in 1853, recounted being warned away by a divine voice from a steamer that sank. W. W. Cluff in a two-chapter section of "My Last Mission to the Sandwich Islands" (1857) reports the Walter M. Gibson apostasy and the miraculous resuscitation of fellow missionary Lorenzo Snow after being drowned for an hour. Benjamin F. Johnson, also a Hawaiian missionary in 1852, describes the fulfillment of a prophecy that the Hawaiian king would ask for counsel from the Mormons and resolve a political crisis by following it.

"Special Providences" (no author identified) portrays the diligence and self-sacrifice of a British convert, "Brother L—__," who reached Nauvoo in March 1844,
and who often went to his labors on the temple without food. When his infant was dangerously ill, the prayer of faith resulted in finding “two new ten cent pieces and one five cent piece” in the waistband of a new pair of trousers. It was exactly the sum needed, but Brother L. conscientiously asked the tailor if it was his. “That impecunious individual said he knew it could not be his, for he had never had a cent of money in his possession for months” (98). The narrative includes three other miracles in response to faith.

The final narrative by “A. M. C.,” depicts “Incidents on the Plains” during the Utah War of 1857–58, when a party of returning Mormons intercepted the army but were able to avoid discovery and detention.

The binding is not satisfactory. Opening the book flat cracked the glue, leaving a section of pages unattached.


In 2002, Charles Allen, a specialist in historic furniture who is probably best known as the window-maker for the reconstructed Nauvoo Temple, published a personal history of the deaths of two of his six children from cystic fibrosis. Since they were his first child, Craig, and fifth, Camille, the ordeal lasted from Craig’s birth in 1965 until Camille’s death in 1994. This memoir, which includes the earlier experience, continues the family’s suffering as a grandchild died in 1996 shortly after birth, and as his second child, Carrie, was diagnosed with breast cancer in July 2002, followed by the diagnosis of advanced colon cancer for his wife, Sue, in September 2002. Sue died fifteen months later, followed by Carrie ten months later.

Charles Allen writes in his introduction: “Being a husband and father in a medically challenged family produced difficult obstacles for me to conquer and unique opportunities to grow that would not have been possible under less intense circumstances. Amid the sorrow we have experienced as a family we find sacred gifts that are embodied in personal acts of kindness and love given to us by others. This is a narrative of trial, hope, and trust that I am willing to share” (vii). Part of that trust is in the reader—that these “sacred experiences” will not “offend or fail to communicate” (viii).

He quotes extensively from the diaries that he kept throughout these years to present the repeated medical and emotional crises in all their immediacy, “positive and negative so that the reader can trust the insights I have to offer. I am not interested in making myself or my family or my church ‘look’ good. I am interested in being good so that I have something to offer others” (ix).

Raised in a devout LDS family, Charles drew on his personal faith to deal with his own exhaustion, the marital stresses of dealing with the chronic illness of (for a time) two children at once, the poverty caused by the enormous medical bills, and
the need to include the four healthy children in their ill siblings' care without neglecting their own needs. He includes vivid vignettes: “Something that I was totally unprepared for was when our Church [ward] directory came out with Craig’s name missing from our family” after his death. “Carrie was now listed as our first child” (99).

Called as a bishop soon after Craig’s death, he reports walking with a family through the Christmas death of the husband, who left three children. “During the crisis, I was able to explain why they were feeling the way they did and how they were going to feel next.” On his next visit after the funeral, he was surprised to find “happiness and laughter” in the home. The wife explained that “they were able to accept what had happened and to make the adjustments they did because of my involvement with them, including being there with them when her husband died.” Allen drove home feeling “very discouraged and somewhat angry that I had had to suffer through Craig’s death so that others could be happy. I was disappointed in myself but I couldn’t help feeling that way” (107). Only gradually and with effort did he come to accept that such hard-won understanding was “a blessing.”

The last half of the book deals with the simultaneous fatal illnesses of daughter Carrie and wife Sue, whom he refers to consistently as “my sweetheart.” It was particularly ironic to him that, after years of making a comfortable house a lower priority than caring for their sick children, they were in the process of building their “dream home.” This part of the story, like others, is filled with instances of kindness from others and what they interpreted as small messages assuring them of God’s continued love. One of the most poignant was that the backhoe operator digging out the foundation stones of their former house felt inspired to run his hands through the dirt he had just excavated and unearthed Camille’s nearly undamaged high school graduation photograph (137–38). Sue was able to die at home, surrounded by her family, and expressing her love for all of them.

Sue’s greatest gift, however, came after her death. She had told Charles before her death that she wanted him to marry again, knowing he would need companionship. He had strenuously resisted such talk, but Sue had assured daughter Christie that she (Christie) would know her mother’s mind. Even before Sue’s death, Christie told Charles that he must, within two or three months, marry Debbie, a divorcée in their ward who had grown close to their family while Charles was home teacher to her and her five children. She had since moved out of state but had written Sue a tender letter of appreciation and love.

When Debbie attended the funeral, Charles watched her standing beside the casket. “I knew that I was looking at my wife-to-be as she looked down at the body of my sweetheart who [had] just died, without a clue about what Sue had set in motion for us.... The children and I had known for a week
what their mother asked and expected us to do” (180–81).

Their brief courtship coincided with the sudden worsening of Carrie’s condition. Charles confessed to the temptation of breaking off the developing relationship with Debbie because he feared that “our time together would be short and full of tragedy.” Even the expressions and love and admiration from others were not always comforting, and he wryly told the children: “And there are people in our community who want to be like the Allen family. If they only knew what it has taken to be an Allen” (198).

Charles and Debbie married three months after Sue’s death, and she helped nurse Carrie through her final illness. The speed of the marriage shocked some who felt Charles was being disloyal, a topic that both Charles and Debbie deal with sincerely and poignantly in the last chapter. As a personal and family history, this memoir is unusual in its simultaneous depth and simplicity.