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JOURNAL OF MORMON HISTORY

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COVER: An unidentified missionary conducts a guided tour in the Mormon Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair. She is standing in front of the “Life of Christ” while behind the group is the Church history mural, which includes, from left to right: Church organized; 1836: First “Mormon” Temple, Kirtland, Ohio; 1838: “Mormons” expelled from Missouri; 1839-1845: Nauvoo, largest city [sic] in Illinois; 1844: Martyrdom of Prophet Joseph Smith; 1846: Exodus from Nauvoo; 1847: Brigham Young in Great Salt Lake Valley; and 1856: European immigrants pull handcarts across plains to Utah. Also note the Christus statue in the background. Courtesy Bill Cotter and http://www.worldsfairphotos.com

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The Mormon History Association is an independent organization dedicated to the study and understanding of all aspects of Mormon history. We welcome all who are interested in the Mormon past, irrespective of religious affiliation, academic training, or world location. We promote our goals through scholarly research, conferences, awards, and publications.

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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 and contemporary history, regional and local history, folklore, historiography, women’s history, and ethnic/minority 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 to Martha Taysom, Editor, Journal of Mormon History, at mtaysom@indiana.edu, preferably in Word. Illustrative materials must be attached in a separate file, not embedded in the Word document. The Journal’s style guide, based on the Chicago Manual of Style and the LDS Style Guide, and specifications for photographs and other illustrative materials, are available on the Mormon History Association’s website {www.mhahome.org}.
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THE MORMON PAVILION:
MAINSTREAMING THE SAINTS AT THE
NEW YORK WORLD’S FAIR, 1964–65

Nathaniel Smith Kogan

In a speech given at the New York World’s Fair on the sixty-eighth anniversary of Utah’s statehood in 1964, Utah Governor George D. Clyde emphasized that there were strong “ties binding Utah to New York.” Citing his state’s Mormon history, Clyde noted that “the journey across the plains and mountains to Utah [began] in New York State, where the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been organized on April 6, 1830.”

Avoiding reference to the hostilities that Mormons faced in New York and other states in the nineteenth century, Clyde focused on the present and the future. He had come to New York to help celebrate the LDS Church’s exhibit at the World’s Fair—an event that promised to fo-

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cus international attention on the Church.

Participation in the fair marked a landmark moment for the LDS Church, as its exhibit, the Mormon Pavilion, helped the Church introduce what many then considered a marginal religion to a national audience and created the template for new proselytizing methods. The Mormon Pavilion presented the faith to fairgoers through architecture, artwork, missionary presentations, and a film. This article describes how conceptualizing, designing, and operating the Mormon Pavilion enabled LDS Church leaders to forge a new public image and develop new strategies for proselytizing, many of which persist in contemporary visitors' centers.

**THE WORLD’S FAIR, RELIGION, AND THE 1964–65 EVENT**

The first World’s Fair—officially the “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations”—opened on May 1, 1851, in England. This initial event laid the groundwork for many other “Universal Exhibitions” throughout the second half of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. World’s Fairs developed into showcases, not only for new industrial techniques and materials, but also for cultural education. Hundreds of displays, dioramas, and booths aimed to educate fairgoers about the variety of people throughout the world and highlight interesting aspects of those different cultures.

Flushing Meadows in Queens Borough, New York, was home to both the 1939–40 and the 1964–65 World’s Fairs; however, the role of religion in these two fairs was quite different. The Temple of Religion at the 1939–40 World’s Fair represented only mainstream American religions—Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism. The intergroup relations movement—a collaborative effort that originated in the early twentieth century with Jewish self-defense organizations but which later expanded its mission to help eliminate prejudice and racism in all forms—helped these three American faiths coalesce. However, the movement’s aims expanded before and during World War II as it emphasized how the Axis powers sought to destabilize American society by opening racial, religious, and ethnic rifts.

This intergroup coalition continued to fight prejudice

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3 The groups responsible for spearheading the intergroup relations movement included the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish
throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. Given the continued prominence of the intergroup movement, the planners of the 1964–65 World’s Fair hoped to create a pavilion similar to the Temple of Religion at the 1939–40 fair. To replicate the success of the previous New York World’s Fair, Fair President Robert Moses—a man whose role as the master builder of New York City fundamentally reshaped its urban environment in the twentieth century—commissioned a study to determine what had made the Temple of Religion appealing. The study discovered that the project came to fruition due to the “support—civil, moral and financial—of two leading citizens of that time—the late John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the late William Church Osborne,” who also made the “content and operation . . . acceptable to persons of all denominations.” Osborn, a prominent New York Democrat and member of various philanthropic organizations and boards, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was selected by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia to chair the committee in charge of raising funds for the $250,000 exhibit. Rockefeller, son of the founder of Standard Oil and a prolific philanthropist who donated over $537 million to various causes during the course of his lifetime, generously contributed $25,000 to the Temple


However, the religious leaders whom Moses consulted in the early 1960s did not have a clear vision of how religion should operate in the fair; moreover, it is also likely that they did not have the consensus-building ability or broad social capital of either Osborn or Rockefeller. Still, with the Cold War underway in the 1960s, both fair planners and religious leaders wanted religion to have a place at the fair, knowing that it played a vital political role. In an early preparatory report, World’s Fair Vice President J. Anthony Panuch, a lawyer and former adviser to New York Mayor Robert F. Wagner on housing and urban renewal, outlined how religion would bolster the fair and the country:

(1) I assume that this Fair will attempt to project the world image of a free society as contrasted with the closed society of the Sino-Soviet orbit of power.

(2) If this assumption is correct, religion must be regarded as one of the principal institutions, which differentiates our way of life from a totalitarian society. As such, its place as an exhibit in the Fair seems clear.

Panuch believed that presenting an image of a united American religious community provided the best bulwark against the perceived threats to personal liberty posed by Communist nations. However, as the opening date drew nearer, instead of coalescing, individual religious groups each arranged for their own separate exhibition spaces at the fair, causing plans for an interfaith pavilion to dissolve.

The failure of an exclusive intergroup religious pavilion opened up the way for less-mainstream American religions to participate in the fair on equal footing with more established faiths. By 1962, five separate religions had registered for individual sites on which they would construct their own pavilions—the Roman Catholic Church, who planned to display Michelangelo’s Pieta; an ecumenical group of twenty-two Protestant sects, who planned for a small chapel and a the-

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8Panuch, Letter to Moses, October 24, 1960; see also “J. Anthony Panuch Dies at 75; Was Adviser to U.S. and City,” New York Times, April 17, 1975, 42.
ater in which to show a specially commissioned film; the Christian Scientists, who showed an educational film about that faith and provided visitors with a reading room for contemplation; Billy Graham’s Evangelists, who also commissioned a film and used the opportunity for proselytizing; and the Mormons, who planned a replica of the Salt Lake City Temple and a performance by the noted Tabernacle Choir. Perhaps as an attempt to compete with flashier pavilions, virtually all of the religious pavilions featured some type of modern media—typically films—to appeal to fairgoers in search of entertainment. Moses viewed the fair’s combination of religious and scientific pavilions as an educational opportunity. To this end, Moses expected “the Vatican observers, Billy Graham, The Mormons, The Protestant Groups, The Christian Scientists—all the priesthood of whatever persuasion—to visit the science exhibits, reflect, puzzle and somehow spell out of [sic] them that the hand that made them is divine.”

Although Moses still saw the potential for ecumenical dialogue at the fair, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints viewed its involvement as a valuable opportunity to increase membership and define Mormonism as a mainstream American religion.

THE CHURCH IN THE 1950S AND 1960S

The middle decades of the twentieth century were undoubtedly a period of growing acceptance for the LDS Church, as it began to draw attention from a variety of national publications. The New York Times, for instance, published a feature on the LDS Church in August 1962, explaining the religion’s origins and highlighting some of its most notable practices. Included were “the Hill Cumorah pageant” and the LDS penchant to “go in extensively for pageants, choral singing and other dramatic entertainment in their chapels and community centers.” The most prominent example of this trend, the article noted, was “the most famous Mormon cultural group . . . the 350-voice Mormon Tabernacle Choir, which participated in the first formal television broadcast sent to Europe.” The article also commented on Mormonism’s growth: In 1962, the Church had “almost 2,000,000


members in this country and in many foreign lands. It has doubled its membership in the last ten years and is adding almost 150,000 converts a year.”

In 1964 Fortune ran a feature article that also emphasized the Church’s rapid growth and highlighted its missionary program. The article emphasized how “more than doubling the Mormon missionary force in the past decade . . . resulted in a dramatic rise in converts: between 1957 and last year the number of annual conversions rose by 285 percent from some 30,100 to more than 115,600.” In conjunction with this increasing world presence, the LDS Church also constructed more local ward houses, so that, in contrast to the mid-1950s when the Church built “seventy-five new chapels annually,” it now built “them at the rate of 300 a year.”

To reinforce its aggressive pursuit of new members domestically and abroad, the LDS Church created an infrastructural network of local branches helping to physically solidify Mormonism in its many new environs. Not only did the increased missionary effort help bolster membership, but the Church’s emphasis on family and clean living as sanctioned by the Word of Wisdom also made it appealing for its commitment to community and healthful lifestyles. However, many aspects of the faith, such as its long-standing doctrinal prohibitions, as well as its powerful corporate nature, made some suspicious of whatever lay below its glossy veneer.

One of the major concerns of the 1950s and 1960s dealt with the LDS Church’s wealth. A 1955 feature in the New York Times drew up a laundry list of the Church’s many valuable assets: “In Salt Lake City alone, the Church owns banks and insurance companies, the afternoon newspaper (The Deseret News), two large hotels, two hospitals, two sugar concerns, storehouses bulging with food and clothing for its vast welfare program, and a substantial interest in the leading department store. The church also owns the $9,000,000 Brigham Young University at Provo, a business college, a music school and more than one hundred seminaries and institutes where Mormon doctrine and history are taught to grade school, high school and college students.” While the article expressed concern about Mormonism’s omnipres-

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ence in the western United States and certain locations abroad—notably in Tonga and Samoa—it stressed Mormonism’s durability by noting, “Neither criticism nor the passing years have erased the achievements of Brigham Young and his brave band of pioneers.”

The LDS Church’s immense financial and temporal power registered in the consciousness of many Americans as being Mormonism’s key traits, but a more troubling and sensitive issue for many was the LDS prohibition against the ordination of black men to the lay priesthood which was available to all other “worthy” boys and men over age twelve. While the American public largely ignored this exclusion in the early twentieth century, the spread of the LDS Church into more diverse urban centers on both coasts and in the Midwest brought the Church into closer association with African Americans. Unsurprisingly, as the American civil rights movement gathered momentum in the 1950s and 1960s, the Church came under increasing scrutiny and attack for its long-standing prohibition. While other major denominations acted quickly to remove their equally racist practices when critiqued for them by civil rights groups, the LDS Church remained steadfast in its prohibition—a perplexing decision to many Americans.

While other major denominations acted quickly to remove their equally racist practices when critiqued for them by civil rights groups, the LDS Church remained steadfast in its prohibition—a perplexing decision to many Americans. Because the Church president and prophet acted as the vessel of divine revelation, the Church did not bow to public pressure like other denominations, but instead maintained the policy until instructed otherwise by revelation (June 1978).

In 1949, the LDS Church released an official statement that quoted Brigham Young and attributed people’s “blackness” to a “consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the holy priesthood, and the law of God . . . when the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed.


from the seed of Cain.”18 While this was the official view of the Church during the 1964–65 World’s Fair (the next official statement came in 1968), some in the Church felt that the restriction rested on an unstable foundation. In 1954 correspondence, LDS Church President David O. McKay asserted that the Church did not have a specific doctrine “pertaining to the Negro”—that the prohibition was “a practice, not a doctrine, and the practice will some day be changed.”19 McKay thus believed that the policy against black men in the priesthood was not an essential tenet of the faith, yet it could only be legitimately changed through revelation. Moreover, the announcement of the first LDS mission in Africa in 1963, as well as a number of pro-civil rights comments made the same year by Hugh B. Brown, counselor in the First Presidency, admitting the possibility of black men’s admission to the priesthood foreshadowed the eventual end of the prohibition.20 However, McKay’s open-mindedness on this issue was quite circumscribed as he held these views privately and did not make them public, which prevented the possibility of dialogue within the Church on that issue.

LDS Church members themselves, of course, differed over the validity of their faith’s outlook toward black people. Lowry Nelson, a native Utahn and professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota, viewed the Church’s racial outlook as detrimental to the advances Mormons had made into mainstream American life. Writing in the early 1950s, Nelson felt personally insulted by his Church’s stand, because “Mormons as a group are not ignorant people,” and many “find it difficult to reconcile what they learn in college with the stand taken by their church.” Nelson remained hopeful, however, that “if the question could be openly discussed,” then “the deep humanitarianism of the Mormon people . . . would

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19 Ibid., 236.

20 Ibid., 233; Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), chap. 4.
line up on the side of justice.”

By contrast, more conservative Mormons, such as John J. Stewart, author of *Mormonism and the Negro* (1960) and a professor of journalism at Utah State University, defended the ban as a “reasonable doctrine” that the Church need not “apologize for” nor “evade questions about.” Stewart supported the ban by providing an explanation for inequality based on his hypothesis of behavior in the preexistence, which, naturally, needed to be accepted on faith since it was not fully explicated in the scriptures. He took the position that priesthood exclusion for blacks properly reflected God’s plan for all people, making it neither a product of the Church nor evidence of humanity’s narrow-mindedness.

From studies done in the 1960s, sociologist Armand Mauss concluded: “Mormons could not be considered outside the national consensus in their external civic attitudes toward African Americans. Incidentally, Mormon rates of anti-Semitism . . . were considerably lower than those of Catholics and of most Protestant denominations.” In terms of tolerance, Mormons in the 1950s and 1960s may in fact have been less racist than many non-Mormons. However, ill-advised public statements, such as Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith’s notorious 1963 utterance, “Darkies are fine people, and we have a place for them in our Church,” exacerbated the negative racial associations with Mormonism. Despite the increasing prominence and secular influence of Mormons in the 1950s and 1960s, evinced by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson and Michigan Governor George Romney, Vern Bullough, a writer for *The Nation*, nevertheless thought that “Romney, or any other Mormon who aspires to national elective office, must be prepared to discuss just what the Mormon attitude, both in dogma and

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practice, has been” toward black people.25

While the LDS Church did not appear willing to stage a conveniently timed revelation for the sake of mitigating negative press, the prohibition appeared increasingly unrepresentative of the broadly inclusive and optimistic Mormon theology during the 1960s. It was against this backdrop of contrasting public images of the faith that the LDS Church decided to participate in the 1964–65 World’s Fair. Church officials were unsure how they wanted to integrate themselves into this enormous exhibition; however, they did know that the fair would draw large crowds, thereby providing an important opportunity to define Mormonism to the nation and the world.

CONCEPTION, PROPOSAL, AND APPROVAL OF PARTICIPATION

Mormon participation in the 1964–65 World’s Fair, an event that ran for two six-month seasons—opening on April 22, 1964, being temporarily closed from October 19, 1964 through April 20, 1965, re-opening on April 21, 1965, and permanently closing on October 17, 1965—marked a momentous step in the Church’s self-conscious effort to become more integrated into mainstream American culture. That trend began as the brainchild of Apostle Mark E. Petersen, editor of the LDS Church-owned Deseret News. In 1946, Petersen conceived of a publicity department that would work to bring more attention to the Church. However, it was not until 1957 that Petersen’s idea led to the formation of the Church Information Service (CIS), an agency which he directed.26 In 1961, upon learning about the upcoming World’s Fair in New York, G. Stanley McAllister, president of New York Stake and the vice-president of


26David W. Evans, Letter to Irene Staples, October 16, 1975, The Mormon Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair, 1964–65 (hereafter cited as Mormon Pavilion Collection), Ms 9138, Box 1, Irene E. Staples, Scrapbook, Vol. 1 (hereafter cited as Staples, Scrapbook), LDS Church History Library. Irene Staples served as a full-time sister missionary at the Mormon Pavilion as part of her service in the Eastern States Mission. During the fair, she worked in public relations at the pavilion and kept copious records, which she ultimately assembled into a three-part, unpublished scrapbook that now forms the bulk of the LDS Church History Library’s materials about the Mormon Pavilion. Church President David O. McKay called Staples as the LDS Church’s first official hostess in 1965—a post she held until 1975.
properties and operation research for the Associated Dry Goods Corporation, suggested to David W. Evans, a CIS employee and the brother of Apostle Richard L. Evans (David later formed his own advertising agency), that the LDS Church should construct a pavilion for the event. David Evans, knowing that the CIS’s limited financial resources could not fund a pavilion, urged McAllister to appeal to more senior Church officials. McAllister sought Petersen’s support by letter on June 8, 1962, noting that the World’s Fair Corporation would provide a site free of charge, although construction costs would likely total $3 million. Petersen and other Church leaders deferred a decision as they debated whether to invest in a large-scale pavilion or to rent a small information booth as the Church had done at previous expositions.  

To help make this decision, the Church formed a committee of Mormons in New York City and Salt Lake City to discuss how the Church should represent itself in the fair. Senior Apostle Harold B. Lee chaired the committee, which also included McAllister, Kenneth Beesley, a professor at Teacher’s College, Columbia University, Wilburn West, president of the Eastern States Mission, and Apostle Richard L. Evans, who also served as the writer, producer, and announcer for “Music and the Spoken Word,” a popular devotional program featuring the Mormon Tabernacle Choir that had begun making weekly broadcasts in July 1929. In initial discussions with Lee, Beesley discovered that Evans “thought the Church would only be interested in leasing space and having a booth where a couple of missionaries could provide literature and answer questions.” 28 Beesley found Lee’s response “very disappoint[ing]” as he hoped for a grander display of Mormonism. Lee’s hesitancy may have been related to the liquidity crisis that the LDS Church experienced in the early 1960s as a result of an over-expanded building

Staples is the subject of a recently published biography. See Kevan Clawson, Hostess to the World: The Life of Irene E. Staples, First Official Hostess of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Orem, Utah: Walking the Line Publications, 2008).


program that sought to construct more than a hundred chapels in Europe. These extensive expenditures left the Church with a projected budget deficit of $20–25 million for 1961, a number that was later reduced to roughly $9 million. Although the Church managed to increase revenues through tithing and secured a $20 million line of credit from the First National City Bank in New York in 1962, these fiscal concerns likely prompted Lee to carefully weigh the costs of investing in the World’s Fair at the same time the Church was regaining financial stability.\footnote{Prince and Wright, \textit{David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism}, 209–21.}

McAllister, who shared Beesley’s aspirations for a monumental presence at the fair and was likely unaware of the liquidity issues facing the Church, met with fair officials in New York to discuss what options would be available to the LDS Church. According to Beesley, during the meeting, “fair officials proposed to [McAllister] that [the LDS Church] should join with the ‘other Protestant churches’ for space in a building in which all Protestants could participate.” McAllister rejected this suggestion, making clear “that Mormons are not ‘Protestants’ and that the Protestants would not welcome . . . sharing a building.” Moreover, the “Catholics had been allotted space for a separate building,” which set a precedent for giving each religion its own area. This line of argument persuaded fair officials to give the LDS Church its own plot, making the LDS Church’s independent presence at the fair the ultimate result of McAllister’s grassroots advocacy.\footnote{Ibid.}

The theme of LDS exceptionalism persisted throughout the course of the fair, as the iconography and architecture of the Mormon Pavilion grappled with the issue of how to simultaneously portray the Church as recognizably Christian, yet distinctively Mormon. The committee’s fears of combining with other Protestant faiths in a joint pavilion stemmed from the belief that broad religious categories obscured an individual religion’s attributes. Therefore, the LDS Church’s defining theological tenet—its claim that revelations did not stop with the New Testament but continued in the Book of Mormon and from the leadership of modern prophets—would be less distinctive if the Church were simply labeled “Protestant.”

Having a dedicated exhibition space for something more signifi-
cant than a simple information booth served immensely important religious and spatial functions for the LDS Church. Having its own site allowed the Church to design an exclusively Mormon exhibition and fill it with its unique iconography—images that might otherwise have been confusing or contradictory in a shared space. McAllister felt that the pavilion needed to be architecturally distinct, so he advocated constructing “some outstanding edifice . . . that [one] could point to and say, ‘This is the Mormon Church.’”

Clearly, the final decision to replicate the facade of the Salt Lake Temple accomplished his goal. Spatially, a dedicated Mormon Pavilion symbolized that the LDS Church was on equal footing with the other religions participating in the fair. While not all of the sites on the fairgrounds were equal (in fact, the Mormons had one of the best, most visible sites on the grounds), they were all autonomous and independent. Unlike the previous World’s Fair staged at Flushing Meadows in 1939–40 which dedicated only one pavilion to “Religion,” the 1964–65 fair was peppered with the buildings of distinct religions—Catholic, Protestant, Christian Scientist, three Evangelical sects, Jewish, and Mormon. By occupying its own space in the fair, the LDS Church simultaneously avoided the religious subordination that comes as being part of a larger category and solidified its status as a unique American religion.

On August 1, 1962, committee members McAllister, Beesley, and West sent Petersen and other Church leaders their recommendation in favor of participating in the World’s Fair. The committee viewed the event as a “wonderful opportunity to present our message to the millions who will attend, to awaken an interest in thousands of people.” To formulate this message, the committee thought that the “exact nature of the exhibit should be developed by those most experienced with missionary work, advertising, public relations and related activities.”

Essentially, the committee members viewed participation in the World’s Fair as a chance to introduce their religion to a clientele of millions and possibly convert many to the faith. The desire to employ the


knowledge and experience of advertising and public relations professionals suggests that committee members perceived religion as a marketable commodity. By following the models of big business, the LDS Church created a corporate image for itself. Much in the same way businesses fought the label of “soulless corporations” by creating a new “humanized” image, the LDS Pavilion Committee saw fair participation as a chance to carefully craft an image of its faith by employing public relations strategies. LDS Pavilion Committee members, many of whom were businessmen themselves, knew that corporations appealed to the widest possible range of people by showing an awareness of their different audiences and making a concerted effort to speak to each one. With this concept in mind, they designed the Mormon Pavilion to speak to the broadest possible audience, thereby making their missionary effort maximally effective.

This goal of communicating a clear and appealing image of the LDS Church became codified in 1972 when the Church officially established its Public Communications Department under the leadership of Wendell J. Ashton, who had a background in advertising and later went on to serve as the managing editor and publisher of the Deseret News. He was also the brother of popular Apostle Marvin J. Ashton. As Ashton characterized it, the department “help[ed] bring the Church out of obscurity” by working with 1,200 Mormons throughout the world, “many of them skilled professionals in news media work,” who “help[ed] correct false impressions about the Church” and “publish...
ize[d] the Latter-day Saint way of life as much as possible.” However, given the Public Communications Department’s primary objectives and the fact that it was established seven years after the close of the New York World’s Fair, it appears that the Mormon Pavilion actually provided Church leaders with their first venue to craft a compelling message about Mormon identity and how the Church was a part of the mainstream American religious landscape.

On August 20, 1962, the Mormon Pavilion’s fate momentarily seemed tenuous as the World’s Fair Operations Department informed Church officials that they would lose their spot in the fair if they failed to decide whether to construct a pavilion or rent a booth. Frantic, McAllister personally called President David O. McKay to press the issue. Within twenty-four hours on August 21, McKay officially approved Church participation and allocated $1–2 million for the construction of a pavilion to “do it right.” Such a significant investment in the pavilion (equivalent to $7.04–$14.08 million in 2008) clarified that, in spite of the Church’s financial turbulence, the First Presidency viewed missionary work as the Church’s lifeblood and worthy of the investment.

On October 19, 1962, the fair’s Vice-President of Operations, Stuart Constable, visited Salt Lake City to hold a press conference with President McKay and formalize the Church’s agreement to participate in the fair. In his address at the press conference, McKay commented on the Church’s growing membership and noted that many of those new members were part of the international community, making it fitting for the Church to participate in a World’s Fair. Constable followed up by stating that he thought the Mormon “exhibit [would] be so designed as to be a significant contribution to the international aspects of the Fair.”

After solidifying a distinct space in the fair, the Church then developed a unique theme. Although “Peace through Understanding”

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37 I obtained financial estimates using an online “inflation calculator” (http://www.westegg.com/inflation/).
was the fair’s official theme, David Evans proposed the theme “Man’s Search for Happiness,” a phrase that had inspired him during his Church-sponsored investigative visit to the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair.\(^{39}\) Behind his slogan were important ideologies about what the Church could provide to people and how it could be made appealing to the widest possible audience. Harold B. Lee emphasized that the theme was “in harmony with that of the Fair” but that it went beyond the simple pleasures and escapism typical of such expositions. Lee thought that the Mormon Pavilion’s theme would open people’s eyes to the LDS belief that the “premise . . . of all purposeful living is . . . the pursuit of happiness, happiness as distinguished from pleasure, as expressed in the scriptural text, ‘Man is that he might have joy.’”\(^{40}\)

With the LDS Church slated to have a pavilion independent of other faiths, it no longer had to “avoid emphasizing doctrines that might conflict sharply with the beliefs of other people.” Instead, the pavilion could teach people the restored gospel, because “the era of working largely to make friends was now turning into the era of making converts.”\(^{41}\) Lee wanted the Mormon Pavilion to serve as people’s first introduction to LDS theology and as an opportunity for conversion. Moreover, David Evans believed that the theme “would have a universal appeal to people of all races, creeds, colors, nationalities; and that, within the greater New York area alone, where millions of potential Mormon Pavilion visitors lived, as well as visitors from all over the world would come, no other appeal could be so universal.”\(^{42}\) Therefore, the “Man’s Search for Happiness” theme expressed the LDS Church’s desire to spread the faith beyond the Intermountain Western United States and make Mormonism a global religion.

**A Fortuitous Site Selection**

The presence of other religious groups at the fair was a motivating force for the LDS Pavilion Committee in its recommendation to the First Presidency. The religions with the largest memberships had

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\(^{39}\) Evans to Staples, October 16, 1975.


\(^{41}\) Wilburn C. West, “Our Main Objective: Teach the Restored Gospel,” Ms 9138, Box 2, Mormon Pavilion Collection.

\(^{42}\) Evans to Staples, October 16, 1975.
sizeable plots in the fairgrounds on which to build their pavilions. The Protestant Center had a plot of 76,416 square feet, the Catholic site was 52,778 square feet, and the Synagogue Council of America was located on a 37,168 square foot site. The plot sizes were not chosen arbitrarily. In fact, World’s Fair Corporation planners allocated sites to different religions in part determined by their overall membership—a statistic thought to reflect a faith’s worldwide significance. Once LDS officials finalized their plans to participate in the fair in September 1962, they battled against the fair’s agency that was resolved to spatially organize the grounds according to this logic. Richard Whitney, a Fair Corporation planner, recounted that, in a conversation with Kenneth Beesley, he “explained the problem of giving the Mormon Church as much as 50,000 sq. ft. as against the Synagogue Council who have only 37,000 sq. ft. The Mormons only have 1,486,887 members according to the World Almanac—whereas the total of Jews is in excess of 5,000,000.” This early contentiousness, however, did not sour later negotiations between the Church and fair planners.

Less than a week after Whitney expressed the problem with giving the LDS Church a large site, Beesley and Harold W. Burton, the Church’s official architect, met with William Ottley, the fair’s director of special events, to express their vision of the Church’s pavilion and “discuss possible sites for a 21,000 square foot building dramatically emphasized by 29,000 square feet of unusual landscaping.” While the religion was not widely known, Ottley thought that the allocation of such a vast amount of a space for the Mormons could be an asset to the fair, as he had “visited Mr. Burton’s temples in Hawaii and Utah and can attest personally to their tremendous appeal and dignity and to their extraordinarily effective use of landscaping.” Though the Fair Corporation did not want to give the Church 50,000 square feet, Ottley thought that the beautification of the grounds they proposed would be a valuable addition. However, the site selection process was delayed because the RCA Pavilion already occupied the Church’s first choice, Block 9, Lot 10, and the Church deemed Block 22, Lots

10 and 11 unsuitable because they were “facing the Protestant site.”\textsuperscript{45} Because the pavilion was to serve as an area for proselytizing, proximity to another faith—whose beliefs, iconography, and message would undoubtedly clash with those of the Mormons—could siphon off potential converts. The LDS Pavilion Committee’s opposition to sharing a building with other Christian religions extended to fairground locations as well.

Ultimately, the Church accepted a plot in the Industrial Section of the fairgrounds, away from other religions and near exhibitors such as RCA, the World of Food, the Festival of Gas, and the fair’s largest indoor performance space. By September 19, 1962, the fair confirmed that the Church would be located on Block 15, Lot 6—a 50,014 square foot plot that met the Church’s desires.\textsuperscript{46} While the plot size was ideal, Beesley expressed hesitancy about being near the World of Food pavilion, which had exhibited in Seattle 1962 and “had not been in a very attractive facility.”\textsuperscript{47} Moreover, fair officials continued to shop Block 15, Lot 6, to other potential exhibitors, while allowing Church officials to believe that this location was secure.\textsuperscript{48}

In the end, the threat of displacing the Mormons ceased when the World of Food sponsors went bankrupt and dropped out of the fair entirely in late 1963. The now-vacant lot posed Fair officials with a dilemma, as it was too close to opening day to find another exhibitor to take the space and construct a pavilion. Robert Moses thought the fair could “ask the Mormon Church whether they would be interested in having it as some sort of a garden or other open place for their use and for protection. We might do this if they were willing to pay the en-


\textsuperscript{46}G. Stanley McAllister, Memo to Mark E. Petersen and Richard L. Evans, September 20, 1962, New York World’s Fair Committee: Subject Files, 1961–65, CR 115/2, fd. 4, LDS Church History Library.

\textsuperscript{47}Kenneth H. Beesley, Letter to Irene Staples, December 13, 1976, Staples, Scrapbook 1.

tire cost of landscaping and would maintain it.”49 Hoping to make the space useful and cut costs, Moses seized on the Mormons’ earlier proposal about having significant landscaping near the pavilion. The LDS Pavilion Committee showed enthusiasm about having an additional 50,000 square feet for beautification; and by mid-January 1964, Moses found “that the Mormons will pay a considerable part of the cost of a garden and landscaping at the former World of Food site.”50 The foundation of the World of Food building was cleared away, and “only days before the Fair opened, that parcel was filled in and landscaped . . . so that as visitors came through the main gate the first pavilion which came into view in an appropriate . . . park-like setting was the Mormon Pavilion.”51

This development helped the Mormon Pavilion in several ways. The landscaping and distance from other religious pavilions were desirable, but the site’s best attribute was its location directly in front of the fair’s primary entrance. William Ottley characterized Block 15, Lot 6, as “a nonpareil location” because the majority of the fairgoers would at least see, if not visit, the Mormon Pavilion. Moreover, the fair’s internal transportation network helped to popularize the pavilion as “four of the six bus routes planned will pass directly in front of the Mormon Church exhibit, which will mean that almost every visitor at the Fair can . . . share the breathtaking view over the reflecting pool up to the towers.”52 Although it is impossible to know with certainty how many people visited the Mormon Pavilion because they had seen it from the entrance, or while riding by on a fair shuttle bus, it is likely that the prominent location helped increase the number of visitors.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR**

An important part of the LDS Church’s appeal to fair planners


50Robert Moses, Memo to General W. E. Potter, January 17, 1964, in ibid.


lay in the fact that the Church was the parent organization for the immensely popular Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The choir had a long history of giving performances at World’s Fairs, beginning at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893–94 in Chicago. During that initial visit, the First Presidency and the then-250-voice choir traveled in eleven Pullman cars to the fair to compete for a $5,000 prize awarded to the best choir. The timing of this visit to Chicago proved momentous in light of the 1882 and 1887 legislation banning polygamy, combined with the fact that the Church had been denied representation in the World Parliament of Religions, an event held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition. Therefore, the choir’s visit to this event, where it won the second place prize, posed an ideal opportunity for the Church and its members to participate in a mainstream American cultural event and start erasing practices of the past. The choir went on to sing in the 1934 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, the California-Pacific International Exposition in San Diego in 1935, and the Seattle World’s Fair in 1962. While the group performed in the highly public venues of World’s Fairs throughout the first half of the century, it gained its strongest base of name recognition and popularity through its weekly Sunday morning broadcasts. KSL, the Salt Lake City-based Church-owned radio station, became affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company in the late 1920s, and this connection inspired then-station manager Earl J. Glade to push for a regular weekly segment for the choir. The first of these weekly broadcasts took place on July 15, 1929, with Apostle Richard L. Evans providing a short, nondenominational, inspirational message.

Although NBC first introduced the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to a national audience, CBS helped make it nationally popu-

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55 Church Information Services, “Choir Tours,” 1964, Jones, Scrapbooks.
56 Charles Jeffrey Calman, The Mormon Tabernacle Choir (New York:
lar. Interestingly, G. Stanley McAllister, the future president of the New York Stake and Mormon Pavilion committee member, who worked as director of buildings and plant operations for CBS from 1929 to 1946, brought the choir over from NBC in 1932 by offering it a permanent Sunday morning time slot, thus providing constant exposure to a national audience.\footnote{Ibid., 85.} During the first Grammy Awards in 1959, the choir received an award for its rendition of “Battle Hymn of the Republic” recorded with the Philadelphia Philharmonic, then directed by Eugene Ormandy. According to historian Charles Calman, this song encouraged many people who would otherwise not purchase classical choral music to do so because the song “was impossible to avoid hearing several times during a typical day of radio listening.”\footnote{Ibid., 99.} To many, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s signature secular song was a patriotic one, making the group a conduit between the Mormon faith and the American public at large. Far removed from the checkered history of Mormon polygamy on the frontier in the last half of the nineteenth century, the choir and its integration into mainstream American entertainment helped create a new image of the contemporary Mormon—that of the wholesome American.

This positive image made the choir an attractive group to Robert Moses and the World’s Fair committee, who expected the choir’s weekly radio program to draw large crowds. However, it was James Lavenstein, another Mormon executive at CBS who specialized in advertising, who proposed the idea of incorporating elements of Mormon cultural life into the fair. Lavenstein, in writing to the fair’s director of cultural activities, Louis Ames, suggested that the fair not only host the choir, but also “the annual Hill Cammorah [sic] Pageant . . . the annual All-Church Dance Festival . . . and the yearly ‘All Faces West Pageant.”\footnote{James Lavenstein, Letter to Louis Ames, September 24, 1962, Box 338, P 2.5, Folder: “Mormon Exhibit (1962–64),” New York World’s Fair Collection.} Ames showed enthusiasm for the LDS-themed performances because “any [of the acts] would offer a great

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Harper & Row, 1979), 84.
attraction for the Fair.\textsuperscript{60} At the joint press conference on October 19, 1962, Stuart Constable presented President McKay with Robert Moses’s formal invitation requesting the choir’s participation. In the letter, Moses asserted that he was “pleased to provide, for such concerts as you may wish to schedule, the facilities of the World’s Fair Assembly Pavilion . . . directly across the way from the [Church’s] exhibit site.”\textsuperscript{61} In addition to concerts on the fairgrounds, Moses also extended an invitation for the choir “to plan programs for the Choir in Philharmonic Hall during these years.”\textsuperscript{62} McKay “earnestly appreciated,” the invitation and assured Moses that while “the Choir’s officers and advisors will surely give serious consideration to the invitation . . . it is too soon to say what circumstances may suggest.”\textsuperscript{63} Despite McKay’s uncertain response to Moses, in which he also referred to the Mormon Pavilion as a “contemplated exhibit,” the LDS Pavilion Committee ensured that the choir would be a noteworthy presence at the fair. In fact, aggravated by the ongoing negotiations regarding the site of the Mormon Pavilion, Moses exclaimed, “I don’t want to debate this matter or to hold up this assignment . . . we want the Mormons.”\textsuperscript{64} Moses showed an understanding of the cultural capital held by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir; and by lobbying to assure the LDS Church a place in the fair, Moses also ensured that the Church had star power at his event.

Although Moses obviously thought the choir would get more people through the gates, the LDS Church viewed the choir’s role as part and parcel of its broader proselytizing effort. The First Presidency gave Choir members special guidelines “to conduct ourselves at all times with dignity and decorum . . . [T]he Church will be judged by our appearance and actions, which must always be above suspicion or reproach.” Moreover, to craft a particular image of their institution and beliefs, the Church urged choir members to “be discreet and avoid discussing controversial or sensitive subjects. Refer questions

\textsuperscript{60}Louis Ames, Memo to Stuart Constable, October 3, 1962, in ibid.
\textsuperscript{61}Robert Moses, Letter to David O. McKay, October 16, 1962, in ibid.
\textsuperscript{62}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63}David O. McKay, Letter to Robert Moses, November 26, 1962, in ibid.
on such matters to Church and Choir officials or others trained in the field of public relations. The documents do not mention specific “controversial or sensitive” subjects, but they likely referred to at least two—the prohibition of black men from the priesthood, and the negative legacy of polygamy. By working exclusively through official public relations personnel, who remain unidentified in the documents, the Church sought to avoid any statements that could be construed as a reflection of unsavory doctrine or practice.

The summer of 1964 featured a parade of Mormon performance groups. In addition to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, other planned performances included Mormon folk dancers from Brigham Young University and the Mormon Singing Mothers, an all-women choir assembled from the eastern seaboard. The 2,100-seat World’s Fair Pavilion was reserved for the folk dancing performances on June 9 and 10, 1964, and for two Tabernacle Choir performances on July 24 and 26. The Singing Mothers performed at a smaller venue on July 24 and 25. The performances in late July corresponded with the Pioneer Day celebrations of Utah’s statehood on July 24. While not explicitly stated, the planners seemed to assume that other LDS performance groups would draw an audience precisely because their religious affiliation linked them to the choir and its stellar reputation.

On Sunday, July 26, the choir’s morning performance was moved to the larger Texas Pavilion Music Hall; and despite the change of venue, the choir “succeeded in . . . nearly filling the 2,400-seat . . . hall.” The strong attendance numbers revealed the undeniable popularity of the choir’s live performances, largely because they were so rare. The World’s Fair marked the choir’s first stop on its 1964 nationwide tour, which also visited Rochester, Houston, New Orleans, Atlanta, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Las Vegas, and the White

65“Schedule and Itinerary for World’s Fair Tour 1964,” Jones, Scrapbooks.
House in Washington, D.C. Though most tour stops were on the East Coast, the choir intentionally visited cities in both the North and the South, introducing the LDS Church to a broad audience. The bulk of the concert remained the same regardless of location, consisting of both Mormon and traditional Christian hymns and choral pieces by composers such as Handel and Bach. However, the difference came during the encores, which in the North led off with the trademark “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and in the South with “Dixie,” leaving “Battle Hymn” off the program. Each concert gave the choir a chance to introduce and make the Church appealing to a large group of people, but the differing encore songs, designed to appeal to distinct regional identities within the United States, played a vital role in creating that appeal.

After the success of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s performances in the summer of 1964, fair planners were understandably eager to have the group back for the second season in 1965. William Ottley, putting the bargaining power in the hands of Church authorities, suggested that the choir appear “in concert at the Fair for several days” as “such a concert schedule would win our complete support, and include free use of whatever World’s Fair facilities might seem most suitable, plus no admission charge . . . for all members of the Choir.” The Fair Corporation showed itself to be much more generous after the fair’s first season than during its initial negotiations with the LDS Church. Acknowledging the popularity of the choir, but also realizing the logistical challenges of transporting 375 people more than two thousand miles, Ottley willingly made financial concessions to the Church.

Ottley and fair planners conceived of the choir’s second visit to the fair as a grand event—one that would be the center for more Mormon-focused events. Ottley went so far as to designate “a specific period as ‘Mormon Pioneer Week,’” and also “made tentative arrangements to reserve on Saturday, July 24, our Singer Bowl for . . . the Mor-

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mon dance festival on the occasion of ‘Utah Pioneer Day.’” The fair’s willingness to designate a Utah- and Mormon-themed week confirmed the choir’s popularity. Despite the generous invitation, the LDS Church was hesitant to accept and commit the choir to more performances, citing the high costs of transportation and the disruption caused to “the lives and homes and careers of some 375 people.” However, the Church was still eager to have a “Mormon Pioneer Week” in 1965, as well as the opportunity to stage smaller events, such as the Hill Cumorah Pageant.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir did not perform at the fair in 1965, likely due to budget constraints, but gave other highly publicized concerts, notably at President Lyndon B. Johnson’s inauguration ceremony on January 20, 1965, where it sang the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Inauguration planners invited the choir because they thought it “would add ‘an impressive and dramatic note’ to the swearing-in ceremonies.” Performing at a presidential inauguration revealed how nationally renowned the choir had become, not just as Mormons, but also as Americans who conveyed patriotic ideals through music. The choir went on to participate in World’s Fairs in Montreal, 1967; San Antonio, 1968; and Spokane, 1974. The continuation of this trend placed the choir—and by extension, the LDS Church—in secular settings, where its patriotic songs helped define the choir and the Church as distinctively American institutions, thereby assimilating both into the cultural mainstream.

THE PAVILION ITSELF

On March 27, 1963, Robert R. Mullen Company, the LDS Church’s public relations firm based in Washington, D.C., and run by Dwight Eisenhower’s former campaign press secretary, released a statement describing the Mormon Pavilion. The structure would feature a replica of the three spires on the east facade of the Salt Lake City Temple. The middle spire would be topped with a facsimile of the Angel Moroni, pushing the total height of the pavilion to 127 feet.

71Ibid.
The fair’s Operations Department required the LDS Church to obtain a zoning variance to place the seven-foot tall statue atop the spire. The pavilion itself was set back from the Industrial Area’s major thoroughfare; and landscaped between the street and the building were a reflecting pool, terraced gardens, and seating, “all designed to provide a quiet, restful atmosphere for the visitors to the fair.” The pavilion’s interior would feature dioramas and exhibits thematically centered on the theme of “Man’s Search for Happiness.” The walls were to be filled with golden glass panels, intended to “provide a sunny atmosphere in the interior.” The most notable aspect of the pavilion, according to the press release, was that, once the fair was over, the pavilion would be disassembled and “used in the construction of future Chapels . . . on Long Island.”

In addition to design considerations, financial concerns were foremost in the pavilion committee’s mind as they planned their building. In order to make the pavilion “economically feasible,” the LDS Pavilion Committee reported, “it would be necessary to consider building a structure which can be profitably used by the Church after it has served its functions at the Fair.” The committee’s proposal, which sought to alleviate concerns about funding a large-scale pavilion, “recommended that the Church build a pre-fabricated or especially designed demountable chapel to house our exhibit . . . which attempts to introduce people to the Church.”

It is ironic that, at a time when newspaper and magazine articles focused on the immense wealth of the LDS Church—Fortune labeled the Church “a rich organization . . . in tangible assets”—Church leaders stayed dedicated to the same thrift and resourcefulness characteristic of their ancestors who

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74 William H. Ottley, Memo to William Hamby, December 4, 1962, Box 526, Mormon Church, New York World’s Fair Collection.

75 Robert Mullen Inc., Letter to LDS Church, “The Mormons Break Ground for Pavilion at Fair,” March 27, 1963, Staples, Scrapbook 1, Mormon Pavilion Collection, Ms 9138, Box 1. Though not used for multiple chapels, the physical components of the Mormon Pavilion were re-erected as the Plainview Stake Center in Plainview, New York.

settled the Salt Lake Valley.\textsuperscript{77}

Those helping to organize and plan the design and content of the LDS Pavilion actively sought out the opinions, recommendations, and advice of non-Mormons. James Lavenstein thought that it was “extremely important that [the LDS Church] get outside help on a consulting basis from” public relation strategists who provided “a different slant,” which would be helpful in making the religion appeal to the broad range of fairgoers. Moreover, Lavenstein urged Church leadership “to remember that we are competing with many other exhibitions and unless ours is outstanding and attractive and different, we will fall flat on our faces.”\textsuperscript{78} While Lavenstein seemed to be accurately predicting the rampant commercialism that characterized the 1964–65 World’s Fair, his language also highlights the ways in which the Church employed the tactics and values of big businesses in competing with the other pavilions, each selling its own products, image, or identity.

On the day the committee sent off its recommendation to build a pavilion for the fair, McAllister wrote to Mark E. Petersen recounting a recent conversation with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, a personal friend. McAllister asked Hoover “what two or three areas of our Church activities appeal[ed] to him as being of interest to the public. [And] without hesitation he said the Family, Youth, and [the] Welfare program.”\textsuperscript{79} After discussing Hoover’s suggestion, the committee agreed to incorporate those themes in the pavilion. McAllister also sought input from Robert Moses, who gave a response similar to Hoover’s and additionally recommended urging the Church to make its message quick and direct to avoid boring visitors.\textsuperscript{80} Hoover’s and Moses’s suggestions represented the Church’s key characteristics in the eyes of non-Mormons. These outsider perceptions of the faith in effect became the corporate images around which the LDS planners designed their pavilion and defined their religion. By seeking outside input, the LDS Pavilion Committee came to understand how non-

\textsuperscript{77}Freedgood, “Mormonism; Rich, Vital, and Unique,” 136.
\textsuperscript{78}James Lavenstein, Memo to Richard L. Evans, September 17, 1962, New York World’s Fair Committee: Subject Files, 1961–65, CR 115/2, fd. 4, LDS Church History Library.
\textsuperscript{79}G. Stanley McAllister, Letter to Mark E. Petersen, August 1, 1962, New York World’s Fair Committee: Subject Files, 1961–65, CR 115/2, fd. 4, LDS Church History Library.
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid.
Mormons viewed the faith and used those perceptions to publicly define Mormonism as a religion dedicated to the family, community, and wholesome living—both in doctrine and in practice.

Although non-Mormons gave suggestions and advice that helped shape the Church pavilion’s thematic aspects, the job of drafting architectural plans for the pavilion was left up to official Church architect Harold Burton, who worked in conjunction with the New York and Tokyo-based firm of Raymond and Rado.81 The firm’s junior partner, L. L. Rado, wrote Burton early in the planning stages with broad conceptual suggestions. Rado stressed that most of the fair’s buildings would be “extremely flashy” temporary structures, “of far less overall integrity than those of the Seattle World’s Fair. Most of the exhibitions will represent hard-sell commercial ventures in contrast to the spiritual intent of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Given that the LDS Church was not a “hard-sell” corporation in the same way that fair participants General Motors, Pepsi-Cola, or RCA were, “the most satisfactory approach to the expression of spiritual values in such an environment is to take just the opposite direction,” by being as different as possible: “Where the other exhibits are dynamic, ours should have a formal dignity; where the others have a temporary quality through the use of synthetic materials, ours should have a feeling of permanence through the use of natural materials; and where the others are built right out to the street demanding attention, ours will be more effective by being set back and adequately landscaped for a feeling of repose.” Rado’s argument reflected the architectural concern with the psychology of spatial experience. He thought that, as visitors would be inundated with the fair’s “distort[ed] and exaggerat[ed]” architecture, a well-proportioned and harmonious design would portray the LDS Church as “an oasis of integrity and truth.”82 To avoid the typical, temporary fair architecture, Rado encouraged Burton to focus on designing a pavilion reminiscent of sacred Mormon architecture.

However, roughly three weeks after he offered his suggestions to Burton, Rado broke ties with the Church over differences regarding

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how to "visualize the program." While the specifics of the disagreement are undocumented, the Church agreed to pay Rado $4,035.44 for services rendered and then entered into agreement with another New York-based firm—Fordyce and Hamby—to pick up where Rado left off. The Evans brothers—David W. of Church Information Service and Apostle Richard L.—the voice of "Music and the Spoken Word," first suggested replicating the three spires of the temple. By mid-November 1962, Burton and Fordyce and Hamby agreed to replicate the eastern facade of the Salt Lake City Temple. Mormons outside the committee responded enthusiastically to the pavilion design, believing "the decision to use the facade of the Temple a very happy one and we completely concur with your conclusion that it is the most widely recognized physical symbol of Mormonism." In deciding to mimic Mormonism’s most famous LDS building, the Mormon Pavilion Committee found itself a symbol to complete its corporate image. While Hoover and Moses highlighted characteristics of the faith—family, youth, and welfare programs—that comprised the corporate thrust of the pavilion, committee members hoped that reproducing the Salt Lake City Temple in miniature would architecturally define those values as quintessentially Mormon to those unfamiliar with the Church.

The design, by virtue of its stateliness, would also serve as “an unusual architectural note at the fair and contrast favorably with the not-too-effective modernistic architecture presently planned for the buildings that immediately surround [the] site.” Nearby buildings included Gas Inc.’s “Festival of Gas Pavilion,” a minimalist design featuring a broad canopy over a glass-enclosed restaurant; the RCA Pavilion, comprised of a series of smooth cylindrical spaces massed together; and the World’s Fair Pavilion, a geometrically decorated

85Top, “Legacy of the Mormon Pavilion.”
87Ibid.
An unidentified missionary conducts a guided tour in front of the Christus statue in the Mormon Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair. She is standing in front of the “Life of Christ” while behind the group is the Church history mural, which includes, from left to right, the following scenes: 1820: Joseph Smith’s First Vision; 1830: “Mormons” expelled from Missouri; 1839–45: Nauvoo, largest city in Illinois [sic]; 1844: Martyrdom of Prophet Joseph Smith; 1846: Exodus from Nauvoo; 1847: Brigham Young in Great Salt Lake Valley; and 1856: European immigrants pull handcarts across plains to Utah. Courtesy Bill Cotter and http://www.worldsfairphotos.com.

dome covering an indoor performance space. Although it is unlikely that the LDS Pavilion Committee knew the architectural specifics of the pavilion’s neighbors, David W. Evans’s report on the Seattle World’s Fair likely gave the committee members a clear conception of the futuristic designs to expect from other fair participants who focused on showing off their visionary products.

For further contrast with the other pavilions, Fordyce and Hamby followed Rado’s lead and set the pavilion back from the pedestrian walkway. In the space between the pavilion’s entrance and the thoroughfare, Fordyce and Hamby designed a large reflecting

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pool. From projected figures, the architects “expected that 65% of the people attending the fair will cross in front of [the] exhibit.” Contemplating the ideal location in front of the fair’s major entrance, the architects expected the exhibit to automatically be deluged with potential visitors. The pool would serve as “a device to attract people toward the pavilion” once they “recognize[d] . . . the reflection.”

The pool furthered the Mormon Pavilion’s sense of uniqueness through contrast. It created a space of repose and serenity, while also multiplying the image of the pavilion’s spires. The pool and facade combined to reinforce the pavilion’s difference from the rest of the fair.

Not everyone was impressed, however. Martin Marty, editor of the Christian Century, was dismayed, writing in 1964, “Charity prevents my commenting in detail on the Latter-day Saints travesty, a miniature of Salt

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Lake City’s Mormon Temple,” a comment suggesting that the Mormon Pavilion’s rendition of the famous landmark did not do justice to the original.  

Early in the planning phases, Robert R. Mullen Company encouraged the Church to “bring celebrities to the exhibit, high LDS officials, [and] have interviews and press conferences” at the pavilion as a way to generate news. If these events were successful, Mullen Inc. expected the exhibit to “do a tremendous lot in developing the growth of the Church in the East.” The LDS Church heeded its PR firm’s advice and brought in prominent Mormon leaders to help dedicate the pavilion when the fair opened on April 22, 1964. Seven hundred people attended the ceremonies, and among the notable Mormons present were seven of the fifteen General Authorities, including Apostles Hugh B. Brown and Ezra Taft Benson (former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and future Church president), and Michigan’s Governor George Romney.  

The promotional activity surrounding the dedication seemed to be effective, as more people attended the ceremony than the LDS Fair committee anticipated. By June 19, 1964, one million people had visited the Mormon Pavilion. Bernard P. Brockbank, the pavilion’s managing director and an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, considered these attendance figures “a tremendous accomplishment for a Church as small as we are in numbers. One million visitors add up to about half the total membership of the Church all over the world.” The religious composition of the first million visitors was diverse according to entries in the guest registry: 52 percent were of some Protestant sect, 22 percent were Catholic, 10 percent were Mormon, 8 percent were Jewish, and 18 percent were Hindu, Buddhist, members of other East-
Schematic floor plan of the Mormon Pavilion. Original document in LDS Church History Library, digitally replicated by Nathaniel Kogan.

Attendance varied during the first two months of the fair, swinging as low as 14,000 or as high as 35,000 per day, but roughly averaging 17,200 visitors daily.\footnote{Ibid.} Resident missionary and pavilion staff assistant Irene E. Staples noted that visitors generally had positive impressions and that seeing the pavilion had a powerful effect on people. “Some children seeing it, with its graceful spires thought it was a fairy castle,” and many “commented on the ‘beautiful peaceful feeling’ they had which they had never experienced before in any other Pavilion.”\footnote{Irene E. Staples, “In General It Was a Beautiful Pavilion,” Staples, Scrapbook 1.}

Overall, visitor comments in the guest registries indicate that the LDS Church had successfully created an image that people responded to in ways anticipated by the pavilion’s architects. A visitor from New York wrote that the pavilion was “Beautiful, you feel as if you should tip-toe and whisper.” One person from New Hampshire observed, “The Mormon people seem to be so calm, serene and healthy,” and inquired about the possibility of relocating: “Would there be work for a stranger going west to Utah?”\footnote{Guest Register, Positive Comments, 1964, Ms 9138, Box 2, Mormon Pavilion Collection.}

From the Church’s point of view, these comments indicated that the Mormon Pavilion not only served as a sanctuary from the fair’s typical commotion, but also left visitors with favorable impressions about Church members.

**THE PAVILION IN OPERATION**

The pavilion’s floor plan and its staffing by well-trained missionaries provided an extremely structured experience for Mormon Pavilion visitors. Recruitment in the New York area had been a long-time challenge for the Church because of the nature of apartment living. Wilburn West, president of the Eastern States Mission, observed that “in the better residential areas . . . along Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue, and Riverside Drive . . . [at] the street entrance of almost every first class apartment house stands a uniformed doorman.
who will admit only visitors whom residents have invited."\textsuperscript{97} This limitation prevented missionaries from employing their typical door-to-door proselytizing techniques that proved effective in suburban areas. The numbers of converts in the mid-1950s in New York City remained paltry—an estimated three or four per month.\textsuperscript{98} By contrast, the Mormon Pavilion “provided a vehicle for people to come to us . . . in substantial numbers,” which gave West optimism about an increased LDS presence on the East Coast.\textsuperscript{99}

Given that the Church wanted to make the fair a proselytizing effort first and foremost, it is not surprising that missionaries played an integral role. Senior Apostle Harold B. Lee felt that the best way to make the pavilion a place to proselytize would be to “present [the] message as the missionaries present it.” To Lee, this meant having missionaries staff all parts of the pavilion and serve as guides to all the separate exhibits, which would achieve his aim of “want[ing] people who come in carefree to go out worried.”\textsuperscript{100} If the profundity and gravity of Mormonism’s religious claims were to have lasting impact in the New York area, they would need to be conveyed by those trained to share their conviction for the faith.

The role missionaries played at the fair served as a testament to the orderliness and organizational acumen of the LDS Pavilion Committee and missionary training in general. The guidelines that the missionaries had to follow were numerous, and their daily lives were highly scripted and scheduled. However, this intense organization facilitated its success. Missionaries at the fair behaved according to strict rules, which dictated everything from their dress, to what they would say at each display, to how they would interact with their groups. While visitors were not required to take the missionary-guided tours through the pavilion, it was strongly encouraged. The pavilion was designed to admit people in groups of fifty that would then move through the exhibits sequentially. During the guided tours, groups traveled from one display to another, and at

\textsuperscript{97}Wilburn C. West, “Missionary Service at the Mormon Pavilion,” Ms 9138, Box 2, Mormon Pavilion Collection.  
\textsuperscript{99}West, “Missionary Service at the Mormon Pavilion.”  
\textsuperscript{100}Harold B. Lee, quoted in Wilburn C. West, “Our Main Objective: Teach the Restored Gospel,” Ms 9138, Box 2, Mormon Pavilion Collection.
each stop a different missionary explained the importance of that particular display, reciting from a script written by West.\textsuperscript{101}

Of particular note is the rule that discouraged missionaries from entertaining questions during the tour. If people had inquiries after seeing all the displays and watching the film, they could visit the information booth near the exit.\textsuperscript{102} While eliminating questions during the tour allowed groups to move more efficiently through the pavilion, it also avoided putting the missionaries in an uncomfortable situation where they could be forced to answer a sensitive question about racial discrimination or polygamy. Instead staffers used a rubric of Church-sanctioned responses. Wilburn West compiled a list of the most frequently asked questions at the pavilion, most of which were clarification questions about the doctrinal stance of the Mormons, such as:

1. What Biblical scriptures provide a basis for your belief that we had an existence prior to our birth in this life?
2. What are the basic differences between the Mormon beliefs and those of other Christian churches?
3. Why do we need anything more than the Bible as a guide?
4. Where are the golden plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated?
5. Why have we been led to believe that the Mormons are not Christians?\textsuperscript{103}

The next two entries on West’s list were: “What is the church attitude toward the negro?” and “Questions relating to the practice of polygamy.”\textsuperscript{104} While the list itself does not specify whether the numbering indicates how frequently a question was asked, the inclusion of the questions about the Church’s stance toward “the negro” and polygamy indicates that many visitors to the Mormon Pavilion either knew or had concerns about these topics.

The layout of the iconography and artwork worked to clarify misconceptions about the Church, to communicate that Mormons were also Christians, and to reinforce the corporate images of clean

\textsuperscript{101}Wilburn C. West, “Guidelines for Missionaries at Mormon Pavilion,” Mormon Pavilion Collection, Ms 9138, Box 2, LDS Church History Library.

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103}Wilburn C. West, “Doctrinal Questions Most Frequently Asked,” Ms 9138, Box 2, Mormon Pavilion Collection.

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid.
living and the importance of family. The paintings, displays and dioramas inside the pavilion were divided between pieces that focused on the Judeo-Christian basis of the Church and pieces that emphasized unique LDS beliefs and doctrines.

Upon entering the pavilion, visitors first saw a statue of Adam and Eve, a mural of Old Testament prophets, and a replica of Bertel Thorvaldsen’s twelve-foot tall *Christus* statue, done by Italian marble studio Rebechi Aldo & Gualtiero.105 These images and objects immediately communicated the visual message that the Mormons were firmly grounded in traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs and symbols.

105“Essential Facts about the Pavilion and Its Exhibits,” Staples,
To reinforce this impression, the missionary’s first scripted line at the Adam and Eve statue asserted that the “pavilion is centered around Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures,” and that Mormons “believe that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, lives today, and that he had the same resurrected body of flesh and bones that he had when he ascended into heaven. . . . To be Christians, we must literally follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and not the interpretations and traditions of men.”

Irene Staples, a full-time missionary who worked at the pavilion, found the entryway’s artwork “very impressive” and also thought it would help to correct the erroneous notions of “many people [who] did not think that the Mormons were Christians!” Stephen L. Richards, first counselor in McKay’s First Presidency, bought, then gifted to the Church, its first *Christus* replica in 1959. It stayed in a crate until the opening of the new Bureau of Information building on Temple Square in 1966. However, the Mormon Pavilion’s *Christus*, a copy made from the same cast as the original, marked the first time the LDS Church displayed the statue publicly. The placement and the scale of the *Christus* statue in New York had the desired effect with many visitors. One visitor from New York exclaimed, “The statue of Christ overwhelmed me!” Beyond the pavilion’s most obvious examples of Judeo-Christian symbolism, the sequence in which visitors were led through the exhibits also indicates that LDS planners aimed to firmly establish Mormonism as a mainstream religion before explaining its own unique beliefs.

The tour continued with stops at the Twelve Apostles mural, where the missionary guide explained the organizational similarities between the original church established by Christ and Joseph Smith’s restored church—both having twelve apostles under the leadership of a prophet. The tour then moved on to one of the two major murals in the pavilion, the first painted by Harry Anderson, which chronicled the life of Christ. The enormous 8’x110’ mural was mounted roughly seven feet above the ground and contained scenes of Jesus’s baptism,
his calling Peter and Andrew “to be fishers of men,” his Sermon on the Mount, his prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas’s betrayal and the subsequent crucifixion, the literal resurrection, his appearance to the apostles after the resurrection, his ascension into heaven, John the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos, and finally an image of the Angel Moroni. The missionaries explained that, until Joseph Smith restored the Church, “there was spiritual darkness for many centuries,” and many of Christ’s original and crucial teachings—the importance of apostles, ordinances surrounding baptism, and the principles of tithing and fasting—were discounted or ignored entirely.

The mural’s artist, Harry Anderson, had drawn illustrations for major businesses, billboards, and the covers of popular American publications such as Collier’s, Saturday Evening Post, and Good Housekeeping. Though he was a Seventh-day Adventist, Anderson nevertheless accepted the invitation of his friend Wendell J. Ashton, who later became the LDS Church’s first Public Communications director, and J. Willard Marriott, the founder of Marriott Hotels, to paint key scenes

110West, “Narrative Explanation of Exhibits at Pavilion.”
of Jesus’s life for the Mormon Pavilion. Though Anderson willingly accepted these New Testament commissions, feeling his religious values to be in harmony with those of the Mormons on these points, he declined to paint scenes related to the LDS Church and the Book of Mormon. Therefore, the execution of those pieces fell to other artists. Nevertheless, his artistic style, both familiar and proven in its marketability, resonated with pavilion visitors. A Baptist fairgoer from Virginia noted that the “paintings are fantastically beautiful. They show Christ as a strong bodied person which he undoubtedly was and as your young [Mormon] men are.”

Given that much of the artwork commissioned for the Mormon Pavilion was later copied and used in other LDS buildings, this visitor’s comment resonated with LDS fair officials and reflected a widespread opinion.

In contrast to much Christian devotional artwork, particularly images that focus on the suffering of the crucifixion, this Mormon artwork narrated Jesus’s life in a celebratory and uplifting manner. While the mural included a crucifixion scene (relatively blood-free), other mural scenes focused on Christ’s life and showed him performing good deeds and influencing those around him with his teachings. To appeal broadly, the pavilion offered straightforward narratives through accessible artwork instead of obscure symbolism. The artwork’s overt didacticism required minimal interpretive guidance from the missionaries for people to gain an understanding of the Church’s beliefs. Moreover, the mural drew parallels between Christ and the Mormon missionaries, suggesting that they were teaching others, just as Christ did in his life.

As a transition from a narrative scene that emphasized the dissolution of Christ’s original church, the missionaries then explained


112 Guest Register, Positive Comments, 1964.

113 The film screened at the Protestant Center provides the most obvious contrast with the artwork in the Mormon Pavilion. Their passion play film, Parable, depicted Jesus as a clown in a circus where he was crucified in a Punch and Judy show. Though Robert Moses found it offensive, most fair visitors found the film’s complex symbolism and imagery unintelligible. Lawrence R. Samuel, The End of the Innocence: The 1964–1965 New York World’s Fair (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 23, 52.
artwork that illustrated the history, beliefs, and the restored LDS Church. Scenes from LDS history were presented in a mural identical in size to the one that depicted scenes from Christ’s life. The two murals were mounted directly opposite each other in the exhibition hall.114 The architect’s floor plan emphasized the identical size and symmetrical placement of the murals, thereby drawing parallels between Christ’s original Church and the restored Church of the Latter-day Saints.

The Church history mural consisted of twelve scenes that recounted important events in the formation of the Church and its movement across the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Harold T. Kilbourn, an LDS artist who lived in Salt Lake City and executed a number of other devotional images for the Church, designed the mural; however, Alexander Rosenfeld, an artist from Los Angeles, physically painted it at the pavilion.115 The mural’s first image depicted Joseph Smith receiving his first vision as a teenager in 1820. The next scenes illustrate the creation of the Church as an institution, beginning with its formal organization in 1830 and the construction of the first temple in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836. The next three scenes—the expulsion from Missouri, Joseph Smith’s martyrdom in Nauvoo, Illinois, and the exodus from Nauvoo—communicated persecutions suffered by Church members in the 1830s and 1840s.

The remainder of the mural celebrated the triumphs and growth of the Church from the 1850s onward. Beginning with Brigham Young’s entrance into the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1847, the mural recorded European immigration into Utah Territory, the development of irrigation in early Salt Lake City, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869—ceremoniously marked by a golden spike used to join the rails at Promontory Summit, Utah. The completion of the transcontinental railroad relates to the Church’s history in that Mormons helped in surveying and grading the rail-

115Gerald Joseph Peterson, “History of Mormon Exhibits in World Expositions” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974), 82. Peterson’s thesis contains more detailed descriptions of the images than I can offer here, including references to the biblical passages on which the images were based; see pp. 79–87.
However, the scene’s inclusion in the mural also connected Utah—and by extension the LDS Church—with significant events of nineteenth-century America. The penultimate scenes in the mural documented the construction of the Tabernacle in the 1860s and the completion of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893. The very last scene, dated 1963, showed people of different ethnicities from all around the world lined up next to a depiction of the earth. This scene, unrelated to any specific event, was meant to serve as “a reminder to Latter-day Saints to share the Gospel message and its blessing with ‘every nation, kindred, tongue and people.’ It also is a challenge to all people to listen and learn the principles of truth through which all men may find peace and happiness.” Although most of the Church history mural focused on the major events and figures of early Mormonism, the final image asserted that the present era of Mormonism was one of missionary work and expansion throughout the world. Interestingly, all the figures in this final scene were white people and diverse only in their costumes—an artistic decision that subtly echoed the Church’s exclusionary practices.

The vital similarity between the murals was their focus on the martyrdom of each Church’s leader, drawing parallels not only between Christ and Joseph Smith, but also between the original and the restored Church. By emphasizing the similar religious narratives and organizational structures of Christ’s church and Smith’s restoration, the architecture and iconography served to reinforce LDS claims of being the true restored Church.

The last major component of the exhibit, and one which later became widely used as a conversion tool, was the motion picture commissioned for the fair and titled after the pavilion’s theme, Man’s Search for Happiness. The film, produced by Brigham Young University, ran fifteen minutes and played in both of the pavilion’s theaters throughout the course of the day, allowing a maximum

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117The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Mormon Pavilion Brochure,” 1963. This specific quotation and the images described in the paragraph are all included in the original Mormon Pavilion brochure, which was distributed at the fair.
number of people to see it. Narrated by Richard L. Evans, the film explained the distinctive tenets of Mormonism, serving as a final reinforcement of and complement to the other displays about Mormon beliefs and the missionaries’ accompanying explanations. The doctrine of preexistence featured prominently in the film. Once a person is born, the film explained, the memory of the preexistence is “blotted out [so] that you might live by faith and further prepare for the everlastingness of life.” However, the unique nature of preexistence creates interconnectedness among all people, so that one “[is] related not only to every person upon this earth who lives, who has lived, who will yet live, but to God, the Father of us all, and to his son, our Savior.” The film then explained that the challenges and obstacles people face on earth—particularly dealing with death—and the eternal connection uniting all people (a doctrine that evinces the LDS interest in genealogy and family history) is a bond that prevents death from “loom[ing] forever comfortless.” Even death was cast in a positive tone: “Coming out of a darkened room into the light, through death you will emerge into a place of reawakening and find loved ones waiting to welcome you. There with your loved ones you will await the resurrection, which is the reuniting of your spirit and your body. There you will continue toward the limitless opportunities of everlasting life.”

The film emphasized that the Church was dedicated to the sanctity and permanence of familial connections. Stanley Cox, chief projectionist at the pavilion, observed, “From the few moist eyes of some and the thoughtful expressions of all . . . the message of the Picture is going over. Out of all the perhaps half million referral cards there has been nothing but praise for the picture and its presentation.” The film’s positive reception indicates that incorporating various forms of media succeeded in executing the Church’s goal of defining itself positively to outsiders, thereby furthering its proselytizing message.

When originally commissioned, the film, artwork, and displays inside the pavilion were intended for an English-speaking, primarily American audience. The World’s Fair Corporation predicted that only 3 percent of fair visitors would be from outside the United States.

118 Motion Picture,” Staples, Scrapbook 1.
Moreover, two out of three of these foreign visitors were expected to be from either the United Kingdom or Canada, meaning English would likely be their native tongue. In light of these facts, LDS Pavilion planners chose to offer missionary guide service only in English, following the lead of such major corporations at the fair as Ford, AT&T, and IBM. The decision to have only English-speaking missionaries was tied to Robert R. Mullen Company’s prediction that the pavilion would have its greatest impact among those living on the East Coast.

Contrary to the expectations of a linguistically homogenous population touring the pavilion, however, the missionaries encountered many more Spanish-speaking visitors than anticipated. Although “most of the Spanish speaking visitors could understand English well enough to catch the import of the message as they went through the pavilion . . . their knowledge of English was often too inadequate for them to understand the doctrinal and scriptural subject matter covered by the discussions.” Richard Murdock, a bishop in Caldwell, New Jersey, and an FBI agent liaison between Cuban refugees and the U.S. government, told LDS Pavilion officials that, in addition to the greater-than-expected numbers of Spanish speakers coming through the exhibit, there were roughly 200,000 Cuban refugees in his area, many of whom would be willing to learn about the LDS Church. The combination of Spanish-speaking visitors and the potential for many Cuban converts in New Jersey prompted the LDS Pavilion planners to request six Spanish-speaking missionaries from the central Missionary Committee. By November 1964, the Missionary Committee had more than fulfilled that request, sending twelve missionaries to New York, who worked the duration of the 1965 fair season.

Also for the 1965 season, a “Se Habla Español” sign was erected near the pavilion’s entrance, and missionaries began to greet Spanish-speaking visitors in their native tongue, causing their “faces [to] light up with an expression that seemed to say: ‘Here is someone who really cares for us.’” The personalized attention the missionaries gave to Spanish-speaking visitors proved successful in netting referrals and

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121 Wilburn C. West, “Use of Foreign Languages by Missionary Guides,” Mormon Pavilion Collection, Ms 9138, Box 2, New York World’s Fair Collection.
122 Ibid.
bringing new converts to the Church; consequently, the Spanish-speaking missionaries reportedly baptized more people than did their English-speaking counterparts, though the precise numbers are unavailable.123

**THE PAVILION’S IMPACT AND INFLUENCE**

When the fair ended in October 1965, Irene Staples estimated that “approximately six million people visited the Pavilion of the nearly sixty million people visiting the fair,” which she viewed as a success. The missionaries joked that the attendance figures had a deeper significance to the Church, as “the dear Lord took his own due, 10 percent which he was entitled to,” paralleling the LDS tithing requirement.124 For the Mormon Pavilion, the final tally was impressive: 5,769,835 visitors, 97,385 Books of Mormon sold, and 930,489 referrals for missionary visits during the fair’s two seasons.125 World’s Fair officials were disappointed with the number of people through the turnstiles. They had projected 70 million visitors, but received only 51.6 million—a situation which caused the fair to default on $22.4 million in bonded debt. However, LDS leaders and missionaries were ecstatic at the staggering turnout for the Mormon Pavilion.126 Following a public relations model, Don LeFevre, a press aide at the pavilion, created an event out of the five millionth visitor by writing to Robert Moses and urging him to draft a letter for the “special occasion since the figure of five million represents more than twice the world-wide membership of our Church.”127 Moses complied, and wrote that the attendance numbers were “undisputable proof that [the LDS Church’s] decision to participate in our Fair was the right one.” Moreover, he lauded the pavilion itself as “one of the beauty spots of the Fair” and had “nothing but praise for the programs pre-

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123Ibid.
sented there.” Fair visitors apparently shared Moses’s sentiments about the Mormon Pavilion’s visual appeal, as they took an estimated 1,075,000 photos of the building’s exterior and its exhibits during the fair’s two seasons.

In contrast to the fair’s other religious exhibits, the Mormon Pavilion proved to be relatively popular among fairgoers. None of the other religious exhibits could compete with the popularity of the Catholic Church’s exhibit, which drew roughly half of the fair’s total visitors—26 million people—who came to see Michelangelo’s Pieta making its first-ever appearance outside of Italy. However, the Mormon Pavilion and Billy Graham’s pavilion officially had the second and third highest attendance numbers, with 5.6 and 5 million visitors respectively. The numbers for the other pavilions, however, were much smaller. The Protestant Center drew 2.9 million visitors, the Moody Bible Institute’s “Sermons from Science” pavilion saw 1.3 million, the Christian Science pavilion attracted only 800,000 people, and the evangelical Wycliffe Bible Translator’s “2000 Tribes” pavilion had 650,000 visitors.

Given that the Mormon Pavilion had to compete against the immense drawing power of the Catholics’ unique art display, as well as Billy Graham’s occasional personal appearances at his own pavilion, the LDS Church’s distant second-place attendance figures marked an important achievement in terms of public recognition for a faith that had a minimal presence on the East Coast.

True to the desired goal of reusability of materials, the Mormon Pavilion structure was disassembled in late 1965 and rebuilt as the Plainview Stake Center on Long Island shortly thereafter. While the facade from the World’s Fair was not replicated on Long Island, the 36 concrete panels that comprised the pavilion—weighing 12 tons each—provided the primary structural elements for the new building. The meetinghouse was rededicated in 1999; and William Schuck, a convert from the fair, praised the building as “a living legacy . . . that

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129 Pavilion Statistics,” *The Easterner*, November 1965, Mormon Pavilion Collection, Ms 9138, Box 2. Unfortunately, this source does not explain the method used to obtain the statistic about the number of photos visitors took of the Mormon Pavilion.

led thousands of Church members to gain their testimonies and membership. "131 While the building is noteworthy as a rare example of a structure that survived after its role in a temporary exposition, it is also symbolically charged for many Mormons in the New York area today who view it as a representation of LDS growth in the region.

After the 1964–65 World’s Fair, the LDS Church participated in three other exhibitions: in 1968 in the Hemis-Fair in San Antonio, Texas, in 1970 in Osaka, Japan, and in 1974 in Spokane, Washington. 132 The Church failed to match the popularity of Mormon Pavilion at its later exposition appearances. Only 650,000 people visited the Mormon exhibit in San Antonio, and the Book of Mormon Pavilion at Expo ’74 in Spokane attracted only 323,455 visitors in six months. By contrast, the Church’s exhibit in Japan proved much more successful, drawing around seven million visitors. 133 However, the Osaka pavilion was specifically a non-proselytizing effort as the LDS Church was there as a representative of the United States. The Church’s pavilion in Spokane, which sought to “introduce the Book of Mormon to the world,” took inspiration from the New York World’s Fair Mormon Pavilion as it distributed brochures about the Church and photographs of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The Spokane pavilion also featured Church President Spencer W. Kimball in a Pioneer Day celebration. 134

One of the most evident ways to measure the success of the Mormon Pavilion would be to see how many converts were baptized as a direct result of visiting the exhibit during the two seasons of the World’s Fair. Sadly, such statistics are hard to quantify, as those who converted as a result of referrals from the fair may or may not have cited the Mormon Pavilion as the reason for their conversion. Nevertheless, some LDS committee members made estimates about the pavilion’s impact on membership. For instance, David W. Evans estimated that, while only six people in the Eastern States Mission area converted in 1963, roughly 1,000 baptisms occurred during each of the fair’s two years of operations. Moreover, the trend continued as “in the succeeding several years, there were six to eight hundred

133 Ibid; “Pavilion Successful at Expo ’74,” Ensign, January 1975, 76.
134 “Pavilion Successful at Expo ’74,” 76.
[conversions]" annually. Membership also increased significantly in the New York area, as L. Tom Perry, then a member of New York Stake and a future apostle, estimated that 75 percent of the members of the Rego Park Ward converted as a result of the Mormon Pavilion.

Although the Mormon Pavilion seemed to cause an immediate spike in conversions after the close of the World’s Fair, especially on the East Coast, it is a stretch to link later Church growth with this particular event. In fact, comparing how Church growth was affected by the Mormon Pavilion versus the Church’s other proselytizing initiatives during this same time period is an important area for further research. Though not directly connected to the New York World’s Fair, given the chronological distance, contemporary membership struggles cast doubt on the triumphal narrative of Church growth throughout the 1970s and 1980s found in LDS publications such as the Ensign and the Church News. From 1990 to 2000 the LDS Church has struggled, not only with membership growth both in the United States and overseas, but also with membership retention, especially in comparison to other international missionary-oriented faiths, such as Seventh-day Adventists, Southern Baptists, and Assemblies of God.

Therefore, rather than measuring the Mormon Pavilion’s importance in conversion numbers, a more valid interpretation of its significance is not only how it created a corporate image for the LDS Church based on family, community, and wholesome living, but also in how it formed the prototype for the Church’s later pavilions and future visitors’ centers. Many of the iconographic and audio-visual displays that were part of the Mormon Pavilion, such as Man’s Search for

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137 David G. Stewart, The Law of the Harvest: Practical Principles of Effective Missionary Work (Henderson, Nev.: Cumorah Foundation, 2007), Section I, esp. pp. 16, 19–24, 37–38. Stewart’s statistical analysis found that, even though the LDS Church ranks fourth in membership among U.S. denominations, it is a distant fourth and that this ranking does not account for membership activity. Moreover, the LDS Church remains concentrated in the western hemisphere, with far fewer members in Africa and Latin America than Pentecostal Christianity.
Happiness, were adapted or reused in other visitors’ centers. One of the most notable elements of the pavilion that has since become a staple of LDS visitors’ centers is the Christus statue. The replica from the World’s Fair is now at the Los Angeles Temple’s visitors center, with others in New Zealand, Hawaii, Mexico City, and Washington, D.C. Moreover, examining the Temple Square visitors’ center in Salt Lake City reveals that the paintings of Jesus’s life, while capturing the same events as those in the mural at the Mormon Pavilion and sharing a similar aesthetic, are not in fact the same images. Many of the artists, notably Harry Anderson and Harold T. Kilbourn, who produced paintings for the Mormon Pavilion, also painted for other visitors’ centers, thereby establishing a unique genre of distinctively LDS artwork. Given that the Church builds visitors’ centers not only

in conjunction with temples, but also at other historical sites, the imprint of the Mormon Pavilion’s imagery and advertising techniques is present throughout the world.139

David W. Evans attributed much of the inspiration for building the first visitors’ center in Salt Lake City (now Temple Square North Visitors’ Center) to his brother, Richard L., the producer of *Music and the Spoken Word* and director of the Bureau of Information at Temple Square. Prior to the Mormon Pavilion, the bureau was the closest thing to a visitors’ center, but its message targeted LDS history enthusiasts rather than potential converts. David recalled Richard as being the “moving spirit” behind overhauling the bureau to make it more attractive and effective at telling the Church’s story. In so doing, Richard L. Evans helped to shape the first of the new visitors’ centers, completed in 1966.140 Since that time the Church has built a total of twenty-seven visitors’ centers.141 This new building type—constructed near temples and important LDS historical sites, such as at Nauvoo and Hill Cumorah—helped to fulfill Wilburn West’s vision of finding a proselytizing medium that would bring people to the Church in vast numbers, aiding the work of missionaries who still sought out converts a few at a time. While this vision and function of visitors’ centers, particularly those at historic sites, predominated from the 1960s to the 1990s, Michael Madsen convincingly argues that contemporarily the LDS Church leadership emphasizes the sanctity of these historic sites, thereby imbuing them with a spiritual function, as opposed to a primarily proselytizing one, that has become extremely important in the construction of Mormon identity.142

As early as 1976, visitors’ centers were having a significant impact on public perception of the LDS Church, as a survey found that

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142Michael Madsen, “The Sanctification of Mormonism’s Historical
“a sizable number of those whose first contact with the Church had been through a visitors center or other form of public media were impressed in a definitely positive way.” In fact, LDS publications, such as the *Ensign*, featured articles that urged Church members to use visitors’ centers as a way to entice nonmembers to learn about and hopefully join the Church. Although the specific contents of each center varied from location to location, certain themes and tenets of the faith remained prevalent in all of them. As a way to create a “balanced view of what the Church is all about,” visitors’ centers included “such basic messages as the importance of the family, an introduction to the Book of Mormon, and an explanation of the apostasy and restoration.” The set of images and messages created for the Mormon Pavilion at the World’s Fair proved so successful at making the Church appealing to nonmembers and as a proselytizing technique that later pavilions and visitors’ centers emulated its form. In this regard, the process was indeed reminiscent of corporate advertising.

The decision to participate in the New York World’s Fair and construct the Mormon Pavilion marked a significant initiative by the LDS Church to gain converts through a new form of missionary work; furthermore, the unique design of the Pavilion itself facilitated that goal. Deciding to actively participate in a mainstream cultural event, the LDS Church showed an earnest desire to move out from its sheltered Western enclave and become both a national and international religion. Although the fair was a failure for Robert Moses and New York City, drawing far fewer people than expected, it was an important achievement for the Mormons. In its eye-catching and prominently located pavilion, the LDS Church successfully employed public relations techniques and channeled them into art and architecture. Many aspects of the fair itself proved fortunate for the Church and made the pavilion popular—from its highly visible site on the fairgrounds to the support of Robert Moses and the Fair Corporation. Ultimately, however, the LDS Church’s careful planning and its sophisticated application of corporate branding techniques helped it create a new form of proselytizing and a new image that has increased

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144Ibid.
the Church’s visibility and help cast Mormon culture as part of the American mainstream.
PREACHING THROUGH PLAYING: SPORTS AND RECREATION IN MISSIONARY WORK, 1911–64

Jessie L. Embry and John H. Brambaugh

In May 1954, German newspapers announced that the Harlem Globetrotters would be playing the House of David, a team of ten men traveling with sixty wives. The president of the West German Mission, Kenneth R. Dyer, was shocked. Five months earlier when he had arrived in the country, his predecessor had told him that the government had officially recognized the Mormon Church as a religion and not a sect. Dyer had not expected to deal with sixty thousand posters advertising a Mormon polygamous team. He threatened to sue, explaining to a reporter: “The German public should know that it is false and almost laughable. U. S. law forbids polygamy.” According to the United Press, the House of David general manager agreed to correct the posters and send a disclaimer to the newspapers.

Why was the House of David basketball team called a Mormon...
team? The players definitely were not Mormon. The House of David was a religious group whose members believed they were the select 144,000 referred to in the Apostle John’s book of Revelation that would see Christ’s second coming (Rev. 7:3–8, 14:1). While its members came from around the world, they gathered in Benton Harbor, Michigan, where they built an amusement park and summer homes for wealthy Chicago residents to support their communal lifestyle. Another way to raise money was by sending men out to play against community teams. Americans knew the House of David for these sports teams, mainly baseball but also basketball. The players were easy to recognize; the men did not cut their hair or beards. They played very well, though most fans remembered their tricks rather than their ball playing. One of these was pepper ball—throwing the ball very fast between bases.

The group did not practice polygamy, so why the confusion? Probably the publicist wanted to draw a connection between the House of David and the Mormons because the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was an unusual American religion that some Germans knew about only because of the two unrelated facts of polygamy and basketball. In fact, during the 1936 Olympics, LDS missionaries helped train a German team and even officiated during the Olympic Games. Two decades later when the dismaying newspaper article appeared, Germans knew Mormons but not the House of David. As an

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1Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), May 22, 1954, 8 (hereafter Journal History); West German Manuscript History, Series 21, May 22, 1954, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City. See also Gilbert W. Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Germany between 1840 and 1970 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 86, 165; Justin Ernst, “Highlights from the German-speaking LDS Mission Histories, 1836–1960,” LDS Church History Library, 89. Unfortunately, we found no sources that reported the German point of view.

For the history of the House of David, see www.israelitehouseofdavid.org (accessed November 9, 2007). In 2003 the Communal Studies Association held its annual meeting at the City of David, the home of the House of David. At that time, a handful of people were trying to continue the commune, which had suffered several divisions.

2Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany, 86, 165; John Kieran and Arthur
added twist, Mormon missionaries were using basketball as a way to spread their message. Taking advantage of this coincidence, the promoters for the House of David team attached the Mormon name.

Germany was not the only country where residents connected Mormons and basketball. Between 1911 and 1964, missionaries used sports and recreation to introduce people to the LDS Church. They created mission basketball and baseball teams that won local and national tournaments; they sang in choirs; they promoted dances, speech contests, games, lessons, and other activities through the Young Men and Young Women Mutual Improvement Association and encouraged teenagers to come to Mutual. All these efforts publicized the Church. This article explores the missionaries’ use of sports—mainly basketball—as a proselyting tool. Through sports, missionaries were very successful in improving the LDS Church’s image and making friends on a mission and individual basis, although comparatively few baptisms resulted. In the 1960s as international teams improved their basketball skills and the Mormon Church shifted to more spiritual programs to attract new members, the sports focus faded away.

Scope of Study

Co-author Jessie Embry first became aware of Mormon missionaries using sports as part of their work when she was researching local


Don Budge, “Mormon Basketball Team Wins Games and Friends for Church in Germany,” Church News, March 31, 1956, 7.

The use of choirs and MIA activities to enhance proselytizing is subjects for another article. The indexes for Church magazines from 1936 to the mid-1960s list numerous articles reporting the use by missions of sports and recreation to create good public relations and find people to teach. These articles can be found under the subject headings of “athletics,” “sports,” “basketball,” “baseball,” and individual mission names. After the mid-1960s the articles stopped. Also see Jay E. Jensen, “Proselyting Techniques of Mormon Missionaries” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974), 50–52.
baseball in Utah. The House of David baseball team had actually played teams like the Provo Timps, with a clipping appearing in the

5For more information on local baseball in Utah, see Jessie L. Embry, “The Biggest Advertisement for a Town: Provo Baseball and Provo Timps,
LDS Church’s Journal History. Embry expanded her research on sports to look at the Mormon Church’s all-Church athletic tournaments. She did not realize that sports were also a part of missionary work until she saw a photograph of an Australian missionary basketball team on the dust jacket of Richard Ian Kimball’s *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890–1940*. Kimball also occasionally mentioned sports as a way the missionaries introduced the LDS Church to non-members. Learning more about missionary sports was a logical extension of Embry’s research on Mormon sports.

Embry’s student John H. Brumbaugh volunteered to assist with her research. He had played Church basketball, so he was especially interested in that sport, and there were more sources available on basketball. After surveying possible sources, we developed a list of missions that used sports as part of its proselytizing approach. The preliminary list included the Australian, Argentine, British, French, German, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Northwestern States, Central American, Central States, East Central States, and Uruguayan missions.

The records of the Missionary Department of the Church are not available to researchers, but Embry and Brumbaugh also located articles in Church magazines and Embry researched journals and oral histories from former missionaries and mission manuscript histories, some of which featured extensive commentary, including clippings from local newspapers.

An initial survey did not disclose profiles of activity unique to any particular mission or region; so the final decision about which countries to focus on depended on those that provided the most sources.

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Only tentative answers can be provided for four important questions:

1. Did the mission presidents receive instructions or suggestions to form basketball teams from Church headquarters? Although only access to the Missionary Committee’s records can answer this question definitively, we found no evidence in the affirmative. Instead, we hypothesize that mission presidents capitalized on the talents of their missionaries. When they had good basketball players, they formed a basketball team. When they had musicians, they formed a choir. For example, according to historian Thomas G. Alexander, his mission president, Kenneth R. Dyer, was concerned that the only thing that Germans knew of the Mormons was polygamy, an association only strengthened by the unfortunate House of David episode. In 1956 he invited one of his missionaries, Newell Kay Brown, who had a master’s degree in music, to form a choir. Alexander sang in this choir and was transferred to an area where all the choir members were close enough that they could reach a central location for Saturday practices. They then performed on tour throughout the mission. While the choir was not a famous men’s choir from America as some of its over-enthusiastic publicity stated, the Germans were interested in the music and had a different image of the Mormons when the missionaries knocked on doors.8

2. Did the Missionary Committee assign athletes to particular missions because of their sports skills? We found only one example that suggests an affirmative answer, indicating, in our opinion, that it was an exception. Wendell J. Ashton, who edited the Millennial Star in England as a missionary and later became Deseret News publisher, reported in his oral history that, as a missionary, he managed and coached a Mormon baseball team during the 1930s. Apostle Joseph F. Merrill, president of the European Mission (also headquartered in England), supported baseball because it interested people in the Church. He personally did not like the sport and never attended a game. But he used his influence to improve the team. At that time, all the missionaries called to Europe stopped in England. When they arrived, Merrill asked if they could throw a baseball; and if they could, they were reassigned to

8Thomas G. Alexander Oral History, interviewed by Jessie Embry, 2006, 15–18, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Redd Center).
Great Britain. Ashton recalled that Christian Draager had originally been assigned to Holland, but Merrill changed his assignment to England where he was one of the team’s best pitchers. 9

3. Did the idea spread because mission presidents enthusiastically shared their sports success with their counterparts in other missions? Again, we found no confirming evidence, although indirect communication or anecdotal reports may have been influential. Furthermore, some elders who had served on sports teams and were later called themselves as mission presidents, revived the idea. 10 In short, rather than radiating from a central locale or figure, it seems more likely that these proselytizing sports programs developed independently in each mission.

4. How successful were these sports programs? The answer here depends on the definition of “success.” In terms of directly generating baptisms, the answer is “probably not,” especially since many other factors had to come into play even if sports had provided the initial introduction to Mormonism. But if the definition of “success” includes the element of creating a positive public image and “making friends” for the Church, the program was unquestionably successful.

During the 1911–64 period covered by this study, very few people had heard about the Mormon Church, most frequently in connection with the practice of polygamy. Missionaries who used the common proselytizing methods of knocking on doors and street contacting found that many people refused to listen because of the immediate negative associations of “Mormon.” American activities (such as sports) were generally considered interesting and popular, so they provided a simpler way of breaking down the barriers and pre-

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10A possible parallel is the post-World War II movement to have missionaries travel without purse or scrip, a revival of standard operating procedure in the nineteenth century that S. Dilworth Young revived in the late 1940s when he was president of the New England Mission. One of his missionaries, Oscar McConkie Jr., told his father, then president of the Southern California Mission, about it; and McConkie Sr. adopted it. Several other missions used Young’s model. Jessie L. Embry, “Without Purse or Scrip,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 29 (Fall 1996): 77–93.
senting a picture of wholesome recreation by attractive, skilled, and good-natured young Americans. Furthermore, most missionaries had played sports in high school or in Church athletic tournaments. Sports therefore proved to be an effective way to meet people on friendly grounds with a more indirect approach than forthright proselytizing—somewhat like teaching English classes and providing community service in later eras. Positive newspaper reports became a useful way to start conversations. Sports historian Richard Ian Kimball explains, “Using athletics as a tool to break down barriers between themselves and non-Mormons, missionaries believed they were truly at play in the fields of the Lord.”

**The Beginnings of Missionary Sports and Recreation**

Following the model of “muscular Christianity” used by other churches and organizations like the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), the Mormon Church added sports programs soon after the turn of the twentieth century to keep young men active in the Church. These sports programs started on a local level and then expanded Churchwide. In 1908 E. J. Milne, a physical education professor at the University of Utah, published an article on “ward and gymnasium halls” in the *Improvement Era* because of “numerous inquiries [about] adopting a course in physical education or athletics.” Wards and stakes established successful programs that kept young men attending church, reactivated those who had left, and introduced nonmembers to the LDS faith. In the 1920s the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) started an all-Church basketball team that attracted teams from Utah, later from throughout the Intermountain West, and finally from the entire United States. The program was so successful that, after World War II, the YMMIA added softball and volleyball tournaments.

The YMMIA programs focused mainly on Church members, but nonmembers were welcome to play if they followed the rules of the game, attended Church meetings, and obeyed Mormon stan-

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12 Ibid., 4, 17.
14 For information about the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association tournaments, see Embry, *Spiritualized Recreation*. 
standards, including the Word of Wisdom. During the 1960s, the General Authorities asked stakes and wards to keep track of how many non-members joined the Church as a result of their sports activity.  

With sports success on the home front, some mission leaders wondered if sports might also help the LDS Church spread its message. The first link that Richard Ian Kimball found between missionaries and sports was in 1911 when American missionaries in Japan played with the Tokyo-American Baseball Team. The missionaries made up teams with “expatriate Americans” who played against Japanese teams or visiting sailors. Kimball also described a New Year’s Day baseball game in 1924 between Mormon missionaries and local residents from American and British Samoa. Both cases focused on the ability of sports to create good will even if no one was baptized.

Although the movement’s exact history is difficult to trace, by 1936 it was sufficiently widespread that Glynn Bennion, who had served a mission in Canada, reported that a Scot told him his countrymen became Mormons in the 1840s because they were looking for “salvation.” They wanted religion and the LDS Church offered something new. In the 1930s, in contrast, Europeans no longer supported churches and finding “eternal life” no longer headed their agenda. Rather than “become disheartened,” Bennion suggested that missionaries use their “ingenuity” and “attract attention to your superior

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15 Ibid. Joseph Fielding Smith, Letters to all stake presidents, February 28, 1964, March 8, 1965, Church softball committee circular letters, Church Records 68/3, LDS Church History Library, report baptisms and reactivation among those associated with softball: 250 converts and at least 350 wives and children who joined in 1963. In addition, 1,600 men and boys returned to Church attendance. Smith added that those figures did not include the “untold number who remained active” because of softball. In 1966, Elder Delbert L. Stapley, who took over Smith’s responsibility for encouraging softball explained that 164 stakes had reported 109 conversions, 90 conversions of families, and 1,179 reactivations; he speculated that if all the stakes had reported, the numbers would have been 400 converts, 350 families, and 4,432 reactivations. Delbert L. Stapley, Letter to all stake presidents, March 22, 1967, in ibid. Since such careful records were kept of a Churchwide priesthood softball program, it seems likely that, if mission-related sports had been a Churchwide program, the General Authorities would have asked for numbers.

16 Kimball, Sports in Zion, 100–101.
wares” just as “worldly competitors . . . dress up the[ir] cheap, gaudy merchandise.” He suggested sports and radio shows as “two modern methods,” providing examples of both.17

A disenchanted Mormon, Clyde Neilson, found the idea ridiculous. Neilson, who considered Heber J. Grant an “apostate leader” and J. Reuben Clark “his great legal mind,” published a pamphlet based on Bennion’s article in which he jeered that “Sports Take Over the Job of the Holy Ghost.” He created a parody in which the Apostle Paul tells Peter about a “new method of proselyting.” In the resulting baseball game in Rome, the apostles shave so “the opposing pitchers won’t warp [twist] their ball in their [whiskers].” He also burlesqued a Wilford Woodruff who “golfed and tennised his way” to convert the United Brethren in England while Brigham Young and the early pioneers sang, “Take Me Out to the Ballpark” instead of “Come, Come Ye Saints.”18

Mission presidents, however, had already seen the merit of such programs or were willing to give it a try in an effort to establish good will and help the missionaries find people to teach. Improvement Era and Church News articles reported successes from around the world.19 A. Delbert Palmer, who served as mission president in Chile in the 1960s, explained in his master’s thesis, which he wrote

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17 Glynn Bennion, “New Ways of Proselyting and the Reason Therefor,” Church News, January 25, 1936, 1, 7. This article no doubt accelerated the adoption of sports programs in missions; but the fact that Bennion had comparatively limited influence (i.e., was not a General Authority) and was reporting already successful programs does not change our overall view that sports programs were independently “discovered” in missions rather than representing a worldwide program.

18 Clyde Neilson, “New Ways of Proselyting or the Cavalcade of Sports: Sponsored by Heber J. Grant and Company, Church Section, January 25, 1946: Wherein Sports Take Over the Job of the Holy Ghost” (Salt Lake City: C. Neilson, 1936), Perry Special Collections.

19 Jensen, “Proselyting Techniques,” 50. Embry selected the missions discussed in this article primarily because they had excellent sources including oral histories, manuscript histories, journals, and Church articles about their sports programs. Many other missions, including some in North America, also had sports programs. For example, Mel Jones started a softball league after World War II in the Southern States Mission and competed on a missionary team in the league. After his mission, he played in the 1952
after his return: “A number of our missionaries were excellent basketball players, and basketball was a popular sport in Chile.”\(^{20}\) As a result, missionaries played basketball in Chile.

Factors that were either essential to or facilitated the formation of sports teams (or other public relations-oriented efforts) included:

1. The mission president had to be interested and willing to sponsor such activities. Sometimes the president and/or his wife had participated in Mutual activities as teens and saw the value of similar programs in the mission field. The interest, as the example of Joseph F. Merrill demonstrates, did not require the president to be personally engaged in the sports.

2. The missionaries had to possess the requisite talent. If elders had played in the all-Church basketball tournaments (or had played in high school and/or college), mission presidents frequently built teams around those players, allowed them to play with clubs, and/or to offer basketball clinics.

3. The local citizens had to find the sport interesting and appealing. Basketball and baseball were American games that other countries wanted to learn. The missionaries then became ambassadors for an American style of recreation as well as for the Mormon religion.

For ease of presentation, we organize our descriptions chronologically first—before and after World War II—then discuss them by three geographical areas: Europe, the Pacific, and Latin America.

**Missionary Sports before World War II Europe**

**Germany**

An excellent example of Mormon missionaries’ use of basketball to arouse local interest was the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The German national team had won the European championship in 1933, but the win surprised everyone including German athletes. Hitler was not willing to leave victory to chance when basketball appeared...
as an Olympic sport for the first time during the 1936 games. According to the German-Austrian Mission history, “Herr Hitler has sought the services of the Elders to teach basketball to the [German national] team. He hopes he will achieve a Nordic victory in the Olympic games.”

Melvyn M. Cowan, one of the missionaries, recalled that the elders were already playing basketball once a week for recreation when German Olympic committee officials saw them and asked the elders to help with the team. Charles E. Skidmore and H. Bowman Hawkes worked as coaches and trainers. The idea spread throughout the mission during 1935 and missionaries played in many cities. Cowan recalls officiating for a game between a Mormon and a German national team. The Mormons won, but Cowan claimed that the German team had made a good showing and added, “The prowess of the German team in an entirely new sport, however, attested to the unquestionable competency of its two missionary coaches, David E. Wright and Donald E. Driggs.” After the game, Wright presented a slide show on Utah’s national parks.

The missionaries continued to work with the German team until the Olympics, but Germany lost its first game to Switzerland, 25–18. The country entered the consolidation bracket and won its second game against Spain by forfeit. (Spain did not send a team because of political unrest in the country.) Then the German team lost to Czechoslovakia 20–0. The North American continent dominated that first year: the U.S. team took the gold, the Canadians the silver, and Mexico the bronze. Helping the team was not the only role the Mormon missionaries played in the Olympics. Four missionaries—Vinton M. Merrill, Charles A. Perschon, Jerome J. Christensen, and Edward C. Judd—were officials at the 1936 Olympics, which further met the missionaries’ goal of establishing positive relations with ath-

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21German-Austria Manuscript History, January 25, 1936, LDS Church History Library.
letes in Germany and around the world.24

Great Britain

The year after the Olympics, missionaries were playing basketball in Great Britain. In 1937 a missionary team won against Hoylake, the British YMCA basketball champion team, in a game partly carried by the London Regional Program of the British Broadcasting Corporation. In 1938 the missionaries lost to a team who competed in an international tournament in Paris. Later that year, two missionary teams competed against each other to attend another tournament in France. At that tournament, the Mormon team beat two teams—one from Germany and one from France. After the games, the Germans and the Belgians invited the missionaries to the hotel for a drink where they toasted their good relationships with “lemonade.” A Mormon publication praised the missionaries for “their clean play and sportsmanship” (only six fouls had been called against them in two games) and editorialized, “Sports are affording a golden opportunity for missionaries to make friends and to preach and teach by example as well as word.”25

Holland

In 1938, missionaries played in the Agemene Maatschappi Voor Jongeren (Amsterdam Society for Young Men) Athletic Club in Amsterdam. After an exhibition game, 350 high school students and faculty gave the Mormons “a thunderous applause.” As the missionaries prepared to participate in an international basketball tournament with teams from England, Belgium, France, Germany, and Holland, the Improvement Era crowed, “As cage artists the missionaries are pointing for the tournament, but as missionaries they are pointing towards making friends.”26

The missionaries also taught Dutch boys how to play baseball during the summers. Since they were playing an American game, the

24German-Austrian Manuscript History, August 1, 1936, LDS Church History Library.


elders usually won. But “at the end of the season, the Rotterdammers were making a real battle out of every game.” The Americans also tried playing soccer, Holland’s national sport, and received “a couple of thorough drubbings” but learned the game and “respect [for] the [Dutch players’] prowess.” As a result of the summer games, the missionaries made friends and showed films to them during the winter. The Era article concluded, “Missionaries are not losing themselves in their enthusiasm to play. Sports are being recognized for what they are—one of the many means of making contacts and winning friends.”

PACIFIC

Australia

At the onset of World War II in Europe, Mormon missionary work ended on that continent. But missionaries continued to play basketball in other missions where they continued to serve. Missionaries started playing basketball in Australia in 1938. After winning back-to-back championships in Victoria, Australia, in 1940 and 1941, one missionary, D. Forrest Greene, predicted: “Basketball will be used to progress the work for years to come.”

New Zealand

The New Zealand Mission also introduced basketball in the late 1930s. In 1938 Matthew Cowley as mission president supported a team that won the Auckland City basketball tournament, beating a local team, 25–14. The missionaries also played an exhibition game in Wellington town hall as part of a physical fitness week. In 1939 basketball associations in Morrisville and Hamilton invited the team to come to their towns to play. The missionaries accepted and won both games.

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27Ibid.


29New Zealand Manuscript History, September 13 and October 4, 1939, LDS Church History Library.

30New Zealand Manuscript History, July 8 and 10, 1940.
Frederick S. Williams, who served as a missionary in Argentina during the 1920s, remembered that “in order to facilitate our proselyting we got into sports in Argentina. They’re great sport-minded people.” Williams felt the efforts were positive. As a result of softball and other games, the Argentines learned that Mormonism was more than Brigham Young and his wives. Mormons loved sports just as the Argentines did.31

Williams returned to Argentina as its mission president, 1938–42. One of his missionaries, Delbert Palmer, recalled that Williams loved both the Argentinians and sports: “He was an athlete and took part in mission basketball and baseball teams.” Palmer continued, “We had an excellent sports program and had a very famous basket-

31Frederick S. Williams, Oral History, interviewed by William G. Hartley, 1972, 55, Moyle Program.
ball team that was quite successful and this generated a lot of publicity that was favorable.”32

To promote sports and other forms of recreation, the Mormons created “Club Athletics Los Mormons.” According to Williams, the program was “a messenger to tell both young and old of Mormonism.” Through “music, special culture, sports and entertainment,” it would “attract young people to the principles of clean and righteous living.”33 In 1940 the Mormons built a clubhouse, a dressing room, and an outdoor basketball court to provide a place for Club Athletics Los Mormons to compete. Missionary Keith N. McCune explained

33Keith N. McCune, Missionary Summary, 1940–42, LDS Church
such facilities were the result of hard work, not a dream of “fairy magic.” Four hundred people attended the opening game followed by a dance.  

A highlight came when Rolf L. Larson, a missionary from Lakeside, Arizona, played on an Argentine all-star team that traveled throughout Argentina and also to neighboring countries to compete. Dale Bergeson, another missionary, was invited to participate but had not been in the country long enough. (He missed the Argentine basketball league’s residency rule by two weeks.) When Larson performed well at a tournament in Montevideo, Uruguay, Williams commented, “There has been no other elder who has publicized the name and ideal of our religion in Argentina more than Bro Larson.” McCune summarized, “Our basketball team became quite famous and a great source of giving us more visibility in the country.”

**MISSIONARY SPORTS AFTER WORLD WAR II**

The U.S. entry into World War II in 1941 essentially ended missionary work. When it resumed after 1945, sports and recreation continued to be a way to introduce people to the gospel. In 1954 missionaries in the Central American Mission sang for a radio program and also played basketball in 1956. According to the mission’s manuscript history, the elders “had some very favorable results which . . . helped them in their missionary work. They have played on teams with some of the . . . native boys and converted their team mates. Also the people became much more favorably inclined toward the missionaries when they have seen what good basketball players they are.”

**PACIFIC**

*Australia*

In April 1955 the *Church News* reported that the “Mormon Yankees” team in Australia received excellent reports in newspapers and

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34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
also led the mission in baptisms. City leagues were impressed and requested the missionaries to play exhibition games, increasing the interest to such an extent that the mission president, Charles V. Liljenquist, created a second team. Newspaper articles, handbills, and event programs announced the missionary teams. Some of the printed articles declared the teams were “world famous” or captained by the “best amateur basketballers in the world,” which probably referred to the fact that the Mormons often called their all-Church basketball tournament the largest in the world.

After the missionaries defeated the Australian Olympic team in 1956, Percival Foster, president of the Australian Basketball Union, lauded their efforts: “Much of the increased interest in basketball throughout Australia is due in large measure to these and past ball teams of Mormon missionaries. We are grateful for what they have done through their playing to stimulate an interest in basketball here. They have taught our boys much about the game.” Playing basketball helped the missionaries as well. As a result of their success on the basketball court, more people listened and accepted literature from the missionaries. The team charged admission and donated the money to local building funds.

In 1957 Sydney officials asked the Mormon Yankees to represent the city in the first inter-district basketball tournament. ATN-Television Studios sponsored the tournament and broadcast the games every Saturday to approximately 75,000 viewers. The Mormons beat a “Neutron” team in the semifinals with a last-second shot, 62–60. The Yankees went on to win the final game against their competitor, the Warriors, 64–41. According to the Church News, “The defeated ‘Warriors’ team admitted the best team had beaten them but

wondered what the Elders were fed to make them grow so tall!”

David Richard Roberts, who served in Australia from 1954 to 1956, started MIA programs in which members and nonmembers played games and sang. But some of his greatest success came when he received permission to teach the youth in Toowoomba, Queensland, how to play basketball. He wrote, “This became a golden opportunity to do public relations among the people of the city.” People no longer asked about polygamy first because they saw the missionaries at the games and wanted to know about basketball instead. With that interest, Roberts helped organize four or five teams and taught them the basics. The teams competed at a community celebration, the Carnival of Flowers Days, attended by city officials and media representatives. The elders lost to the previous year’s champions with Roberts confessing to his journal, “We tried our best and we fought hard in the game” but “we just didn’t play team ball.” However, he quickly went on to tally the benefits: “We have gained a trust, a respect.” When they rode their bicycles around the city and knocked on doors, people recognized them. “All in all we’ve had terrific publicity and press coverage that will eventually be beneficial for the church.” Through the game and the newspaper and radio coverage, “the missionaries were able to break down some barriers, develop some great lasting friends and eventually introduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the lives of some young players, their families, [and] sports fans.” He also proudly noted the comments of local newspaper articles: “A lightning fast team of non-drinking, non-smoking ministers of the Mormons religion last night ran rings about the Toowoomba’s top basketball team 66–35.”

New Zealand

Basketball also returned to New Zealand after the war. On September 3, 1960, the Auckland elders’ team went to Whangarei to coach basketball and play an exhibition game. “Many friends were made as a result of the effort,” comments the mission history. That same year, a missionary team toured the country with the New Zea-

42David Richard Roberts, Journal, LDS Church History Library.
43New Zealand Manuscript History, September 3, 1960, LDS Church
land Basketball Association paying expenses. The team lost only one
game out of twenty-four in a very close match to the defending na-
tional champions, 56–58. The next night the missionaries surged
back to defeat the same team by nineteen points.44

As a result of the games, missionaries opened a new area in the
Westland region of the south island. Also because of their wins, the
missionaries were crowned New Zealand’s national champions. The
New Zealand Mission president, Alexander P. Anderson, commented
in a Church News article that basketball had been “especially effective
in opening new proselyting areas for tracting. Programs are distrib-
uted at each contest bringing many people to a better understanding
of the beliefs and functions of the Church. This helps eliminate the
prejudice or barriers that might exist.”45

EUROPE

Finland

Henry Adolph Matis, the Finnish Mission president, promoted
sports because basketball had brought him to the LDS Church. Matis
had worked with LDS colleagues in Pennsylvania during the 1930s
who invited Matis to meetings. He declined, feeling that he was too
busy with a new work assignment and the birth of a daughter. In 1932
his wife gave birth to a son. She seemed to be recuperating well so he
left on a business trip. While he was gone, she died of complications
from the birth. He left his newborn son with family members, took his
young daughter, and moved in with his best friends. These friends be-
gan attending meetings with LDS missionaries but Matis still felt he
did not have time.

However, the opportunity to play basketball had more appeal.
Matis wrote in his autobiography, “We walked, even on cold stormy
winter evenings over the hill from Forest Hills to Braddock to practice
and to be substitutes on the LDS team. Strangely enough, I began to
find time for more cottage meetings [meetings with the missionaries]

44J. A. Watts, “N. Z. Elders Tour Mission as Hoop Team,” Church News,
February 27, 1960, 9; “N.Z. Fans Laud Prowess of Mission Team,” Church
News, May 7, 1960, 12.

45“Basketeers Open Doors for Elders in New Zealand,” Church News,
April 23, 1960, 9; “Nation’s Top Team: Missionary Squad Trims Champs of
and gospel study.” These religious activities brought new peace about his wife’s death. Matis recalled, “My problems did not seem so large as I now understood the Plan of Salvation and our acceptance of Jesus Christ and the Restored Gospel.”

These memories came back when Matis became the mission president in Finland. He encouraged missionary basketball and baseball teams who competed against local teams. The basketball teams were especially successful. In 1950 the Mormon team defeated the Finnish YMCA all-stars and the Finnish National Team. The next year the Mormon team played basketball in eight cities, won all of its games in January and February, and had the same results in the fall—winning all ten of its games. The missionaries defeated the Finnish National Team by one point just before it went to the European finals.

The missionaries’ major goal was not winning basketball games. They wanted to make friends and interest people in their message. So they not only played against the Finnish teams but also trained and worked with them. In 1950 Herbert H. Wilkinson, a missionary serving in England, came to work with the Finnish team for three weeks. The mission manuscript history explained, “He might use his basketball talent in spreading and widening the scope of basketball in Finland but mainly to use his basketball talent in furthering the work of the Lord. This understanding has been very beneficial in helping to spread the knowledge of the church’s presence in this land to many people who would have otherwise never had heard about it in any manner.”

Missionaries assigned to Finland also worked with the national team. One of the elders, E. Arnold Isaacson won a sportsmanship trophy for his play on the missionary team and spent two months in 1951 coaching the Finnish National Team. In a game against the missionaries, he coached and played with the Finns during the second half. The missionaries won by one point. As a result of his work with the team, Isaacson received a national award. When he returned home, another missionary, Robert Peterson, coached the Finnish team as it prepared

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48Ibid., September 30, 1950.
for the 1952 Olympic Games in that country. The Finnish government awarded Henry Matis a Silver Cross in 1951 for his work with sports, especially basketball. Jussi Lappi Seppala, a member of Parliament who presented Matis the award, “remarked on the spiritual growth of the Finnish players as well as the growth of their physical skills.”

But the crowning sports achievement for Matis was his involvement with the 1952 Olympic Games. Besides his participation with the Finnish basketball team, Matis worked with the U.S. Olympic committee. With the permission of the General Authorities, Mormon missionaries helped train the Finnish national team and served as escorts and translators for the U.S. teams. After the games were over, Matis received a small check from the committee and expressions of appreciation for the missionaries’ help, “Never before have we been so benefitted by such careful planning and such thoughtful and efficient organization.” Matis returned the check, saying, “I am indebted to all of you. . . . My time has been happily spent in furthering an excellent cause of the Olympic movement.”

In 1955, Phileon B. Robinson Jr. replaced Matis as mission president and continued the sports emphasis. The missionaries worked with clubs and held cottage meetings. The missionary basketball team played twelve games, winning eight, losing three, and tying one. More important, 3,500 people attended the games, and the “Church received much favorable publicity in local papers all over Finland.” The manuscript history praised the efforts of the missionaries, “Through basketball games, English classes, and going from door to door they try to build the American image among the Finnish people.” William A. “Bert” Wilson, who served in Finland from 1953 to 1956, recalled that the team was very competent because some missionaries called to Finland had played basketball for the University of Utah and Utah State University. Wilson had not been a college athlete but knew the game, played on the team, and received the outstanding player

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49 Ibid., and December 31, 1951.
50 Ibid., September 30, 1951.
51 Henry Matis, Rough draft of letter, n.d., Matis Papers, Box 8, fd. 1, LDS Church History Library; used by permission.
In 1964 the LDS Mutual Improvement Association in Finland hosted the basketball finals for a nationwide tournament. Anyone who attended church and followed the Word of Wisdom could play.\footnote{William A. Wilson, telephone conversation with Jessie Embry, June 7, 2007. For more information on mission presidents and the role of basketball in their leadership, see Kaija H. Penley, “Leadership of Mormon Missionary Efforts in Finland and Its Influence on Conversion Rates in the Finnish Mission, 1947–1969” (M.A. thesis, Utah State University, 1994), 57–58, 68–69.}

\footnote{“Finnish Mission MIA to Play Hosts to Basketball Finalists,” \textit{Church News}, January 25, 1964, 13.}
Ireland

The Mormon missionaries formed a basketball team in Ireland in 1963 under the direction of mission president Stephen R. Covey. The Ulster Mormon team competed in the Ulster Council of the Amateur Basketball Association of Ireland for the first time that year. Ulster is one of four provinces in the country and has nine counties. Its largest city is Belfast. The Mormon missionaries won every tournament they entered and completed the season with 32 wins and only one loss. 55

The Mormon team benefited from the presence of outstanding players. Timothy O’Reilly had played on the winning all-Church tournament team, John Stormen for Arizona State University, Dean Conant for Brigham Young University, and Raymond Mackford was an all-star at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah. When the Mormons beat a team of students from Benburb Priory, 40–39, in the final seconds of the Ulster Blitz championship at the Stranmillis Training College, a Catholic newspaper, the Irish Times, complained that “the Benburb squad . . . had to play their last three games consecutively” while the Mormons were “fresher.” It praised the Benburb team for coming from behind to tie the game. “From then on it was basket-for-basket in a man-to-man duel before the Belfast marksmen [the Mormon missionaries] edged to a single point victory over the former holders of the title.” 56 By winning that game, the team won the “Abe Saperstein” award. Saperstein, a millionaire, was the owner-manager of a team and, though not a member, was friendly with the Mormons. While the missionaries wanted to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, Saperstein’s focus was the gospel of basketball. 57 Such well-publicized matches met both goals.

As the national champions, the Mormon team played an Ulster all-star team before a Harlem Globetrotters scrimmage against the Cherokee Indians. (The Globetrotters often traveled around the world with a second American team since it was hard to find good local competition.) Over six thousand people watched the two outdoor games. The Mormons lost to the Belfast Celtics, 13–12. The Belfast team dominated the game but the Mormons stayed in the game with their accurate free throws. The Mormons were “frustrated by the wet

55Ireland Mission Manuscript History, May 10, 1963,
and windy conditions,” according to the mission history, on a rain-soaked wooden floor over a grass football field. One player actually put his foot through the wood.\footnote{Ibid., May 10, 1963.}

**LATIN AMERICA**

*Chile*

A. Delbert Palmer, who had served under Frederick S. Williams before World War II in Argentina, became Chile’s first mission president when it was established as a separate mission in 1961. Palmer praised Chile as “a country with a beautiful climate, tremendous resources, and friendly people who are ready to receive the Gospel. . . . It is our hope and prayer that the hand of the Lord will rest upon this land.” He saw an important role for sports as part of this effort. He gave permission for three elders to travel for slightly over a month with an international basketball team touring Argentina in 1963. The Mormons borrowed Harlem Globetrotter-like tricks to increase interest in the games. Besides playing, they helped local elders, held press conferences, and donated admission fees to local chapel funds.\footnote{Chile Manuscript History, December 1961; September 1961, September 3, 1963, LDS Church History Library.}

Palmer recalled in his thesis, “Although [there was] pressure to form a Mormon basketball team, we decided that this would be counter-productive—winning might engender resentment instead of good will. Instead, we proposed that missionaries join local teams and gain entry to local sports clubs.”\footnote{A. Delbert Palmer, “Establishing the LDS Church in Chile,” 135.}

Palmer’s replacement, Carl Beecroft (1963–66), reversed Palmer’s decision and created a missionary team. His wife, Helen May Taylor Beecroft, recorded in her journal that the elders lost to the Chilean champions on July 10, 1964. She had hoped for a victory but added that the champions were “a little too much for them.” Still, she was “really proud of them.” She attended their games when possible and felt “they got a lot of Publicity which makes them feel good.”\footnote{Helen May Taylor Beecroft, Chilean Mission Journal, July 10, 1964, LDS Church History Library, used by permission.}
CARLOS ASAY AND PALESTINE-SYRIA MISSION

An interesting variation on the pattern of Mormon basketball teams was the involvement of future Seventy Carlos E. Asay, as he served in the Palestine-Syrian Mission (1947–50). Asay grew up in Utah and served in the U.S. military during World War II. After the war, he played basketball at the University of Utah and was on a team that won the National Invitational Tournament (NIT).62 His wife, Colleen Webb Asay, recalled that she and Carlos were childhood sweethearts. When they decided to marry, “Carlos was very involved in athletics at the University of Utah. He had been offered a contract to pitch for a professional baseball team, and a lot of opportunities came his way.” She was concerned that this career might take him in a less religious direction, and she had resolved at age twelve to marry a returned missionary. She prayed, “Please call Carlos on a mission.” Then when he called to say that the bishop wanted to talk to him, she prayed, “Please touch Carlos so he’ll want to go on a mission.” Carlos accepted the mission call, and the two were married just before he left for the mission field.63

Asay was among the first elders sent to the Palestine-Syrian Mission. His journal is full of basketball stories. Shortly after he arrived, he wrote, “Elder Connell informed me that I was wanted to play basketball for a city organization. I’m hoping, and I know the Lord will make everything turn out for the best.” He added that Mission President Badwagan Piranian “thinks it will be an opportunity to establish many initial contacts.”64

Asay first tried out for an Armenian team and “was able to play good enough to merit membership into the club.” He recorded in his journal, “The opportunity to preach the gospel by word and action by virtue of my athletic ability gives me added joy and satisfaction. . . . God has endowed me with a wealth of abilities along the athletic line and I pray that I might use this ability intelligently in preaching the

62While the NIT is now seen as a second-class tournament for those who cannot get into the NCAA tournament, at the time the NIT was the premier college champion.
64Asay, Journal.
Throughout his mission, Asay played, refereed, and coached basketball. At some points he resolved not to play because the games were so rough. He frequently had to balance his efforts so as not to favor the Armenians over the Arabs. Many games occurred on Sunday, but he would not play on Sundays and usually did not attend team celebrations on Sundays. He trained the Lebanese Selection team, the country’s national team, and traveled to Egypt with the team twice when the team competed in European championship tournaments. The mission president even suggested that the Lebanese Basketball Federation hire Asay part-time after his mission so that he could study dentistry in Lebanon. He also organized a team of missionaries and competed against teams he had earlier coached. He commented that he was a winner regardless of who won, and there were times when he stepped away from basketball because the politics and play seemed to take away from his missionary efforts.

One example of a game and Asay’s comments illustrate his experiences. On October 29, 1950, nine missionaries and the mission president went to Damascus to play the Titan basketball team. Newspapers, posters, and radio advertisements announced the game, and 1,400 people attended. The missionaries led throughout the first half and also sang two songs at half time. During the second half, the opponents played rough and the officials made some errors. The missionaries lost 38–27. But Asay commented, “At any rate, my team played fine and displayed themselves as gentlemen and real missionaries. The crowd liked the game and us. . . . This game proved to be [a way] to advertise our work in this land. We met many friends and hundreds of people in Damascus heard of the Mormons through the basketball game.”

**The End of Missionary Sports**

Basketball, other sports, and general cultural and recreational activities provided a way to interest people in the Church just as Glynn Bennion had suggested in 1936. However, the use of sports teams in missionary work waned during the 1960s. Why did the

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65 Ibid.
change take place? Sociologist Armand L. Mauss sees it as part of a larger shift, which he describes in *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*, as symbolized by the Angel Moroni on the Salt Lake Temple (Mormonism’s spiritual aspects) and the beehive on the Joseph Smith Memorial Building (formerly the Hotel Utah), which represents the more secular elements of Mormon culture. He argues that the Church in the first half of the twentieth century concentrated on its beehive aspects in its efforts to assimilate more smoothly into the American culture. However, about mid-century, Mauss saw a shift toward more distinctive “angel” elements that allowed Mormonism to maintain its unique religious identity. This period coincided with gradual deemphasis on missionary sports and cultural activities as part of the proselytizing repertoire. Sports represented the beehive.67

According to Catholic sociologist Thomas F. O’Dea, writing in 1957, the LDS Church, like other religions, should deal with “deeper human problems” such as “understanding . . . the problem of God and man.” He saw Mormonism moving in that direction during the 1950s but added, “Only in the field of recreation has Mormonism been able to meet the challenge” of dealing with “worldly spheres.” O’Dea believed that “for organized religion to offer competition in which non-religious organizations do better . . . is to be found wanting.” The focus on “this worldliness” was what “modern man appears to be finding inadequate” and “the basic need of Mormonism may well become a search for a more contemplative understanding of the problem of God and man.”68

Armand L. Mauss discusses the change that O’Dea predicts, citing as evidence the Correlation movement that moved the auxiliaries from their “extensive education programs” and youth activities to a renewed focus on the spiritual elements. As Mauss writes, “Gone are the . . . competitions provided by the old MIA.” In their place were “priesthood correlation and youth temple trips.” Mauss sees these changes as positive. “This spiritual core would link Mormon communities around the world into one universal religion.” He continues, “If the Mormon Church is to become truly a new world religion in the

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21st century, as some scholars have projected, the angel will have to be largely disengaged from the American beehive” so that the Church can create new cultural beehives in other places.69

Another example of the change in focus was the move to standardized missionary discussion and mission president seminars. In 1961, Church President David O. McKay declared “Every Member a Missionary” and asked Latter-day Saints to talk to their friends about the gospel, including the family home evening program, and then ask them if they wanted to talk to the missionaries. Church leaders asked mission presidents and the missionaries to focus on baptizing whole families and not individuals. According to historians James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, baptism numbers dropped temporarily but eventually grew again and the new programs resulted in better retention.70

While a change in focus was the major reason for the change, there were other reasons to eliminate missionary sports. While the Mormons focused on improving the LDS Church’s image and making friends, the Olympic teams that they helped wanted to win. The missionaries may have improved the play of the teams that they worked with, but they did not make them into medal contenders. Just as the German team did not win at the 1936 Olympics, neither did the Finnish and Australian teams. In 1952 the home team from Finland lost its first game to the USSR 47–35. The Soviet team continued to win until the championship round when it lost to the Americans, 36–25. The Finns finished fifteenth out of twenty-three teams.71 An Australian team competed in the Olympics for the first time in 1956. At the summer games in Melbourne, the home team beat Thailand and Singapore and finished in twelfth place. A notable exception for Mormon-coached teams was Uruguay’s, which won the bronze medal in the 1952 and 1956 Olympics.72

Certainly one reason that these teams did not place higher was that the countries had recently adopted basketball, so the players were

72http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_national_basketball_
inexperienced. The Mormon missionaries were good players but not world class. Some had played college sports, but they were not the caliber of the selected all-stars who had played on American teams in the past and especially not the professional players who later were allowed on all Olympic teams. As a result, national teams no longer looked to the missionaries for help. The fact that the United States won only a bronze medal in 1988 when college players were still involved and a bronze medal in 2004 when professional players were allowed shows that, by the late twentieth century, there was world parity in the sport.

A further reason was the disclosure of abuses in the use of sports to convince young men to join the LDS Church. From 1960 to 1963, a number of baseball baptisms or “kiddie” baptisms, especially in England, raised baptism statistics but sharply depressed retention statistics. Missionaries told young men that they could not participate in sports unless they were baptized. As part of an effort to increase baptisms, some mission presidents in Great Britain set baptism quotas and established missionary competitions. Although there were rules against baptizing children without their parents’ permission, some young people agreed to be baptized so they could be part of the missionaries’ baseball leagues, and some parents apparently thought they were signing consent-to-participate forms when they were actually authorizing their youngster’s baptism. The First Presidency issued a circular letter in 1962 reinforcing the need for parental consent. In 1963 Church leaders contacted many of those who had been baptized to see if they wanted their names to remain on Church records.  

Historian D. Michael Quinn documented these baptisms along with his personal experience as a twenty-year-old missionary in England in 1964, performing scores of name-removal/excommunications for youth and adults who thought they were joining a team and not a church. Those baptisms gave all Church sports a bad name. As William T. Bingham, who served in the Central States Mission from 1965 to 1967, explained, “Our mission president told us not to

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74 D. Michael Quinn, “I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon ‘Base-
use athletics to get baptisms because a number of years earlier that philosophy had been followed and there were a number of young teenagers baptized. Shortly after joining the Church they stopped coming because the missionaries left, their parents weren’t members, and the athletics stopped.”

The concern about baseball baptisms may have therefore influenced the decision to discourage even successful public relations sports programs. Helen May Taylor Beecroft wrote in her journal that, when Apostle Spencer W. Kimball toured the Chilean Mission in 1964, he announced, “There would be no more basketball teams nor singing groups traveling around.” She interpreted his statement as direction, not a suggestion.

The Ireland Mission’s manuscript history noted on June 30, 1964, that the missionaries were “returning to fundamentals” of “tracting and street meetings.” While it meant a decline in baptisms, it replaced an emphasis on youth programs with a plan to attract mature and intelligent leaders and whole families. In 1965 the mission leaders emphasized family home evening as a way to bring older people into the Church. According to the manuscript history, “Many felt that athletic activity program was beginning to eclipse other equally important programs.”

Another concern was the lopsidedness of Mormon victories in countries where basketball was a new sport, a result that had mixed public relations effects. Frederick S. Williams, who had been both a missionary and mission president in Argentina, went on to become mission president in Uruguay from 1947 to 1951. While he had been very involved in sports and had created missionary teams in Argentina, he decided against continuing that practice because he felt that the elders made the most friends when they lost. The other teams always complained about referee problems when the Mormons won. Rather than fielding separate teams, Williams had the elders compete on local club teams, thus avoiding America-versus-Argentina splits. He focused more on musical performances and sponsored a

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76 Beecroft, Chilean Mission Journal.
forty-missionary choir, explaining in an oral history interview, “We decided with music you don’t make enemies. . . . There was no competition and everyone loves music.”78 William T. Bingham recognized the same problem. The missionaries in his area played basketball on their preparation day against an inactive member and his city league team. Bingham recalled, “It didn’t work out well because even though we were missionaries and out of shape, none of us smoked and drank. We ended up beating them rather soundly.”79

Though the abuses represented by “baseball baptisms” have had a wide notoriety, the use of sports started with high ideals and aspirations. The missionaries hoped that, if the LDS Church had a better image, more people would listen to their message. Some of the problem came when the sports became entangled with baptism quotas. But more important issues were a shift in focus from sports and recreation to spirituality, the negative reaction from local teams when they lost, and the inability of the missionaries to compete in an improved international setting.

78Williams, Oral History, 55.
79Bingham, email.
Missionary work is not easy. It is the most demanding, the most compelling, the most exhausting, and yet, with it all, the most happy and most joyful work in all the world.

—Ezra Taft Benson

From 1921 to 1923, Ezra Taft Benson (born August 4, 1899), future president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, labored as a full-time proselytizing missionary in northeastern England. Eager, ambitious, anxious to please, he was accustomed to hard, physically demanding work but knew more about the crops and animals he raised than about the vagaries of peoples and classes. His knowledge of a larger, cosmopolitan world was mostly circumscribed by his experience of his fellow Latter-day Saints. His small hometown of Whitney in southern rural Idaho boasted a population of not more than 300—some fifty families—all of whom were LDS. As a result, much of what the twenty-two-year-old farmer encountered, especially during his first months in Great Britain, came as no small shock, offering, in the words of his authorized bi-
ographer, “as great a test of his mettle and endurance as anything he would experience for many years to come.”

The story of Benson’s first mission abroad not only forms an important chapter in Benson’s own biography but also contributes to the history of the LDS Church outside the Rocky Mountain West and to the study of the development of LDS missionary activities and proselytizing techniques. This essay adds new details and includes additional context for the narrative of Benson’s mission experiences found in previously published accounts. It also supplies some new information about the history of the Church in England. Furthermore, with its recounting of Benson’s mission, it provides a baseline against which future studies of LDS missionaries’ experiences may be judged as representative or not. At first consideration, Benson’s mission may appear relatively uneventful, even ordinary. But as Benson himself was subsequently to comment: “In many ways, my mission in England set the tenor for the rest of my life.”

The desire to fill a mission, Benson recalled more than a half-century later, first occurred to him in April 1917 as the seventeen-year-old youth listened intently one Sunday to two recently returned missionaries report on their missions in his Whitney Ward. The elders spoke candidly, and Benson wondered “how a mission could be ‘the happiest two years of my life,’ as the missionaries would conclude after recounting their hardships of opposition.” Five years earlier, the Church had sent his father, George Taft Benson Jr. (1875–1934), to the Northern States Mission, leaving be-

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5 Benson later elaborated: “As I sat there these missionaries told of their experiences. They had been out in the world; they had been perse-
hind his pregnant wife, Sarah Dunkley Benson (1878–1933), and seven children. Ezra, the oldest, was only twelve. Benson’s father’s absence had been particularly difficult financially and emotionally. Still, whatever anxiety Benson may have felt that Sunday in 1917 about leaving home easily gave way to the missionaries’ infectious enthusiasm. When Church services ended, Benson turned to his father and asked excitedly, “How old do you have to be to receive a patriarchal blessing?”

Benson believed that the special prophetic blessing would give him a glimpse into his future, including the possibility of a mission. He was not certain that his family’s finances would allow him to leave. Nor was he, a seasoned prankster, convinced of his own personal worthiness. His father suggested that he talk to his grandfather, George Taft Benson Sr. (1846–1919), who was also Whitney Ward’s bishop. After a brief interview with his grandson, George Sr. referred the teenager to the stake patriarch. Sixty-four-year-old John Edward Dalley asked Benson to accompany him to his house, where, as was the custom, he placed his hands on Benson’s head that same Sunday, April 15, 1917, and proclaimed that “I would go on a mission ‘to the nations of the earth, crying repentance to a wicked world.’” The patriarch also promised that “his life would be preserved on land and sea, that he would raise his voice in testimony and would grow in favor with the Almighty, and that many would rise up and bless his name.”

The announcement was exactly what Benson had hoped to hear. More than fifty years later, he remembered being “filled with happiness,” and returned home a mile away “almost walking on air” to

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6Ezra Taft Benson, “Missionary Memories,” Friend, August 1971, 14; Ezra Taft Benson, God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 51–52; Dew, Benson, 28–29. In his Friend article, Benson misremembers precisely when his father’s mission call occurred, placing it chronologically after he received his patriarchal blessing instead of before.

7Dew, Benson, 29.
share “the glad news” with his family.\textsuperscript{8}

Four years later in mid-1921, Benson, fast approaching his twenty-second birthday, stood six feet tall and sported a farmer’s dark tan. Since late the previous year, he had been courting nineteen-year-old Flora Smith Amussen (born July 1, 1901) of Logan, Utah. The budding romance was in its early stages, and Benson had not had any second thoughts about missionary service. By May 1921, he had received his official call to Great Britain: “I am very pleased and thankful that I have been counted worthy to fill a mission and will try to do my duty,” he replied.\textsuperscript{9} He quickly completed his passport application, with accompanying affidavits attesting to his status as a U.S. citizen and as a “minister” of the LDS Church, and soon confirmed his travel plans. By June 21, he had received his passport. Flora invited friends to help fête him at her parents’ Logan home; Benson’s parents held a second soirée in Whitney. The ward’s farewell social convened on a nearby tennis court, because the stone chapel was being rebuilt.

The following Wednesday, July 13, Benson’s father ordained his oldest son an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood. The next day, his parents traveled south with him to the Logan Temple, where he received his endowments. Flora joined them as they continued to Salt Lake City, where Seymour B. Young, a member of the Church’s First Council of the Seventy, on July 15, set Benson apart as a missionary in the British Mission. (The custom of having General Authorities set missionaries apart endured until about the late 1960s.) Armed with the Melchizedek Priesthood and his official setting apart, protected by the sacred promises of his temple endowment, Benson had received what preparation his church could provide. On Saturday evening, July 16, the young elder embraced his father, kissed his mother good-bye, and, accompanied by Flora, stepped on board the Continental Limited No. 20 train. Flora descended in Ogden, and Benson continued on to Montreal, Quebec, Canada.\textsuperscript{10} Six days later, on July 22, together with seventeen other newly appointed LDS missionaries,

\textsuperscript{8}Benson, “Mission Memories,” 14.
\textsuperscript{9}Benson, Letter to Heber J. Grant, June 24, 1921, quoted in Dew, \textit{Benson}, 48.
\textsuperscript{10}Benson and Amussen corresponded more or less regularly over the next two years and married in 1926. “We agreed,” Benson later explained,
Benson boarded the S.S. Victorian en route to England.\textsuperscript{11} After ten days of mostly rough seas and several bouts of seasickness, Benson and companions reached Liverpool (pop. 125,000) at around midnight on August 1, and were immediately taken to the mission’s official headquarters at Durham House, 295 Edge Lane. The next morning, after a few hours sleep, he met briefly with LDS Apostle Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931)—for whom Benson’s hometown had been named—who had recently been installed as president of the combined European and British missions. Benson and another young missionary, Russell Hodgson of Salt Lake City, were assigned to the Newcastle Conference, home to some 600 Latter-day Saints.\textsuperscript{12} Benson would remain in the Newcastle Conference for the duration of his mission. Of the seven other new British missionaries, two were sent to the Bristol Conference, one to the Manchester Conference, two to the Norwich Conference, and two to the Nottingham Conference.\textsuperscript{13} Benson was part of the first wave of LDS missionaries sent to Great Britain following World War I. Between 1909 and 1919, the number of missionaries in the British Mission dropped from a high of 348 to a low of thirty-one, including five Americans.

As his train pulled slowly out of the Liverpool station, Benson contemplated his immediate future with both excitement and trepi-

\textsuperscript{11} Dew, Benson, 50.

\textsuperscript{12} Conferences were geographic zones composed of groups of cities supporting LDS congregations. Fourteen conferences—or zones—comprised the British Mission at the time: Birmingham, Bristol, Hull, Irish, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich, Nottingham, Scottish, Sheffield, and Welsh. A fifteenth conference was made up of members of the British Mission office. Benson’s nine other non-British Mission traveling companions continued to one of the Church’s other European missions: four to the Netherlands, two to Switzerland/Germany, one to Denmark, one to Sweden, and one to South Africa.

\textsuperscript{13} “Arrivals and Appointments,” Millennial Star 83, no. 32 (August 11, 1921): 510–11.
He had arrived just as Britain was beginning to reel from a second burst of anti-Mormon rhetoric and activism. Provoked mostly, but not entirely, by the sensational claims of English novelist Winifred Graham (1874–1950) regarding British virgins kidnapped into plural wifery, this continuing swell of paranoia—interrupted only by World War I—proved impossible to avoid. Relatively short-lived, Graham’s campaign nonetheless posed serious obstacles to the LDS Church, and especially to American missionaries seeking converts. “The activity of the Saints in Britain in tracting is arousing the devil,” wrote David O. McKay (1873–1970), Whitney’s successor as mission president, “who is manifesting his evil designs through his co-partner Winifred and her ilk. . . . [They] have opened the flood gates of hell, and are deluging England with the vilest slander that impure minds can imagine.”

This was the welcome that greeted the Church’s young, unsuspecting American representatives.

Benson was first posted in Carlisle (pop. 50,000), some fifty miles west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (pop. 300,000), the conference headquarters in the country’s northeastern Lake District. Benson and Hodgson were met at Carlisle’s train station by another young missionary, James T. Palmer of Morgan, Utah, who conducted them to the boardinghouse room they would share. “There was a bed and a

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16See, for example, “The New Anti-Mormon Outcry,” *Millennial Star* 84, no. 4 (January 26, 1922): 59–60. See also “A Tempest in England,” *Improvement Era*, May 1922, 643–45. One of Graham’s works was turned into the popular motion picture *Trapped by the Mormons*.

narrow cot," Palmer wrote. “Elder Benson and I slept on the bed. The springs at the best were stretched and old; and with the weight of two men, we slept with sunken springs almost to the bare floor. . . . Elder Benson [and I] . . . called this situation home for better than the whole next year.”

From here, Benson spent his first weeks tracting from door to door (beginning on August 9), holding open-air public street preaching meetings, distributing (selling, loaning, or giving away) Church literature (he sold his first copy of the Book of Mormon on September 30), meeting with and teaching prospective converts, meeting and counseling both privately and in public Sunday meetings with local Church members, and studying LDS teachings and reading the scriptures and other Church books. In fact, Benson devoted almost half of each day, seven days a week, to studying the LDS gospel—a daily average of four hours out of nine, excluding travel time, daily. (See Table.) He read the theological works of nineteenth-century LDS apostle Orson Pratt, “devoured” the Book of Mormon, and read all of the multi-volume *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. By the end of his mission, he could write: “Each day I am learning to love books more.”

Benson’s twenty-seven months in England cost him, his family, and his supporters a total of approximately £280, or about £10-£11 a month. The equivalent in U.S. dollars was approximately a total of $1,120 (about $13,000 in today’s currency) and $41.50 ($481.50 in today’s money) monthly. (See Table.) Benson’s typical monthly mission-related expenses included: board and room (weekly), books and other literature, clothing and clothing repairs, laundry, train tickets and car fare, bread and fruit (apples, figs, lemons, etc.), candy (chocolate, licorice, etc.) and ice cream, fish and chips, stamps and stationery, haircut, bath, medicine, miscellaneous “amusements,” and an occasional trip—or “ramble”—to the theater, cinema, restaurant, and

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18 Quoted in Dew, *Benson*, 52.
19 “We are taking up systematic tracting,” explained Newcastle Conference President Donald C. Crowther, “going over the territory two and three times, as this is the best form of missionary work we can do, and we feel that it is a successful means of preaching the gospel for a witness of the Savior by telling them of the restoration of the gospel.” “Twenty-three Baptisms in Newcastle Conference,” *Improvement Era*, November 1921, 85.
**Table**

**Ezra Taft Benson’s Missionary Activities, August 1921 to October 1923:**

27 Months in Three-Month Intervals

(Figures Rounded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours spent/month*</th>
<th>1921–22</th>
<th>1922–23</th>
<th>1923</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>08/10</td>
<td>11/01</td>
<td>02/04</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>W/investigators</td>
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<td>37.5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ave. expenses/month**</td>
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<td>£9</td>
<td>£8</td>
<td>£11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total expenses in U.S. dollars (approx.)

$1,120

Total income received

$1,523

Total no. priesthood ordinations Benson performed/three-month intervals:

| Baptisms | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 10 (mission total) |
| Confirmations | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 11 (mission total) |
| Ordinations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 (mission total) |
| Children blessed | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 (mission total) |

* Does not include hours spent traveling to and from work.

** This totals approximately £280 spent on Benson’s entire mission. Does not include “Expenses Paid for Amusements” (approximately £3.5 total). According to Benson, £1 equaled $3.72 (on July 16, 1921), $4.33 (January 1, 1922), $4.47 (September 1, 1922), and $4.68 (January 1, 1923). Today, $1.00 ca. 1921–23 equals approximately $11.60.

*** Approximately nine hours/day, seven days/week, on the above five activities.

Note: Data from Benson’s monthly reports (below) for February 1922, August 1922, November 1922, July 1923, and September 1923 are unavailable.

Sources: Ezra Taft Benson, Monthly reports of missionary labors, British Mission, August 1921/October 1923, and Benson, “Expense of Mission.”
elsewhere. Not all of these purchases were for Benson alone; some were gifts to other missionaries, members and their children, and interested investigators.

After nearly two months in Carlisle, Benson, on Thursday, September 29, stepped into the waters of the city’s public baths to perform his first baptism. He does not identify the individual, but he or she was probably the spouse or child of a Church member. During the same service, attended by twenty-five Saints and investigators, he helped to confirm three newly baptized members and spoke publicly on the gift of the Holy Ghost. Benson worked hard at public speaking, on at least one occasion castigated his “frail attempt” at oration, and compiled from his reading and gospel-related conversations eighteen handwritten pages of anecdotes with which he tried to enliven his talks. A few weeks later in early November, Benson and Palmer traveled through Scotland—Edinburgh was less than seventy-five miles to the north—visiting members for several days. Benson then attended his first semi-annual Newcastle Conference meeting, presided over by President Whitney. These meetings were intended to complement the Church’s semi-annual world general conferences held in Salt Lake City each April and October. Their goal was to provide the Saints with sermons of both admonition and consolation. “The world is in its Saturday night,” Whitney told British members, to whom the horrors of the recent world war were still painful, “. . . and the great work of house-cleaning has commenced preparatory to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign as King of kings.”

By the end of his first calendar year (August-December 1921) in Britain, Benson was one of about ten missionaries—one high priest, two seventies, and six elders—to have labored or to be laboring in the Newcastle Conference. In the British Mission were a total of 148 missionaries (including Benson): fourteen high priests, thirty-four seven-

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22 “Baptism,” Millennial Star 83, no. 42 (October 20, 1921): 671. Another of Benson’s Carlisle companions, Ralph S. Gray (of Salt Lake City), evidently performed two additional baptisms on this same day.

23 Dew, Benson, 54-55.

ties, ninety-eight elders, and five sisters. The Newcastle Conference had grown that year by forty baptisms to 625 members (including 81 unbaptized children). As a whole, the British Mission had grown by 243 baptisms (with twenty-two excommunications) to 6,981 members (including 764 unbaptized children). While these figures represented an increase over the previous year’s baptisms (nineteen in Newcastle, 204 missionwide), the ratio of baptisms per missionary had actually declined slightly—4.75 and 2.95 in 1921 to 4 and 1.65 in 1922. Additionally, the number of excommunications missionwide had risen from two (in 1920) to twenty-two (in 1921), while the total number of members missionwide had decreased by nearly 11 percent, from 7,830 to 6,981, perhaps because of immigration to Utah. The Newcastle Conference had seen no excommunications in either 1920 or 1921, and the number of Church members had decreased very slightly from 637 to 625 (not quite 2 percent).

Early the next spring, Benson was still working mostly in Carlisle and environs. On May 7, he offered a public prayer and reported on some of his mission experiences at his second of Newcastle’s semi-annual general meetings. He also listened as President Whitney “refuted the false statements in circulation against the Latter-day Saints.” Speaking as much to the local Saints and missionaries as to the Church’s critics, Whitney declared: “They who publish lying stories about the Lord’s servants, are slandering the Lord himself, and must answer for it when the books are opened before the Great White Throne. They who slam the door in the face of a servant of God who offers them a Gospel tract, are insulting the Author of that Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ, and will hear him say on the day of judgment: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’” Developing his warning of the Millennium’s approach, Whitney stressed: “These are the last days. . . . The sixth day is now drawing to a close, and morning will break upon the Millennium, the thousand years of peace. It is Saturday night, and house-cleaning is in progress, to make the world ready for the Sabbath

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that is about to dawn."  Such declarations must have been as electrifying as they were sobering.

Perhaps in his own remarks to conference members, Benson related a recent faith-promoting experience that he later said occurred sometime the previous November-December. The incident, if Benson’s memory indicates the event’s impact, touched the missionary’s heart more forcefully than almost any other spiritual experience up to that point in his young life and, in fact, was one of two mission-related events Benson never forgot. As he recalled forty-eight years later:

I had been in the field only four months when it occurred. It was during the time of great opposition to the Church in Great Britain in the early twenties. The newspapers, the magazines, even anti-Mormon moving pictures were all over Great Britain; the opposition was so great we had to discontinue all street meetings, and many areas [we] couldn’t even tract. . . . [I]n those days men of the caliber of Orson F. Whitney and David O. McKay couldn’t even get one inch of space in the press to answer the lies that were printed against us.

But up in northern England where we were laboring, we had a group of people out at South Shields Branch who were very faithful and very devoted and very loyal, and they had invited my companion and me to come over and speak in the sacrament meeting. They said, “Many of our neighbors don’t believe the lies that are being printed. If you will come, we will fill the little chapel.”

And so we accepted the invitation and we started preparing and I started studying about the apostasy. It was a subject I liked, and I thought they needed it; and I worked and I studied, and I thought I could talk fifteen minutes on the subject.

We went over to the little chapel and it was filled. Everyone was happy. And after the opening exercises my companion spoke, then I spoke with a freedom I had never enjoyed in all my life. And when I sat down and looked at my watch, I had talked twenty-five minutes, and I hadn’t mentioned the apostasy, I hadn’t even thought of the apostasy. I had talked about Joseph Smith, and I had borne witness that he was a prophet of God and I knew it. I told about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as a new witness for Christ, and I had borne testimony. When I realized what had happened, I couldn’t hold


28 South Shields is about sixty miles from Carlisle, about eight miles from Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
back the tears.

At the end of the meeting, many of the Saints came forward and expressed their gratitude that something had been said about Joseph Smith. They said, “Several of our neighbors have said, ‘We can accept everything about the Church except Joseph Smith.’” And then some of those same neighbors came up and said, “We are now ready. We are ready tonight. We have received the witness that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.”

“This was an answer to our prayers,” Benson added in 1985, “for we had prayed to say only those things which would touch the hearts of the investigators.”

Benson’s companion, James Palmer, agreed: “Elder Benson was assigned to speak on the apostasy. . . . He mentioned that he was humble and nervous about speaking. But he was impressed by the spirit . . . and gave a strong and impressive discourse of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, never once remembering that his subject was to be of the apostasy.” (Benson did not say if any of his listeners were, in fact, baptized. According to his record of activities for this period, he did not perform any baptisms. See Table.)

Benson’s memory tended to emphasize what he remembered of the positive, spiritually utilitarian aspects of his mission. Less appealing was the actual grind of daily proselytizing. Among non-LDS British locals, the increasing reliance on anti-Mormon propaganda was pervasive, the ignorance of actual LDS belief and practice widespread. In an amusing anecdote he told to suggest prevailing ignorance about Mormonism, Benson described a street meeting during which a “half drunk ex-sailor yell[ed] out, ‘Can’t tell me anything about those old Mormons. I’ve sailed all over Utah from coast to coast, sailed right into S[alt]. L[ake]. port & they wouldn’t let me

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30Ezra Taft Benson, “Keys to Successful Missionary Work,” an address to the Boston Massachusetts Mission, April 20, 1975, 5, photocopy in possession of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

31Quoted in Dew, *Benson*, 55. Palmer’s presence supports the assertion that the event took place during Benson’s residence in Carlisle. On the other hand, Benson recorded in his monthly reports two Sunday trips to South Shields on June 4 and 25, 1922, while he was living in nearby Sunderland.
The humorous story reassured Benson and his fellow missionaries that the negative reception to the Church they routinely encountered was probably based more on misinformation than on actual malice.

At the same time, the reality of mission life was sometimes too harsh to dismiss casually. After a particularly trying day in mid-November 1921, Benson, clearly frustrated, described some of the men and women he approached as “bitter and narrowminded.” Shortly afterwards, he met more “hot people” who told him “to go to hell.” Early the next year, he complained of running “into one of those birds that knows more about the Mormons than I did.” One Sunday in late January 1922, there was an attempt to disrupt by force an outdoor street meeting; a few weeks later, Benson wrote of “Tracting in South Street, women rather excited, afraid they’re going to be taken to Utah.” Another time, he was “cussed by a little 18 yr. old maid . . . tracting among the rich—enjoyed it in spite of their bitterness”; and again, “detectives on our trail at present”; also, “two ministers watching us tract. ha! Rain and snow”; and finally, “Went tracting, was kicked out twice is all.” Following an especially inflammatory anti-Mormon lecture in late March 1922, Benson reported that the “Town [was] in uproar about Mormons. All of vast assembly voted to have us put out of town.” He subsequently lamented, “Searched in vain for a [meeting] hall but no success. The world seems to be against the work

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32Ezra Taft Benson, “Index to Antidotes [sic] & Happenings,” No. 62, photocopy in possession of the Smith-Pettit Foundation. In 1974–75, Benson presented a slightly different version of this story which he said had actually happened to him: “We used to get some great rebuffs at the door. I’ll never forget one. There was a lot of drinking in those days. I remember going to one door and a woman answered the door. The husband could hear us talking, and the word ‘Mormon’ was mentioned and he came to the door, half inebriated, and said, ‘Oh, you can’t tell me anything about these old Mormons. I’ve been in the British Navy, and I remember we sailed right into Salt Lake harbor and they wouldn’t let us land.’ And that’s about as much as some of them knew about it.” Benson, Oral History, 17; see also Dew, Benson, 57. Given the priority of the earliest version (in “Index to Antidotes [sic]”), however, Benson’s later memory was probably not entirely factually accurate.
of the Lord.” President Whitney’s successor wrote in late 1922, “The bigotry of the people here is quite in keeping with the dense fog that hangs like a pall over Liverpool.” Only among the country’s poor did the missionaries find some interest.

On Monday, May 8, 1922, during an elders’ priesthood meeting, Whitney called Benson and set him apart as clerk (or secretary) of the entire Newcastle Conference, making him responsible for the administrative paperwork of the various branches and missionaries throughout the zone. One week later to the day, having spent some nine months in Carlisle, Benson was transferred to coastal Sunderland (pop. 35,000), sixty-two miles to the east, where he would remain for the rest of his mission. The following Sunday, May 21, Benson was also named Sunderland Branch president. His responsibilities included mediating misunderstandings among members and missionaries, promoting sales of the Church’s British weekly *Millennial Star*, supervising local ecclesiastical activities, and maintaining local membership records. (Possibly related to the increase in paperwork, he also started to wear eyeglasses about this time.) He devoted significant time to looking for “lost” or no-longer-practicing Church members. “Still hard at the records day in and day out,” he wrote. “Many are shown to have apostatized and many lost. Almost without exception, those marrying out of the Church fall away.”

That summer, in addition to working periodically on the branch chapel and visiting several outlying congregations, the Star was a godsend for members and missionaries alike. In addition to containing encouraging counsel from local Church leaders, the magazine kept members and missionaries more or less regularly informed of events in the mission and the Church at large; of news throughout Britain, Europe, Utah, and the world; and, in some instances, of friends and family in the States.
tions, he enjoyed some breaks in his routine: a brief sight-seeing excursion to the beach (June 6), attending an agricultural fair in nearby Darlington with other missionaries and members (July 22), and celebrating his twenty-third birthday (August 4).

Benson made a lasting impact on some members of the Sunderland Branch. Frederick William Oates, then sixteen, later recalled that Benson took the branch’s teenager Aaronic Priesthood holders to a city park, where he “had us sit in a ring. Then he sat in the middle, and he talked to us about the Word of Wisdom. . . . He said, ‘Now, brethren, I want to tell you a little poem, and I want you to remember it’—and I’ve always remembered it—‘Tobacco is a weed. The devil sowed the seed. It scents your pockets, burns your clothes, and makes a chimney of your nose.’”

On another occasion, Benson displayed some of the skills he had perfected on his family’s Idaho farm. According to Oates:

One of the young men in the branch worked for a laundry, and the owner of the laundry had a beautiful chestnut horse. He told us that we could take it out and exercise it. I was on the back of the horse, and I came up to our back door. Elder Benson was in the yard and he said, “Come on. Get off there.” He lifted me off the horse and jumped on. He took that horse up the back street, and he turned it around on it’s hind legs and came down and did the same thing again. I guess he did that three or four times. All the neighbours were out, looking to see what was going on.

Then he put me back on the horse, and the blessed thing must have thought it still had an experienced rider, and it set off. He shouted to me, “Get hold of it’s [sic] neck, Will!” I remember saying, “How can I get hold of it’s [sic] neck when I’m hanging onto it’s [sic] tail?” So you know we had wonderful times.

“President Benson was a great favourite with us all,” Oates concluded, “and even the adult ones in the ward [sic, branch] loved him. I remember some of the older people, and my dad and mother, too, saying, ‘You know that young man is going to be a member of the Council of Twelve.’” He just had something that made you realize he

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40Ibid., 6.
was going to be important to the Church.”

In late August 1922, Benson, as Newcastle Conference clerk, began recording the minutes of the semi-annual conference meetings of most of Newcastle’s branches, including Shildon (August 27), Darlington (September 3), South Shields (September 10), Sunderland (September 17), and Gateshead (September 24). On Sunday, October 1, he returned to Carlisle, where the small branch’s semi-annual meetings convened in the local Socialist hall, having been denied access to their customary meeting hall due to some recent anti-Mormon agitation. The next Sunday, he participated in and recorded the minutes of Newcastle-upon-Tyne’s semi-annual conference. The following evening, he was back in Sunderland, where, as branch president, he helped to supervise a local social. Benson loved directing and playing games, and maintained a written inventory of games suitable for large public gatherings. These included “Jolly Miller,” “Grand Old Duke of York,” “Crossing the Desert,” “Little Tom Tinker,” and “My Ship’s Come Home from China.” Also in October, he addressed the conferences held in Middlesbrough (October 15) and West Hartlepool (October 22).

On November 25, Elder David O. McKay, one of Whitney’s colleagues in the Quorum of Twelve, accompanied by his wife, Emma Ray Riggs McKay, and five of their six children (the eldest, David Lawrence, was completing a mission to Switzerland), arrived in Liverpool.

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41Ibid., 7.
42See Millennial Star reports, all titled “Branch Conferences”: 84, no. 36 (September 7, 1922): 575; 84, no. 37 (September 14, 1922): 591; 84, no. 38 (September 21, 1922): 608; 84, no. 40 (October 5, 1922): 640; 84, no. 42 (October 19, 1922): 671.
43“Branch Conferences,” Millennial Star 84, no. 43 (October 26, 1922): 688.
44“Minutes of the Newcastle Conference,” Millennial Star 84, no. 42 (October 19, 1922): 665–67. According to Newcastle Conference President James Palmer, it “was one of the most successful of its kind ever held.” Quoted in “Steady Progress in Newcastle,” Improvement Era, January 1923, 288.
to replace Whitney. Whitney, sixty-two, had filled the post for sixteen months, but ill health had cut short his term. Seven weeks later on January 8, 1923, Benson listened closely as McKay, himself a former British missionary (1897–99), pronounced what would become the mission’s new motto: “Let each member be a missionary. We have nothing to feel ashamed of, nothing to apologise for.” He is . . . truly a man of God,” Benson recorded. “I shall never forget how he lifted us,” he added years later, “how he inspired us, how we loved him, how we hung on his every word. . . . His wisdom to the missionaries was the wisdom of Solomon.” Less than two weeks later on January 23, McKay called Benson, not quite sixteen months in the field, to become the new president of the Newcastle Conference, responsible for the full range of Church-related programs of the entire zone and its branches. “Never did I feel so weak and humble,” Benson confided. “I felt weak because I know my inability and yet I felt thankful to think the Lord has as much faith in me and that he would entrust to my care the supervision of 8 branches of the Church, preside over some 600 saints and eleven elders.” Twelve days later, on Sunday, February 4, Benson was released as Sunderland Branch president.

47 McKay and Whitney had both been ordained apostles on April 9, 1906, Whitney minutes before McKay. Thus, according to Quorum protocol, Whitney was McKay’s ecclesiastical senior. He was also eighteen years older than McKay. For the McKay family’s experiences in England, see David Lawrence McKay, My Father, David O. McKay, edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 156–71.

48 “Meetings of Traveling Elders,” Millennial Star 85, no. 5 (February 1, 1923): 80.

49 Quoted in Dew, Benson, 60.

50 Quoted in ibid., 63. According to Gibbons, Benson, 59: “Ezra was attracted immediately to this tall, handsome, self-confident man [McKay] who would play such an important role in his future life.” Twenty years later, McKay was serving in the First Presidency when Benson was called to the Quorum of Twelve in 1943.

51 “New Conference Presidents,” Millennial Star 85, no. 6 (February 8, 1923): 94; “Farewell Socials,” Millennial Star 85, no. 7 (February 15, 1923): 111. The previous conference president’s mission having ended, he was released to return home to the States. Today, the position of conference president would be roughly equivalent to zone leader and stake president.

52 Quoted in Dew, Benson, 61.
From late February through March 1923, Benson attended several socials for members and interested friends sponsored by local units of the Church’s all-women’s Relief Society, including the Gateshead and Sunderland branches (February 28 and March 14). Usually, these festivities featured games, refreshments, musical programs, and various competitive activities, which Benson participated in as conference president. On Sunday, March 18, he addressed the semi-annual conference of the South Shields Branch, and also sang a solo of the missionary-themed hymn, “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.” He recorded with chagrin that he had been denied his first choice for a meeting hall and been “treated as an undesirable.”

A week later, he presided over and addressed some sessions of Sunderland’s branch conference. The next day, he conducted baptismal services for six, personally performing two of the baptisms and confirmations, and concluded by offering “valuable instructions to the new members.” On Easter Monday, April 2, he attended a social and tea prepared by the Sunderland Branch; over the next several Sundays, he participated in the semi-annual spring conferences of the Darlington, Middlesborough, West Hartlepool, and Carlisle branches (April 8, 15, 22, and May 6). In addition to delivering discourses on LDS doctrine, he again soloed with “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” at the Middlesborough Branch.

On May 12, Benson conducted Newcastle’s annual spring social (held in Sunderland) and, the next day, conducted the semi-annual meeting of the Newcastle Conference, held in Gateshead, while Da-

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54 “Branch Conferences,” *Millennial Star* 85, no. 16 (April 12, 1923): 239.
55 Quoted in Dew, *Benson*, 61.
vid O. McKay presided. Visits from the mission president were a rare treat, and McKay’s presence generated a larger-than-usual turnout. In remarks commemorating Mother’s Day, McKay said, “The object of every man’s life should be to prove that his mother was an angel.” In the afternoon session, Benson preached that “the Gospel message is for all mankind.” Early Monday morning, Benson and McKay addressed Newcastle’s missionaries, “imparting valuable advice and encouragement.” “The splendid discourse delivered by President McKay will doubtless cause many to look on the restored gospel with a desire to find out the truth,” Benson later told readers of the Church’s monthly Improvement Era. “...The work is progressing nicely. There have been thirteen baptisms during the last three months and a number more have applied. The Saints are co-operating with the elders in arranging a series of cottage meetings at which friends and investigators may hear more of the gospel. The eight branches of this conference are in flourishing condition, some of which have doubled the attendance at their Sunday meetings during the last six months.”

The next month, June, Benson experienced his second most memorable mission-related incident. This one, however, was a terrifying encounter with an enraged mob. The previous year, about a hundred students at Edinburgh University had assaulted seventy-one-year-old missionary John E. Ingles, his sixty-seven-year-old companion Thomas Findayson, and a local Church member. The three men had been smeared with green paint and treacle (molasses), then feathered. Although no one had been killed or permanently injured, the threat of physical assault in addition to verbal harassment was real. On May 9, 1923, McKay urged his missionaries to spend more time tracting and cautioned them to “keep your self above suspicion, by avoiding the very appearance of evil, by leaving the young ladies abso-

60“Minutes of the Newcastle Conference,” Millennial Star 85, no. 22 (May 24, 1923): 330–33.
62Quoted in “Large Conference in Newcastle,” Improvement Era, September 1923, 1064.
lutely alone.”64 About this same time, he also suspended all open-air street meetings. The tenor of opposition to the Church had been intensifying since the Edinburgh incident, and McKay was worried about his missionaries’ physical safety. “The general theme was the same,” Benson explained years later, “that Mormon missionaries were in England to lure away British girls and make slaves of them on Utah farms.”65 Benson and his companion, William Harris, had already made plans to conduct a street meeting on Sunday evening, June 17, next to Sunderland’s train station, and decided to go ahead, then not to schedule any more. (In fact, it was the last of Benson’s English street meetings.)66 Benson felt that this compromise satisfied the spirit if not the letter of McKay’s instructions. “That’s where we made our mistake!” he later admitted.67

When they began preaching, they quickly attracted a “hostile crowd.” As Benson told the story in 1954, the two missionaries positioned themselves back to back and carried on, but the group was rapidly swelled by a rowdy element from the pubs, men who were always eager for excitement and not averse to violence. What had started out to be customary missionary street meeting soon took on the proportions of an angry, unmanageable mob. Many false malicious rumors had been spread about our church activities.

The crowd started swaying. Someone from the rear called out, “What the excitement?” Several voices shouted. “It’s them bloody Mormons!” This touched off a clamorous demonstration: “Let’s get ‘em under our feet!” “Throw ‘em in the river!”68

The mob surged forward and tried to force us to the ground so they might trample us.

64McKay, Circular letter dated May 9, 1923, quoted in Dew, Benson, 61.
68Writing closer in time to the event, Benson reported: “One in the crowd shaking his fist in our faces says, ‘You bloody bugger how many wives have you got?’). Some other bloak answers, ‘He ain’t got any.’ The first replies, ‘No, and he ain’t gonna get any either.’” Benson, “Index to Antidotes [sic] & Happenings,” No. 119.
In my anxiety, I silently prayed for the Lord’s guidance and protection. When it seemed that I could hold out no longer, a husky young stranger pushed through to my side and said, in a strong, clear voice, “I believe every word you said tonight. I am your friend.”

As he spoke, a little circle cleared around me. This, to me, was a direct answer to my fervent prayer. The next thing I knew, a sturdy English bobby was convoying us safely through the crowd and back to our lodgings.69

In another version published eight years later, Benson provided more details:

They surged in on us [Benson and Harris], but we were both tall—tall enough in most cases so we could almost put our elbows on the shoulders of those around us. They couldn’t get us down, but they did get us separated.

They pushed us around. Part of the crowd took my companion in one direction and the rest took me in the other. It began to look ugly. They weren’t hitting, but they were yelling and shoving and they were just wedged in all around. Just when I feared I couldn’t stand up any longer, all at once they fell back. A bulky-looking fellow elbowed up to me. He looked me right in the eye, and he said loudly enough for the crowd to hear, “I believe in what you said, and I’m not a Mormon.”

He moved up alongside [me] while the crowd just stood there. Then a big policeman, a really big, husky bobby, came through and took me by the arm. “You come with me,” he said. “You’re lucky to be alive in this crowd.” This policeman led me down three or four blocks away from the mob and then he said, “Now you go on back to your lodge.”

“My companion,” I said, “he’s around here somewhere.”

“You go back to your lodge. I’ll take care of him.”

When I got back to the lodging my companion was not there. After a couple of minutes I took my old bowler hat off—missionaries used to wear bowlers—put on a cap, changed my coat, and started back to see if I could find him.70 As I got near the corner three or four persons that had been in the crowd recognized me. “Have you seen your friend?” they said.


70“I decided to disguise my appearance by putting on an old American cap and taking off my topcoat,” Benson later elaborated in “Preparing
“No, where is he?”
“Down there at the corner. One side of his head is all mashed in.”
I started running as fast as I could toward the corner. I was nearly there when I met the same policeman. He grabbed my arm. “I thought I told you to go to your lodge.”
“I’ve been there. I’m worried about my companion. They tell me he’s hurt. Where is he?”
“Well, he got a nasty blow on the side of his head but he’s all right. He might have gone to your quarters.”

So I rushed back again, running all the way. When I got home, my colleague was changing his clothes. “Where’ve you been?” he said. “I was just going out to look for you.”

“We threw our arms around each other and knelt together in prayer,” Benson added in 1985, the memory of the experience seemingly as fresh as ever. “From that experience,” he reported, “I learned always to follow counsel, and that lesson has followed me all the days of my life.”
To my knowledge,” he confessed, “it is the only time in my life that I did not immediately follow the counsel given me by my presiding officer. It almost cost us our lives.”

Early the next month, on July 7, Benson addressed a special meeting in Gateshead of all of Newcastle’s full-time proselytizing mis-

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71He’s gone to the lodge now,” Benson later reported the policeman telling him. “I walked part way with him as I did earlier with you.” Ibid.
72Ezra Taft Benson, Cross Fire: The Eight Years with Eisenhower (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), 261–62. Benson, “Preparing Yourself for Missionary Service,” 37, later said he “found my companion disguising himself in order to go out and look for me.”
74Quoted in Dew, Benson, 62. According to Gibbons, Benson, 61–62, “Using a rationalization for an excuse, he [Benson] had deliberately disobeyed the direction of his priesthood leader. No good came from it, other than the hard lesson he learned not to disobey again. Indeed, there had been much negative fallout: his companion had been injured, Ezra had lost credibility as a leader by ignoring the direction of his superior, and the Church had been held up to ridicule by the unruly mob that attacked them. On the other hand, the experience affirmed Ezra’s deep conviction that God would come to his aid in an extremity if he prayed fervently and with faith.”
sionaries; his remarks included “some very good advice and instruction.” The next morning, he baptized four new members of the South Shields Branch in the cold waters of the North Sea. In mid-August, he addressed the semi-annual meetings of the Shildon Branch, and on the 22nd confirmed two of four newly baptized members of the Sunderland Branch. Four days later, he addressed the semi-annual meetings of the South Shields Branch; a third confirmation followed on September 2. Also on the 2nd, he spoke at the semi-annual meetings of the Middlesbrough Branch.

With autumn, the pace of semi-annual branch conferences increased. Throughout September and into October, Benson, who by now was rapidly approaching the end of his mission, attended and usually presided at conferences of the Gateshead, Darlington, Sunderland, Carlisle, and West Hartlepool branches (September 9, 16, 23, 30, and October 7), as well as at a conference-wide meeting of

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75“Meetings of Traveling Elders,” *Millennial Star* 85, no. 31 (August 2, 1923): 496.
76“Baptisms,” *Millennial Star* 85, no. 30 (July 26, 1923): 480.
77“I Thought He Was Such a Lovely Man,” *Church News*, March 17, 1990, 5.
81“Branch Conferences” and “Baptisms,” *Millennial Star* 85, no. 36 (September 6, 1923): 575, 573.
82“Branch Conferences” and “Baptisms,” *Millennial Star* 85, no. 37 (September 13, 1923): 501, 500.
missionaries in Sunderland (September 15). In addition, he performed a fourth confirmation on September 19 during baptismal services he conducted for the Sunderland Branch. A month later, he presided at another Sunderland baptismal service and, the next day, spoke at the semi-annual meetings of the entire Newcastle Conference held in South Shields. “The only panacea for the world,” he testified, “is the restored Gospel.” He also sang a missionary duet, “Teach My Soul to Pray.” Fearing that some members and missionaries might respond intemperately to recent anti-Mormon rhetoric, President McKay cautioned, “To-day, many slanderous charges are made against the Latter-day Saints, and justice demands that no one should act on snap-judgment.” That evening, Benson joined some eighty-plus conference members, missionaries, and friends at a social in Sunderland featuring, as usual, games, competitions, musical numbers, and refreshments. Such activities no doubt helped greatly to hone Benson’s organizational and leadership skills.

Wednesday, October 31, 1923, marked the last official day of Benson’s mission. However, before being honorably released two days later, he participated in one last series of priesthood ordinances, performing three baptisms and one confirmation in Sunderland. It was a climactic end for the now-seasoned missionary. “I am a bit reluctant about accepting it [his release],” he recorded in his diary, “as I feel there is so much to do in the field and so few to do it.” “I certainly do loath leaving these dear good Saints,” he added to a friend back in the States. “. . . Really it is the hardest part of my mission.”

Rather than departing immediately, Benson spent the first half of November visiting other English conferences and branches. In

90 Both quoted in Dew, *Benson*, 63.
Sunderland on November 8, he “thanked all the Elders for the support they had given him, and urged all to continue faithful in their callings.”

That evening, the small branch sponsored a farewell social, which, in addition to the customary games, musical numbers, and refreshments, included the branch members’ gifts to and brief remarks by Benson. Three days later, Benson briefly addressed the semi-annual meetings of the Sheffield Conference, some hundred miles south of Sunderland. The next day, he attended a meeting of Sheffield’s proselytizing missionaries. As Benson afterwards motored west to Liverpool with President McKay at the wheel, a policeman pulled them over for speeding. “President McKay was always at his best when he met with a bobby,” Benson recalled. “He said, ‘Now officer, I know you’re out here for our protection. And if I’ve done anything wrong, I’m in a repentant mood.’ The officer chuckled and waved us off.”

From Liverpool, Benson traveled south-southeast to London, and, following the issuance on November 16 of an “Emergency Passport” for travel throughout continental Europe, continued on by plane to Paris. (“After ten minutes the can was called for,” he remembered. “We were all there sick while the Frenchman [on board] chuckled” at their obvious discomfort.) For the next two weeks, Benson visited France, Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium, including a brief reunion in Lausanne with a relative, Serge F. Ballif (1859–1942), president of the Swiss Mission. Finally, on Sunday, December 2, together with another returning elder, Benson boarded the S.S. Metita, presumably at Liverpool, and “sailed for home.” They had hoped to spend much of the time studying but were defeated by seasickness: “We lacked the desire to do anything but heave and reheave. First we

91 “Meeting of Traveling Elders,” Millennial Star 85, no. 48 (November 29, 1923): 767.
92 “Socials,” Millennial Star 85, no. 49 (December 6, 1923): 784.
93 “Minutes of the Sheffield Conference,” Millennial Star 85 (November 22, 1923): 47.
94 “Meetings of Traveling Elders,” Millennial Star 85, no. 50 (December 13, 1923): 799–800.
95 Quoted in Dew, Benson, 64.
96 Quoted in ibid.
97 According to “Releases and Departures,” Millennial Star 85, no. 49 (December 6, 1923): 784, Benson left England on Friday, November 30,
think we’re going to die, and then we’re afraid we’re not.”

Reaching Salt Lake City by Christmas Eve, 1923, Benson asked for and received a second patriarchal blessing, this time from the Church’s presiding patriarch, Hyrum Gibbs Smith (1879–1932), to serve as a guidepost for his life’s next stage. “Be true to thy righteous convictions,” Smith pronounced on December 24; “be humble in thy devotion; shrink not from duty when it’s made known, but keep thy trust in the Lord and thou shalt live even unto a goodly age to fill up the full measure of thy mission and creation.” Afterward, Benson raced north to Whitney, arriving shortly after dark, and spent the evening with his grateful parents preparing Christmas gifts for distribution the next day. “My love for my parents had never been so great,” he remembered.

The following Sunday, December 30, he reported on his mission to local ward members. Flora Amussen made a point of attending Benson’s homecoming, and the two quickly renewed their relationship.

All told, during Benson’s two-plus years in the British Mission, he spent on average every month close to twenty hours tracting, twenty-nine hours with investigators, fifty-one hours with members, forty-seven hours in meetings, and 129 hours studying. He performed a total of ten baptisms (about double the missionary average), eleven confirmations, two ordinations to priesthood office, and naming blessings for three children. (See Table.)

In the British Mission as a whole, from the close of 1921 to the close of 1923, the number of proselytizing missionaries decreased from 148 to 127, whereas the number of baptisms performed annually increased 37 percent from 243 (1.6 baptisms per missionary) to 333 (2.6 baptisms per missionary). Excommunications dropped from twenty-two to seven. Even so, the total number of Church members decreased nearly 20 percent from 6,981 to 5,682. Throughout the Newcastle Conference, these same figures were: a decrease from ten missionaries to eight, from forty baptisms to thirty-six, from no excommunications to one, and from 625 members to 562. (Again, the

with three other returning missionaries (two elders and a sister). However, Dew, Benson, 64, writes that Benson sailed two days later. Perhaps Benson had been set to depart on the 30th but was delayed or rescheduled.

98Quoted in Dew, Benson, 64.
99Quoted in ibid., 65.
100Ibid.
decrease may reflect migration to Utah.) Throughout the remainder of the 1920s, the number of mission conferences increased from fifteen to seventeen, the number of missionaries annually fluctuated between 149 and 196, and the number of baptisms between 168 and 282. The number of excommunications fell from a high of fifty-eight in 1925 to two in 1930, and the total number of members increased by 14 percent to 6,491. In the Newcastle Conference, these figures from the mid-1920s to 1930 were: between ten and sixteen missionaries annually, thirteen to twenty-seven baptisms annually, thirteen to no excommunications annually, and an increase in conference membership of 42 percent to 800.101 In December 1928, the British and European Missions formally separated into two distinct missions, both eventually headquartered in London.102

Benson returned home not so much changed as matured. Like that of most missionaries, his impact was not so much on mission statistics as on Benson himself. His knowledge of scriptures, doctrine, and history had deepened. His self-confidence had grown as he had had to rely repeatedly on his faith in God and the power of prayer in confronting difficult situations head-on including verbal abuse and at least one violent attack. He had helped to counsel both members and missionaries; had gained some experience of a larger, more diverse world; and had been exposed up-close to the workings of his Church in an international setting. Perhaps most important from his perspective, he had found his testimony of the Church expanded and strengthened. He had faced adversity and unpopularity with the unwavering commitment to the truth as he understood it that would become a defining hallmark of his personality. In the ensuing years, he would build a life both informed by and grounded upon the two-plus years he spent during the early 1920s in northeastern England as a missionary for the LDS Church.

For over 150 years, skeptics from E. D. Howe to Fawn Brodie and beyond have painted a picture of Joseph Smith, even before Nauvoo, as that of a man who at least sometimes trespassed the bounds of marital fidelity. Such writers present data and their interpretations of it that support about a decade of intermittent dalliances before 1839 that seemed to contravene Joseph’s own publicly proclaimed standards of chastity. Such an image obviously depends, at least to some extent, on reading backward from the practice of polygamy in Nauvoo to the earlier period. But how accurate is that picture? If we were listening to the gossip in Quincy, Illinois, in May of 1839 about the Mormon prophet, who had been allowed to escape a month earlier by his Missouri jailors, and if we were to read descriptions by non-Mormon writers in local newspapers, what sexual morals would be ascribed to the Mormon prophet? Would the clamor of previous amours mar affirmations from believers that he was a prophet? Or would the complaints of naysayers focus on other issues?

In this article, I briefly examine all the extant accusations regarding sexual impropriety and plural marriage against Joseph Smith—a total of nine—occurring before his 1839 arrival in

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Nauvoo. ¹ I evaluate each reported incident for its credibility and also for its potential to have influenced the Prophet’s reputation during the 1830s.² I give particular attention to Joseph Smith’s relationship with Fanny Alger and its aftermath. My conclusion, after analyzing the available evidence, suggests that, prior to Nauvoo, the Prophet’s general reputation did not include allegations of either li-

¹Included here are all of the accusations based upon even moderately credible evidence that I have been able to locate. I readily acknowledge that my research may not have been complete or that additional pertinent historical data may be discovered in the future. Therefore, I do not consider this study to be the final word regarding issues it addresses.

²I exclude two allegations as not credible. The first is an anonymous article, “One of the Priesthood,” in Saintly Falsity (Salt Lake: Salt Lake Tribune Office, 1885), 1, 2, which claims: “In a meeting of a Female Relief Society, in 1853, in this city, Mrs. Whitney told the sisters present that she had been sealed to Joseph four years before the date of the revelation as given [1839]; Mrs. J________ [Zina Huntington Jacobs?] said she was sealed to him six years before that [1837]; Mrs. B______[Presendia Huntington Buell?] said she was sealed to him nine years before that [1834]; and Eliza R. Snow Smith Young arose and declared that she was sealed to him long before any of them [pre-1834].” A second is from an even later publication by A. Theodore Schroeder in Some Facts Concerning Polygamy (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1898), 3, 9, which repeats some of the faulty information from Saintly Falsity: “At or prior to 1835, the Prophet had taken into his household Eliza R. Snow who admits herself to have been a polygamous wife of the Prophet. . . . She goes out of her way to justify her presence in the Smith household by saying that she ‘Was teaching the Prophet’s family school. . . .’ The real truth doubtless is that she was even in 1835, a plural wife of the Prophet. According to apostates, Eliza R. Snow stated in 1853, before a meeting of the ‘Female Relief Society,’ that she was sealed to Joseph Smith nine years before the date of the revelation [D&C 132, written July 12, 1843], making it 1834. . . . As early as 1833 [the conduct of the Saints] was such as to make their neighbors believe that they were practically polygamists, and although Rigdon as early as 1835 took a plural wife, which must have been known to the prophet, and notwithstanding that[,] probably Smith had already entered the polygamic state with Eliza R. Snow.” The historical inaccuracies in these two documents are too numerous to justify serious consideration, beginning with the fact that the Relief Society had not been reconstituted in 1853. However, these types of statements are not uncommon in the historical record and were apparently believed by many.
centiousness or polygamy.

**NINE ACCUSATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

A thorough search of available historical records identifies nine such accusations. In brief overview, here are the names of the women reportedly involved, the individual alleging the relationship with Joseph Smith, the year of the alleged incident, and where it supposedly occurred.

1. Eliza Winters, according to Levi Lewis allegedly quoting Martin Harris, became involved with Joseph Smith in 1827–29 in New York.

2. Josiah Stowell’s daughters, according to the Broome County (New York) prosecutor, became involved with Joseph Smith in 1830 in New York.

3. William Bond alleged that Joseph Smith was involved with “a certain woman” in 1829–30 in Pennsylvania.

4. Marinda Nancy Johnson, according to Clark Braden, became involved with Joseph Smith in 1832 in Ohio.

5. Vienna Jacques, according to Nancy Maria Smith Alexander, became involved with Joseph Smith in 1833 in Ohio.

6. Fanny Alger was reportedly involved in a relationship with Joseph Smith in 1835 in Kirtland according to several different individuals. Because this episode was substantive and generated considerable commentary and controversy, I will discuss it last, out of order, after dealing with the other eight allegations.

7. According to Sidney Rigdon’s modern biographer, Richard S. Van Wagoner, Athalia and Nancy Rigdon, two of Rigdon’s daughters, had a relationship with Joseph in 1837 in Ohio.

8. According to Wilhelm Wyl, Sarah Pratt told him that Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris was involved with Joseph Smith in 1838 in Missouri.

9. Mary Ettie V. Coray Smith claimed that Presendia Huntington Buell was involved with Joseph Smith in 1939 in Missouri.

**ELIZA WINTERS**

Two of the allegations reportedly occurred while the Prophet resided in New York. The first is a one-sentence statement in Eber D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unvailed* (1834), the first anti-Mormon book to reach print: “Levi Lewis states, that he has been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, adul-
tery was no crime. Harris said he did not blame Smith for his (Smith’s) attempt to seduce Eliza Winters etc.”^3 Technically, Lewis’s statement is not a charge of illicit sexual activity, but a report of an “attempted” (therefore unsuccessful) seduction, probably coming third-hand from two antagonistic sources. This statement is sometimes misquoted reporting that Levi Lewis accused Joseph Smith of trying to seduce Eliza Winters, rather than Lewis allegedly quoting Martin Harris.^4

Whether successful or not, such a charge is a serious accusation when leveled at a religious leader, but the alleged statement is problematic for several reasons, including plausibility. If, in fact, Joseph Smith stated that “adultery was no crime,” it was a very singular statement that he contradicted repeatedly and consistently in his subsequent teachings on the subject. Neither is there any record that the Prophet reacted to this allegation during his lifetime. It appears that he either was unaware of it or believed it unworthy of response.

Born in Delaware in 1812, Eliza Winters apparently moved to Harmony prior to 1829. I have found no evidence that she interacted with Joseph Smith or his family there. One late recollection states that she was a friend of Emma Smith.^5 Eliza herself left no statement concerning the reported seduction attempt which purportedly occurred in the late 1820s. However, during her lifetime, she had at least two perfect opportunities to corroborate Lewis’s alleged statement, but failed in both instances to do so. The first occurred in 1833 when Martin Harris accused her of having given birth to a “bastard child.” Eliza

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retaliated by suing Martin. Throughout the court proceedings, no one, including Eliza herself, mentioned a seduction attempt by Joseph Smith, and the case was dismissed due to jurisdiction problems.

Nearly fifty years later, the seventy-year-old Eliza Winters had another chance to disparage Joseph Smith when newspaperman Frederick G. Mather interviewed her in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, specifically to gather derogatory statements about the Prophet from his former acquaintances. In the interview, Mather recorded Eliza as saying “Joe Smith never made a convert at Susquehanna, and also that his father-in-law became so incensed by his conduct that he threatened to shoot him if he ever returned.” Notwithstanding her negative recollections, she failed to make any accusation regarding Joseph Smith’s personal conduct toward her. Her apparent reticence to incriminate the Prophet on that occasion is puzzling if the Lewis allegation was true.

As noted, the allegation was published in 1834. However, it was seldom, if ever, republished during the rest of the decade, suggesting that it did not influence Joseph Smith’s pre-Nauvoo reputation to any great extent. Richard Lyman Bushman observed: “Considering how eager the Palmyra neighbors were to besmirch Joseph’s character, their minimal mention of moral lapses suggest libertinism was not part of his New York reputation.” Marvin Hill concurred: “[It is a] fact that none of the earliest anti-Mormon writers, neither Dogberry

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7Quoted in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 4:358; see also 314, 297 note 3.

8Ibid., 4:346, characterized her apparent silence on the topic as “an accusation she neither confirmed nor denied.” It seems likely that, if Winters had denied the accusation, Mather would not have included that admission in his article, as it did not suit his purposes of disparaging Joseph Smith. Regardless, while Vogel’s assessment in Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 178, 619, may be technically true, there is no way of knowing whether the subject was even mentioned. Vogel treats Lewis’s report as somewhat credible. See also Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, 4:296–97.

9Richard Lyman Bushman, Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 323. Bushman continued: “One of Emma’s cousins by marriage, Levi Lewis, said Martin Harris spoke of Joseph’s at-
or E. D. Howe, charge Smith with sexual immorality.”

THE STOWELL SISTERS

The second incident of alleged sexual impropriety took place in 1830 in Broome County, New York, where Joseph Smith was being tried, though the exact nature of the charge is unknown since no records have been located. As part of the proceedings, the local prosecutor accused Joseph Smith of improper conduct with two of Josiah’s daughters, probably Rhoda and Miriam, ages twenty-five and twenty-three respectively. Joseph later recalled: “The court was detained for a time, in order that two young women (daughters to Mr. Stoeal [sic]) with whom I had at times kept company; might be sent for, in order, if possible to elicit something from them which might be made a pretext against me. The young ladies arrived and were severally examined, touching my character, and conduct in general but particularly as to my behavior towards them both in public and private, when they both bore such testimony in my favor, as left my enemies without a pretext on their account.”

Since no criminal activity was discovered or prosecuted, its appeal to newspaper readers would have been minimal. Also, its effect upon Joseph Smith’s reputation would have been either positive or neutral.

“A CERTAIN WOMAN”

A third accusation against Joseph Smith appeared sixty years after its alleged occurrence when William Bond, a resident of Erie County, Pennsylvania, published what he called a “history” of Mor-


monism in 1890. He claimed:

In about the year 1829–30, Joseph Smith visited Erie County, Pennsylvania, often as he was passing from Ohio into western New York, and held meetings to gain proselytes in the Mormon faith. . . . Some of the old and more substantial citizens, Henry Teller, Ranson Bromley, Henry Slator, and others, noticed an improper intimacy between Joseph Smith and a certain woman, which led to a further investigation of Smith's character, and finally exposure of his improper conduct before one of these assemblies. Smith, however, having friends, still declared his innocence. The next evening a wooden horse was found before the inn where Smith was lodging, and on the horse was written: “Assistance will be given by twelve gentlemen to mount this horse (he being high), and if the seat is hard a quantity of feathers and tar shall not be withheld to make the journey pleasant, as he is a fast rider.” I need not inform you Smith was seen no more in that vicinity.  

This very late account is problematic in several respects. Most seriously, the chronology of Joseph Smith’s travels contradicts the allegations. Joseph’s first trip through Erie County was with Emma when they were westbound from Fayette, New York, in 1831. Erie, Pennsylvania, is located about eighty miles east of Kirtland, Ohio. It is true that Joseph traversed this area several times in ensuing years. Since Bond identifies proselytizing as one of Joseph’s purposes in entering the county, the most likely visit for this wooden horse incident would have been in October 1833, when, accompanied by Sidney Rigdon and Freeman Nickerson, Joseph visited Springville, Erie County, for two days. He wrote: “A large and attentive congregation assembled at Brother Rudd’s in the evening, to whom we bore our testimony.” The next day, he crossed the county, arriving at Elk Creek, still in the county. No extant records suggest that anything untoward occurred or that Joseph was harassed by locals who wished to retaliate for some current or previous indiscretion. In addition to this visit, Joseph also came into the county (1) in October 1832, accompanied by Newel K. Whitney to acquire goods for a store in Kirtland; (2) in February 1834

13William Bond, The Early History of Mormonism . . . (Portland, Ore.: Schwab Brothers, 1890), 18–19.

accompanied by Parley P. Pratt to assemble volunteers for Zion’s Camp, and (3) in August 1836, accompanied by Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery in an unsuccessful effort to raise funds to stabilize the Kirtland Safety Society. Furthermore, Cheryl Hamon Bean, who researched LDS baptisms in Erie County between 1831 and 1833, identifies at least 122 new members and found no evidence that Joseph Smith had earlier been accused of improprieties in the county.

As a second difficulty with Bond’s allegations, it seems unlikely that such an event, which occurred semi-publicly and involved at least twelve notable members of the community, had remained unmentioned for more than fifty years. Erie was geographically close to Kirtland. It seems improbable that the improprieties described would have gone unnoticed by Joseph’s enemies like Philastus Hurlburt, E. D. Howe, or Grandison Newell. The account states that “substantial citizens, Henry Teller, Ranson, Bromley Slator, and others” were informed. In addition, an “assembly” discussed Joseph’s improper conduct and determined a course of action, including the threat of “tar and feathers.” But again, except for Bond, no record of this community event exists, either in connection with Joseph Smith or, as far as I have been able to learn, with anyone else. In short, this allegation rests solely upon Bond’s unsupported memory.

**Marinda Nancy Johnson**

The fourth accusation regarding Joseph Smith involved Marinda Nancy Johnson, born June 28, 1815, the daughter of John and Elsa Johnson of Hiram, Ohio. Joseph and Emma lived at the Johnson home during two separate periods, from September 1831 to April 1832 and again from July to September 1832. Joseph had healed her mother of a disability that prevented her from using her arm, and most of the family had joined the Church in 1831. Two of her brothers, Lyman and Luke, were among the first Twelve Apostles chosen in

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17Research confirms that these men were indeed in the area during the time in question, but none left any negative record concerning Joseph Smith.
1835, though both later became disaffected. Luke reaffiliated with Mormonism while Lyman did not.

Marinda’s brother Luke, wrote an account of the mobbing, published in 1864:

In the fall of [sic; should be spring of] 1832, while Joseph was yet at my father’s [John Johnson], a mob of forty or fifty came to his house, a few entered his room in the middle of the night, and Carnot Mason dragged Joseph out of bed by the hair of his head; he was then seized by as many as could get hold of him, and taken about forty rods
from the house, stretched on a board, and tantalized in the most in-
sulting and brutal manner; they tore off the few night clothes that he
had on, for the purpose of emasculating him, and had Dr. Dennison
there to perform the operation; but when the Dr. saw the Prophet
stripped and stretched on the plank, his heart failed him, and he re-
fused to operate. 18

Luke’s account does not attribute the intent to emasculate Jo-
seph to sexual impropriety on his part; but Fawn Brodie retells the
story, tellingly casting it as hearsay, “It is said that Eli Johnson de-
manded that the prophet be castrated, for he suspected Joseph of be-
ing too intimate with his sister, Nancy Marinda.” 19 In fact, Eli was
Marinda’s uncle (her father’s brother), not one of her own brothers.
Furthermore, Brodie was quoting Clark Braden, a Church of Christ
(Disciples) minister, who made the allegation of immorality in an
1884 debate with E. L. Kelley, counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of
the RLDS Church. 20 From my research, Braden seems to have been
the very first person to assert sexual impropriety as a motive for the
mob. The accusation was not included in any publication printed dur-
ing the fifty-two years prior to Braden’s 1884 debate with Kelley, even
though many reported the tarring and feathering episode.

For example, in their 1861 publication, A Journey to Great Salt
Lake City, Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley fail to accuse Joseph Smith
of any sexual impropriety when discussing the 1832 mobbing. 21 Antag-
onistic author John H. Beadle accuses Joseph Smith of “attempting to

834. See also Millennial Star 27 (January 7, 1865): 5–7.
19Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith,
20E. L. Kelley and Clark Braden, Public Discussion of the Issues between
the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of
Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing
March 8, 1884, between E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ (St. Louis: Clark
Braden, 1884), 202.
21Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, A Journey to Great Salt Lake City, 2
vols. (London: W. Jefts, 1861), 1:282. This allegation is also not mentioned
in the anonymous History of the Mormons (London: William and Robert
Chambers, 1853), 16; A. M. Pigott, Mormonism: Its History, Doctrines, and
Practices (London: Aldine Chambers and Paternoster Row, 1853), 14, and
establish communism, ... forgery and dishonorable dealing."\textsuperscript{22} If immoral conduct were involved, reticence about it on Beadle's part would have been most uncharacteristic of his typically sensational approach.

Accordingly, it seems improbable that Braden in 1884 had discovered evidence of a motivation unknown for more than fifty-two years. Most likely, he simply read the account, which was available in LDS and RLDS publications, and assumed that, since emasculation was mentioned, at least some of Joseph Smith's offenses were sexual in nature. If Braden had evidence beyond his own assumptions, he never shared it with anyone. Neither has any supporting documentation since been identified in the historical record. Importantly, Symonds Ryder, one of the mob leaders later wrote:

When they [Joseph Smith and other leaders] went to Missouri to lay the foundation of the splendid city of Zion, and also of the temple, they left their papers behind [in Hiram, Ohio]. This gave their new converts an opportunity to become acquainted with the internal arrangement of their church, which revealed to them the horrid fact that a plot was laid to take their property from them and place it under the control of Joseph Smith the prophet [through the law of consecration]. This was too much for the Hiramites. . . . Determined not to let it pass with impunity; and, accordingly, a company was formed of citizens . . . in March, 1832, and proceeded to headquarters in the darkness of night, and took Smith and Rigdon from their beds, and tarred and feathered them both, and let them go. This had the desired

Amos S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1875), 220–21. Hayden explains the causes of the mobbing at length, basically attributing it to "a plot . . . laid to take their [the mob members'] property from them."

effect, which was to get rid of them. They soon left for Kirtland.\textsuperscript{23}

Todd Compton, who has done the most extensive research on Joseph Smith’s plural wives, comments: “There is no good evidence supporting the position (found in Brodie . . . ) that Joseph Smith was married to Marinda Johnson . . . or had an affair with her, in 1831, and was mobbed by ‘her brother Eli’ and others as a result.”\textsuperscript{24} Marinda herself recalled in 1877 at age sixty-two after a lifetime of faithful membership: “I feel like bearing my testimony that during the whole year that Joseph was an inmate of my father’s house I never saw aught in his daily life or conversation to make me doubt his divine mission.”\textsuperscript{25}

**VIENNA JACQUES**

The fifth accusation regarding Joseph Smith involves Vienna Jacques (possibly pronounced “jack-ways”\textsuperscript{26}), who was born in 1787. This charge originated with a statement by a former Mormon, “Mrs. Warner Alexander,” who quoted Polly Beswick as saying: “It was commonly reported, Jo Smith said he had a revelation to lie with Vienna Jacques, who lived in his family, Polly told me, that Emma, Joseph’s wife, told her that Joseph would get up in the night and go to Vienna’s bed. Polly said Emma would get out of humor, fret and scold and flounce in the harness. Jo would shut himself up in a room and pray for a revelation, When he came out he would claim he had re-


\textsuperscript{26}Samuel H. Smith, who was serving a mission in the Boston area, wrote on July 18, 1832: “Went about five miles to Wm. Angel’s, who[se] wife was a sister to Sister Viena Jacways.” Samuel was apparently writing her surname phonetically. Modern pronunciation is sometimes “jakes.” Samuel spelled her name as “Jacques” on July 10 and possibly “Lacways” on July 18.
Research suggests that “Mrs. Warner Alexander” was Nancy Maria Smith, daughter of William Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) and Lydia Calkins Smith, born December 1, 1822. She married Justin Alexander on September 4, 1850, at Kirtland, Ohio, making her “Mrs. Justin Alexander” or “Mrs. Nancy Alexander.” It is not clear how her name got mistranscribed, but other internal references also corroborate Nancy as the author.

The historical record shows that the Joseph Smith family was living in the Kirtland area from 1831 to 1838. In 1831, Vienna traveled from her home in Boston to Kirtland, where she met the Prophet and was baptized. She stayed in Ohio about six weeks, then returned to Boston where she became the means of converting many of her family who were also baptized. Vienna journeyed again to Kirtland in early 1833. She may have stayed with the Smiths, although I’m unaware of any documentation to that effect. On March 8, the Prophet received a revelation telling her to gather to Missouri (D&C 90:28–31). She apparently left in June because he addressed a letter to her in Missouri dated July 2, then residing in that state. (See Figure 1.) These two brief periods are the only times that Vienna and the Smiths lived in the same town.

Accordingly, if Nancy Alexander’s statement is true, Joseph Smith would have needed to accomplish one of two difficult tasks in

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27 Mrs. Warner Alexander, Statement, [1886?], original in Stanley B. Kimball Papers, Southern Illinois University; typescript copy in Linda King Newell Collection, MS 447, Box 11, fd. 3, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah (hereafter Newell Collection). The editorial marks \ . . . / indicate words added interlinearly.


29 The account was apparently published as an article entitled: “Mrs. Alexander’s Statement,” but the available copy is cropped, thus omitting any information about its source or date of publication. At the bottom is a handwritten name “Mrs Nancy Alexander,” A. B. Deming Papers, PAM 9687 (described as copies of pamphlets from the Chicago Historical Society), Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

30 Jerri W. Hurd, “Vienna Jacques: The Other Woman in the Doctrine and Covenants,” 2, unpublished manuscript, Newell Collection, MS 447, Box 4, fd. 1.
Figure 1. Analysis of Times of Proximity between Emma Smith and Vienna Jacques.
the span of three or four months in early 1833. He would have needed to confirm Vienna Jacques’s conversion when she arrived in Kirtland, baptize her, convince her of the appropriateness of polygamy, and immediately marry her (although the form such a sealing would take is not known), while at the same time either convincing Emma to let him have a plural wife share their home or concealing this relationship from Emma but conducting it in their home. (This option contradicts Nancy Alexander’s description of Emma as soothed by repeated “revelations.”) The second alternative is that Joseph succeeded in persuading Emma to allow him to conduct a physical relationship with Vienna (without a plural marriage ceremony) under their own roof. Neither proposal seems very likely.

In addition, the evidence supporting Joseph Smith’s personal involvement with polygamy prior to 1835 is controversial. (See discussion in the “Fanny Alger” section.) Also, as a woman possessing conservative moral values, there is little indication that Emma would ever have approved of her husband having sexual relations with a woman to whom he was not married. Emma struggled mightily in 1843–44 to accept plural marriage. All records from the Kirtland period demonstrate that she did not then believe that God-approved plural marriage had then been restored. Accordingly, she would have considered any polygamous intimacy as adultery and would not have sanctioned contact between the two as described by Nancy.

Many other problems with the account can be identified. Moreover, while Nancy Alexander and her husband apostatized, it appears that Polly Beswick Cook remained an active member of the Church throughout her life. It strains probability that she would have remained silent about this early case of polygamy after there was extreme encouragement to defend the practice after it was announced in 1852. In this situation (a known case of early polygamy), it also seems unlikely that she would have spoken of it only once and only to a woman who was not a reliable confidante. Second, if Polly considered the situation to be not polygamy but adultery, it also seems unlikely that she would have continued to accept Joseph Smith as a prophet and remain attached to his religious movement.

In either case, this allegation was apparently unknown until decades after Joseph Smith’s death. Accordingly, it would not have been

31See the discussion in my Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: History (Salt Lake City: Greg Koford Books, forthcoming), Appendix E4.
part of his public reputation during the 1830s.

**SIDNEY RIGDON’S DAUGHTERS, NANCY AND ATHALIA**

Chronologically speaking, the next allegation of sexual impropriety involves Fanny Alger. Because her case is much more substantive, I am discussing it last out of the nine and am dealing with the remaining three allegations first. In his biography *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, Richard S. Van Wagoner writes: “Gossip in Ohio’s Western Reserve linked Smith to Athalia and Nancy Rigdon, Sidney’s sixteen- and fifteen-year-old daughters.” 32 Born in 1821, Athalia would have been sixteen in 1837, and Nancy would have been fifteen. Wagoner is not explicit about the “link” but his mention of “gossip” implies a sexual connection. As documentation, Van Wagoner offers an 1884 affidavit from a man named William S. Smith 33 (no relation to Joseph) recorded March 15th, one week after the last session of the 1884 debate between Clark Braden and E. L. Kelley and included in the appendix of the published text of the debate:

Q. [Clark Braden] Is it your recollection or your impression, Mr. Smith, that you have heard of the sealing of women to men here in Kirtland, and the sealing of Nancy Rigdon to Joseph Smith? A. My impression is I have. . .

Q. [E. L. Kelley] Did you ever hear it talked of while the Saints lived here? A. I say I have heard it talked of. My impression is that I have heard it talked of here in Kirtland, and that the story obtained that the difficulty between Joseph Smith and Sydney [sic] Rigdon was in consequence of the wish or the manifestation on the part of Joseph Smith that Rigdon’s daughter Nancy should be sealed to him.

Q. Will you say that was between Joseph Smith and Rigdon, and that it was a difficulty occurred here in Kirtland. Who did you hear talk about their having trouble here in Kirtland? A. I cannot tell.

Q. Was it any of the Saints? A. I can not tell you that.

Q. Do you not know, Mr. Smith, that there was not any report of

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33Van Wagoner mistakenly lists the name as “William C. Smith” but cites a deposition from a “William S. Smith.” I have not been able to find any more information about William S. Smith. Interestingly, Nancy Maria Smith’s father was named William, but I’m quite certain they are two different people.
any such thing as that as of Nancy Rigdon being sealed to Joseph Smith while the Saints were here in Kirtland? A. My impression is that that report was here in Kirtland. I went to school with Athalia Rigdon, and there was talk among the boys about sealing. I think there was difficulty between Joseph Smith and Rigdon with reference to having Rigdon’s daughter sealed to Smith. I would not positively say it was so; that is my impression.

Q. How old was Nancy Rigdon at that time? A. I do not know; I went to school with Athalia Rigdon.

Q. How old was she? A. I cannot tell. Nor can I tell how old I was. Nancy Rigdon was the oldest. I do not know how much older than Athalia. [In fact, Athalia was older.]

Q. Did you ever hear any of them talk about sealing? A. Yes, I am positive that I heard that language used among the boys.

Q. Did they not talk about the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Is not that what you heard them talk about? A. No, the sealing was in some way or other with the women. My impression is that I have heard that story of the quarrel between Rigdon and Smith talked of here in Kirtland.

Q. Is it not probable that they were talking [about] those things after they went to Nauvoo. You got it mixed. A. It may be, but I give you my best recollection.

It appears from the transcript that Athalia Rigdon’s name came up simply because the witness, William S. Smith, had attended school with her. Accordingly, it seems that utilizing Smith’s comments to imply a “link” (sexual or otherwise) between Joseph and Athalia would be an extreme interpretation of William Smith’s admittedly shaky memory. Connecting Nancy Rigdon with Joseph is somewhat more understandable because, in Nauvoo in early 1842, Joseph Smith did propose a plural sealing to her. However, Nancy Rigdon recalled in 1884: “I never heard of such a thing in Kirtland as sealing . . . I heard about this first about the year 1842.” Accordingly, no credible evidence exists to support marriage sealings in Kirtland, so it is more probable that William S. Smith was simply confused, a possibility he freely admits.

In any case, it appears that Van Wagoner was the first to imply a “link” between Joseph and Athalia Rigdon in his 1994 biography. I have found no credible evidence establishing a relationship between

34Kelley and Braden, *Public Discussion*, 391.
Nancy Rigdon and the Prophet in Kirtland. Thus, William S. Smith’s little-known 1884 statement was not relevant to Joseph Smith’s reputation in the 1830s.

**Lucinda Pendleton Harris**

At least three authors suggest that two women were involved with Joseph Smith in Missouri, one of whom was Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris.36 (The second, Presendia Huntington Buell is discussed next.) Three pieces of evidence are available supporting the possibility that at some point she and Joseph Smith were sealed in matrimony. The first is a proxy sealing of Lucinda to Joseph Smith performed in the Nauvoo Temple on January 22, 1846.37

The second is found in a May 24, 1839, letter from Joseph to George W. Harris, in which the Prophet wrote: “I have selected a town lot for you just across the street from my own, and immediately beside yours, one for Mr. Cleveland.”38 Todd Compton sees this invitation to reside near the Smiths as “immediate evidence of a close bond,” which is undoubtedly true.39 However, that same day, Joseph Smith wrote a second letter to Judge John Cleveland and his wife, Sarah. He had never met the Clevelands but was similarly welcoming: “We have selected a lot for you, just across the street from our own, beside Mr. Harris.”40 Several months earlier, beginning on February 15, 1839, Emma Smith and her children had found refuge with the Clevelands in Quincy, Illinois, and had been grateful for their hospitality while Joseph was incarcerated in the Liberty Jail.

Third, Lucinda is included on a list compiled by Andrew Jenson (later an assistant Church historian) of twenty-seven women who were


38The letter is reprinted in *History of the Church*, 3:362, but erroneously lists the recipient as “E. W. Harris.”


sealed to the Prophet. Jenson lists her third and designates her as “one of the first women sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith.” Jenson’s personal files include a note: “Harriet Cook Young is positive that [Lucinda] was married to Joseph in Missouri.” The source of Harriet’s information is unknown; and tracing Lucinda’s name through Jenson’s various rough draft lists indicates that he vacillated about whether to include her and that Eliza R. Snow did not identify her as a wife. Further compromising Harriet’s accuracy is that she was not a Mormon during the Missouri period. Born November 7, 1824, and baptized at age seventeen on May 1, 1842, she was sealed on November 2, 1843, to Brigham Young by Joseph Smith. She was therefore a Nauvoo polygamy insider before Joseph’s death and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that either Lucinda or another knowledgeable person confided the information to her. If Harriet’s assertion was true, Lucinda’s sealing to Joseph Smith would have been the second after that of Fanny Alger. However, my study of Nauvoo polygamy suggests that no sealings were performed prior to Louisa Beaman’s in April 1841.

These three observations provide a useful argument that Joseph and Lucinda were sealed at some point although the timing is not confirmed. Despite Harriet Cook Young’s recollection, however, the most likely time and place appear to be Nauvoo in 1842. My analysis

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41 Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” Historical Record 6 (July 1887): 233–34. Thomas Milton Tinney, The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Tinney-Greene Family Organization, 1973), 41, 136, also lists Lucinda as a plural wife of the Prophet. However, Tinney may have simply been repeating Jenson’s claim.

42 “Harris,” Document 2, in Andrew Jenson Papers (ca. 1871–1942), Ms 17056, Box 49, fd. 16, LDS Church History Library. Don Bradley discovered this note in his research in Jenson’s papers. Harriet was sealed to Brigham Young on November 2, 1843, as a nineteen-year-old convert. Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Book 1:50, Ms 3423, fd. 5, LDS Church History Library.

43 Her obituary stated: “‘Aunt Harriet’, as she was commonly called, was an eccentric character, but a woman of more than ordinary intelligence.” Journal History, November 5, 1898, in Richard E. Turley Jr., ed., Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, December 2002), 2:22.

44 I discuss this issue in detail in Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: History, chaps. 8–9.
of geographical and chronological considerations further reduces
the likelihood of a marriage in Missouri. Lucinda and her second hus-
band, George Harris, were living in the new Mormon town of Far
West by 1837, date of arrival unknown. In March 1838, Joseph and his
family moved to Missouri, staying in the state until the Mormon War
broke out in October. Joseph was imprisoned the following month.
Thus, the only time available for a plural marriage was the seven
months between March and October. The History of the Church,
written in the voice of Joseph Smith, records his arrival at Far West on
March 14: “Many of the brethren came out to meet us, who also with
open arms welcomed us to their bosoms. We were immediately re-
ceived under the hospitable roof of Brother George W. Harris, who
treated us with all possible kindness, and we refreshed ourselves with
much satisfaction, after our long and tedious journey.” \(^{45}\) The Smiths
stayed with the Harris family until mid-May—over two months. Joseph
would have had to conduct his courtship, such as it was, in a cabin
crowded with two families, persuade Lucinda to accept polygamy as a
correct principle, and either conduct a sealing by unknown means or
persuade her to accept a sexual relationship that was not formalized
by a sealing—all this during that nine-week period.

On November 2, 1837, a special council of Church members
and leaders in Far West transacted several items of Church business
but had to leave unresolved “a matter between Oliver Cowdery,
Thomas B. Marsh” and the Prophet. \(^{46}\) I think that the logical topic
was Oliver’s perception of Joseph’s “immoral” relationship with
Fanny Alger. The matter remained unresolved until the Far West
High Council excommunicated Oliver Cowdery on April 12,
1838—right in the middle of the two months when the Smiths were
boarding with the Harries—for several improprieties, one of which
was accusing Joseph Smith of adultery. Given these heightened sensi-
tivities to moral questions resulting from Oliver’s accusations, it
seems highly unlikely that Joseph Smith would have selected this pe-
riod to teach such an explosive doctrine to his hostess. After May
1838, Joseph was in and out of Far West, nearly always in the company
of other priesthood leaders, and especially as tensions with the old

\(^{45}\) History of the Church, 3:8–9. See also Scott H. Faulring, ed., An Ameri-
can Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City:

\(^{46}\) History of the Church, 2:521.
Missouri settlers increased in intensity. To complicate matters, however, both Brodie and Compton use a fourth document that points to an 1838 date for a relationship that was not a plural marriage but adultery.47 This fourth piece of evidence involves a statement attributed to Sarah Pratt years after she had left the Church. In 1885 when she was sixty-seven and had been separated from her husband, Apostle Orson Pratt, for seventeen years, hypercritical author Wilhelm Wyl interviewed her. According to his account, Sarah announced: “Mrs. Harris was a married lady, a very great friend of mine. When Joseph had made his dastardly attempt on me, I went to Mrs. Harris to unburden my grief to her. To my utter astonishment she said, laughing heartily: ‘How foolish you are! I don’t see anything so horrible in it. Why I AM HIS MISTRESS SINCE FOUR YEARS!’”48 Both Brodie and Compton therefore date the relationship as occurring during March-May of 1838.

Assuming that Wyl quoted Sarah Pratt correctly, the account strikes a false note in several ways. First, Sarah Pratt claimed that the above conversation with “Mrs. Harris” occurred prior to her husband’s return from his mission to England on July 19, 1841.49 Counting back four years establishes Lucinda’s “mistress-hood” as beginning some months prior to July 1837. However, Joseph Smith did not meet Lucinda until March of 1838, when the Smith family moved permanently from Ohio to Missouri.

Second, Victorian standards in the 1830s made discussions of marital sexuality between even such intimates as mothers and daughters matter of great delicacy and reticence. Hearty claims of extramar-
ital sexual activity on the part of respectable, well-educated women are rare to the point of virtual non-existence.

Third, the need for complete secrecy about plurality in Nauvoo—both because of danger from other Church members and from outsiders—meant that Joseph’s plural wives used great care when speaking of their involvement with him. Indeed, we have no contemporary records from any of them directly acknowledging their relationship at the time they were involved in it before his death or describing their relationship until much later.⁵⁰ One might assume even greater reticence in the case of illegitimate intimacy. In fact, the avidity of the gossipy disclosures of disaffected former members like John C. Bennett provide some negative evidence of how quickly and how far first-hand accounts of unconventional sexual behavior would have spread, particularly if such behavior were attached to the Mormon prophet himself.

Fourth, the flippant tone of this alleged confession is another false note. The high councils in Kirtland, Missouri, and Nauvoo took a very serious view of sexual immorality and excommunicated participants who did not manifest serious evidence of repentance. To admit on-going adultery in the situation Sarah described would have been more than just embarrassing. It would have been a grievous moral sin and regarded as such by the community within which both women were living.

Fifth, Sarah Pratt herself had experienced a compromised reputation in the spring of 1841. Ebenezer Robinson reported: “In the spring of 1841 Dr. Bennett had a small neat house built for Elder Orson Pratt’s family [Sarah and one male child] and commenced

⁵⁰For example, Emily Dow Partridge Young’s reluctant acknowledgement that she shared Joseph’s bed on at least two occasions was forced out of her under adversarial questioning during the Temple Lot litigation in 1892. Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, pp. 371, 384, questions 480–84, 747, 751–62. The full citation is United States Circuit Court (8th Circuit) . . . The Re-organized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Complainant, vs. the Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri . . . Complainant’s Abstract of Pleading and Evidence; originals at the Eighth Circuit Court, Kansas City, Kansas; copies at the Community of Christ Archives and microfilm at LDS Church History Library; digitized copy in my possession (hereafter cited as Temple Lot Transcript). The case is in four parts; Part 2 is the complainants’ testimony and Part 3 is the respondents’ testimony.
boarding with them. Elder Pratt was absent on a mission to England.\textsuperscript{51} By mid-1842, Sarah had been excommunicated along with Orson, but with no public scandal attached to Lucinda’s name at any time, and she was sixteen years older than Sarah. Would she have chosen to “comfort” Sarah by making her a confidante?

Sixth, as witnesses, Sarah Pratt (at least as quoted by Wyl) and Wyl himself seemed willing to repeat any rumor so long as it was derogatory to Joseph Smith. When Wyl asked her about the rumor that “Joseph had eighty wives at the time of his death,” she replied: “He had many more, my dear sir; at least he had seduced many more, and those with whom he had lived without their being sealed to him, were sealed to him after his death.”\textsuperscript{52} While it is true that numerous women were sealed to Joseph Smith posthumously, no records have been found from any woman asserting that Joseph Smith seduced her. Five years before her interview with Wyl, Pratt is quoted in an anti-polygamy newspaper as saying: “An elder once said to me: ‘Sister Sarah, you are a regular Satan,’ I had been giving my views in regard to polygamy and polygamists. I answered him, there are only two classes of women in Utah, devils or fools.”\textsuperscript{53} Insightfully, Compton observes that Sarah’s recollection of Lucinda’s statement “is antagonistic, third-hand, and late.”\textsuperscript{54}

Both Sarah Pratt and Wilhelm Wyl made allegations that were demonstrably untrue. Non-Mormon writer Thomas Gregg commented about Wyl’s interviews: “The statements of the interviews must be taken for what they are worth. While many of them are corroborated elsewhere and in many ways, there are others that need verification, and some that probably exist only in the mind of the narrator.”\textsuperscript{55} When I queried Richard Bushman about his appraisal of Wyl’s accuracy, he pointed out the high level of “hearsay” and summarized: “Personally I found all the assertions about the Prophet’s promiscuity

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  \item \textsuperscript{51}Ebenezer Robinson, “Items of Personal History of the Editor,” \textit{The Return} (St. Louis), 1, no. 11 (November 1890): 362.
  \item \textsuperscript{52}Wyl, \textit{Mormon Portraits}, 54.
  \item \textsuperscript{53}Athena [pseud.], “The Women of Utah,” \textit{Anti-Polygamy Standard 1} (June 1880), 18. Quoted in Jennie Anderson Froiseth, \textit{The Women of Mormonism; Or, the Story of Polygamy As Told by the Victims Themselves} (Detroit, Mich.: C. G. G. Paine, 1882), 40.
  \item \textsuperscript{54}Compton, \textit{In Sacred Loneliness}, 650.
  \item \textsuperscript{55}Thomas Gregg, \textit{The Prophet of Palmyra: Mormonism Reviewed and Ex-
pretty feeble. Nothing there [was] worth contending with.\textsuperscript{56}

However, regardless of its problems of credibility, it does not appear that Sarah Pratt’s claim affected the Prophet during his lifetime. Current research confirms that it was unknown during the 1830s. Probably Wyl in his 1886 book was the first to make the allegation.

**PRESENDIA HUNTINGTON BUELL**

Fawn Brodie also accuses Joseph Smith of fathering a child in 1839 (with or without a prior marriage ceremony) with Presendia Huntington Buell, then the wife of Norman Buell, a sometime Mormon.\textsuperscript{57} Brodie asserts that Oliver Norman Buell, born January 31, 1840, was Joseph’s son:

The extreme informality attending Joseph’s earliest marriages (at least as it appears in the available records) is even more evident in the story of the prophet’s relationship with Presendia Huntington Buell. During the Missouri troubles of 1838–39 her husband, Norman Buell, temporarily left the church. About this time Presendia bore a son. She admitted later that she did not know whether Norman Buell or the prophet was the father. But the physiognomy revealed in a rare photograph of Oliver Buell seems to weight the balance overwhelmingly on the side of Joseph’s paternity.\textsuperscript{59}

It is true that the photographs Brodie displays show a resemblance between Oliver Norman Buell and some of the sons of Joseph

\textit{amined in the Life, Character, and Career of its Founder} (New York: John B. Alden, 1890), 504.

\textsuperscript{56}Richard L. Bushman, Email to Brian Hales, August 23, 2007.


\textsuperscript{58}Presenda Huntington was sealed to Joseph Smith on December 11, 1841. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:19.

\textsuperscript{59}Brodie, \textit{No Man Knows My History}, 301–2.
Compton observes: “It would help to have pictures of Norman Buell and George Buell [another son of Presendia] to see if there were family resemblances there.” Despite the obviously subjective nature of a photographic resemblance to Joseph Smith (of whom no photograph and few other contemporary images exist), Brodie was so confident that Joseph Smith was Oliver’s biological father that she wrote to fellow historian Dale Morgan in 1945: “If Oliver Buell isn’t a Smith, then I’m no Brimhall.”

However, significant problems exist that undercut the credibility of this assertion. Presendia’s “admission” that she did not know who fathered her child is both third-hand and indirect. Mary Ettie V. Smith (b. 1827) was the sister of Howard Coray, who served as a clerk to Joseph Smith. The Coray family were converted in Perry, Pike County, Illinois, in 1840 and moved to Nauvoo. Ettie wrote in 1860: “I heard the latter woman [Presendia] say afterwards in Utah, that she did not know whether Mr. Buel [sic] or the Prophet was the father of her son.” She says that she heard this information directly from Presendia; but like Lucinda Harris’s alleged boast to Sarah Pratt, such a statement would be surprising in the context of the time. Issues regarding sexuality or implied sexuality were seldom voiced, especially to strangers. Compton writes skeptically: “One wonders if Presendia would have said such a thing. Talk of sexuality was avoided by the Victorian, puritanical Mormons; in diaries, the word ‘pregnant’ or ‘ex-

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60Ibid., two photos immediately preceding p. 299.


62Fawn Brodie, Letter to Dale Morgan, March 24, 1945, quoted in Newell G. Bringhurst, Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer’s Life (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 97. Fawn Brodie’s mother’s surname was Brimhall. Morgan responded skeptically: “Your chain of reasoning looks logical, but it is attended by a string of ifs all along the line . . . and the probability of error increases as the chain of reasoning lengthens.” Ibid. See also Compton, “Fawn Brodie on Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives and Polygamy,” 166.

pecting’ is never or rarely used.” In addition, there is nothing in Presendia’s writings or history to support an intimate friendship with Mary Ettie where such a conversation might naturally occur. Stanley S. Ivins, arguably the most extensive researcher on early Mormon polygamy, dismissed Mary Ettie V. Smith’s report as “inaccurate and of no value.” Similarly, anti-Mormon writer Fanny Stenhouse described Ettie Smith in 1875 as “a lady who wrote very many years ago and in her writings, so mixed up fiction with what was true, that it was difficult to determine where the one ended and the other began.”

As an example of Mary Ettie’s confusion, only ten pages later she states that Presendia Buell became pregnant with Joseph Smith’s child while she was living “at Lima, Illinois.” If she is remembering this detail correctly, then the son Presendia allegedly referred to could only have been Oliver’s younger brother, John Hyrum, born July 13, 1843, at Lima, Illinois, three years after Presendia and Norman left Missouri.

Born January 31, 1840, Oliver would have been conceived approximately May 10, 1839. The chronology and geographical locations of Joseph and Presendia pose important problems with Brodie’s assertions. Joseph Smith’s Missouri jailors allowed him to escape on April 16, 1839. At that time he was about twenty-five miles southeast of Adam-ondi-Ahman, traveling with a sheriff and deputies to-

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64 Compton, “Fawn Brodie on Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives and Polygamy,” 166.
65 Stanley S. Ivins, Notebook 4, p. 63, Ivins Collection, Utah State Historical Society.
66 Fanny Stenhouse, “Tell It All”: The Story of a Life’s Experiences in Mormonism (Hartford, Conn.: A. D. Worthington & Co., 1875), 618.
67 Green, Fifteen Years among the Mormons, 45.
68 B. H. Roberts adds a footnote in History of the Church, 3:321, quoting Hyrum Smith, Affidavit, made before the municipal court of Nauvoo, July 1, 1843: “There we bought a jug of whisky, with which we treated the company, and while there the sheriff showed us the mittimus before referred to, without date or signature, and said that Judge Birch told him never to carry us to Boone county, and never to show the mittimus; and, said he, I shall take a good drink of grog, and go to bed, and you may do as you have a mind to. Three others of the guards drank pretty freely of the whisky, sweetened with honey. They also went to bed, and were soon asleep and the other guard went along with us, and helped to saddle the horses. Two of us
ward Boone County in central Missouri. Brodie writes incorrectly: "Joseph’s journal entries make it clear that after his escape he was mingling with the last Mormon group to leave Far West, which included the Huntington family." In fact, Joseph Smith’s journals contain no entries for the April 16–22 period.

Inaccurately, Brodie assumes that immediately after gaining his freedom, Joseph went west (not east to Illinois) through the Missouri countryside to join Church members at Far West. As an escaped prisoner, he was risking his freedom and his life. The previous fall, Mormons had been slain at the Battle of Crooked River and Haun’s Mill. Others had been beaten with clubs and whipped. Neither is there evidence that Presendia was in Far West at that time. Regardless, according to Brodie, the Prophet allegedly fathered her child (with or without a marriage ceremony). According to Brodie’s reconstruction of the events, Joseph then backtracked to flee from the state, arriving in Quincy on April 22. Brodie’s timetable also assumes that Oliver was two to three weeks premature at birth.

Furthermore, Joseph was not traveling alone. The History of the Church records for April 17, 1839: “We prosecuted our journey towards Illinois, keeping off from the main road as much as possible, which impeded our progress.” Hyrum Smith recalled that upon escaping: “Two of us mounted the horses, and the other three started on foot, and we took our change of venue for the State of Illinois; and in the course of nine or ten days arrived safely at Quincy, Adams county, where we found our families in a state of poverty, although in good health.”

For the rest of April and May 1839, Joseph remained in Illinois, while Presendia lived at Fishing River, in Ray County, Missouri, over 100 miles away. At that point, Norman Buell was no longer affiliated with the Church and operated a carding mill on Fishing River until

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69Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 461–62.
70Jessee, The Papers of Joseph Smith, 2:318; Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 229, 234.
71History of the Church, 3:322.
72Hyrum Smith, Affidavit, July 1, 1843, in History of the Church, 3:321 footnote.
the fall of 1840.\textsuperscript{73} After critiquing Fawn Brodie’s assessment of Oliver’s conception, Todd Compton concludes: “Every link in Brodie’s position that Oliver Buell was Joseph Smith’s son is implausible, improbable, or impossible. There is no good evidence that Oliver Buell was the son of Joseph Smith, and thus there is no good evidence that Joseph had an affair with Presendia Buell before he married her in 1841.”\textsuperscript{74}

And conclusively, in 2007 genetics researcher Ugo Perego performed DNA testing on descendants of Oliver N. Buell, demonstrating a 57.5 percent disparity between the DNA loci of Joseph Smith and Oliver’s male descendants on the Y-chromosome. This lack of correlation shows conclusively that Joseph Smith could not have been Oliver Norman Buell’s father.\textsuperscript{75} Taken together, this evidence supports the conclusion that there is virtually no likelihood that Joseph Smith was involved with Presendia in 1839.

**FANNY ALGER**

Undoubtedly the most important of the nine allegations listed above is Joseph Smith’s relationship with Fanny Alger. Born in September 20, 1816, Fanny Alger was one of ten children born to Samuel Alger and Clarissa Hancock Alger. As a result of my evaluation of the evidence, I have concluded that Fanny was, in fact, the first plural wife of Joseph Smith and the only authorized polygamous relationship contracted during the Kirtland period by any Church member. Also I believe that very few people at the time were apprised of the details of the plural marriage, thus setting the stage for the spread of rumors that labeled the association as adultery.

Current research has identified twenty documents that refer to Joseph Smith’s relationship with Fanny Alger in some way.\textsuperscript{76} The numbered list below is arranged from the earliest reference to the latest, providing a brief summary of the writer or speaker’s position (dis-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73}Brodie, \textit{No Man Knows My History}, 461–62.
\item \textsuperscript{74}Compton, “Fawn Brodie on Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives and Polygamy,” 171.
\item \textsuperscript{76}I have eliminated from consideration a late nineteenth-century statement by Alfred Holbrook (b. 1816), an accomplished educator who ap-
cussed more fully below), and a complete citation.

1. Oliver Cowdery (January 21, 1838). Oliver did not believe that the relationship was a divinely ordained plural marriage, referring to it in tones of disgust as “a dirty, nasty, filthy affair.” Letter to Warren Cowdery, January 21, 1838, Oliver Cowdery Letterbook, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

2. Ebenezer Robinson (April 12, 1838), clerk in Far West, recorded a high council meeting in which Joseph Smith explained, apparently to the council’s full satisfaction, a charge of “girl business,” probably an accusation of adultery. “Polygamy,” “plural marriage,” or “spiritual wifery” do not appear in the minutes. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 167–68.

3. Joseph Smith (July 1838) included several statements designed to rebut rumors of adultery. The untitled article does not mention polygamy. Elder’s Journal 1, no. 3 (July 1838): 45.

4. Fanny Brewer (1842) was quoted as denouncing “unlawful intercourse” between Joseph and a young girl. Although her statement has become a standard reference on Kirtland polygamy, she alleges adultery, not plural marriage. She is quoted in John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), 85.

5. William McLellin (1872). Writing to Joseph Smith III, McLellin quotes Frederick G. Williams and Emma Smith as evidence that Joseph was involved with “a hired girl” named “Miss Hill” and with Fanny Alger “in a barn.” It is not clear whether he is describing one or two relationships. Letter to Joseph Smith III, July 1872, Com-
munity of Christ Archives.

6. William McLellin (1875) mentions a single relationship in which Joseph Smith was “sealed to a hired girl . . . in a barn.” Quoted by J. H. Beadle, “Jackson County,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 6, 1875, 4.

7. Martin Harris (1875) mentioned neither polygamy nor adultery, but “improper proposals” that Joseph made to “a servant girl.” Quoted in Anthony Metcalf, *Ten Years before the Mast* (Malad, Ida.: Metcalf, 1888), 72.


9. Eliza Jane Churchill Webb (April 1876) was Ann Eliza’s mother. Fanny Alger reportedly lived with the family for a few weeks after leaving the Smith home. Eliza and Chauncy consistently referred to the relationship as a “sealing” and did not mention adultery. Eliza J. Webb [Eliza Jane Churchill Webb], Lockport, New York, to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876, P21, f11, item 7, 8, Community of Christ Archives.

10. Eliza Jane Churchill Webb (May 1876). Eliza Jane repeated the same general information in writing to Mary Bond, May 4, 1876, P21, f11, item 9, Community of Christ Archives.

11. Historicus [pseud.]. This is the first published mention of Fanny Alger by name. The source of information may have been William McLellin, who died in 1883. “Sketches from the History of Polygamy: Joseph Smith’s [indecipherable] Revelations,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard* 2, no. 1 (April 1881): 1.

12. Clark Braden (1884), born in 1831, had no first-hand knowledge of his allegations and was motivated by polemical considerations and attracting publicity through sensational tactics. E. L. Kelley, and Clark Braden, *Public Discussion of the Issues between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples)* (St. Louis: Clark Braden, 1884), 202.

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77 Thanks to Ronald E. Romig and the Community of Christ Archives for locating the full transcript of these letters.

14. Alfred Holbrook (1885), who settled in the Kirtland area in 1837, would not have had firsthand knowledge of the events before that date. Reminiscences of the Happy Life of a Teacher (Cincinnati, Ohio: Elm Street Printing, 1885), 223–24.

15. Chauncy Webb (1886) spoke of a “sealing” that may have resulted in Fanny’s pregnancy. Quoted in Wilhelm von Wyl [pseud. for Wilhelm Ritter Von Wymetal], Mormon Portraits: or Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family and His Friends: A Study Based on Facts and Documents (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Company, 1886), 57.

16. Andrew Jenson (before 1887), listed Fanny Alger as “one of the first wives Joseph married” on a biographical sheet titled “Alger, Fanny.” He does not identify his source. Document 10, n.d. [probably February-March 1887], Andrew Jenson Papers (ca. 1871–1942), MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16, LDS Church History Library.

17. Eliza R. Snow (before 1887), at Andrew Jenson’s invitation, identified Joseph Smith’s plural wives, among them Fanny Alger. Document 1, Andrew Jenson Papers (ca. 1871–1942), MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16, LDS Church History Library.

18. Andrew Jenson (July 1887) wrote: “Fanny Alger, one of the first plural wives sealed to the Prophet” for the first time in a Mormon periodical. He did not, however, give a date so few members may have dated it to the Kirtland period. Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” Historical Record 6 (July 1887): 233.

19. Mosiah Hancock (1896) provides details of a marriage ceremony, doubtless quoting his father since Mosiah was born in 1834. Mosiah Hancock, Autobiographical sketch, 1896, LDS Church History Library.


An analysis of the various narratives shows that none is contemporary with 1835; thirteen were written at least thirty-seven years af-
ter the events occurred; ten of the accounts are second-hand. Seven considered the relationship a plural marriage or sealing: Mosiah Hancock, the three Webbs (Chauncy, Eliza Jane, and Ann Eliza), John Hawley, Benjamin F. Johnson, and Andrew Jenson. Five considered it to be adultery: Oliver Cowdery, Fanny Brewer, William McLellin, Clark Braden, and “Historicus.”

**The Eliza R. Snow Document**

Perhaps the most important new evidence to emerge is Eliza R. Snow’s unequivocal inclusion of Fanny Alger among Joseph Smith’s plural wives. Through the recent efforts of historians researching the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a large collection of previously uncataloged documents at the LDS Church History Library was made available for investigation. As a result, Don Bradley obtained access to a folder containing Andrew Jenson’s research notes, which he used to write “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 6:219–40. Don has concluded that, as part of Jenson’s own research, he first approached Malissa Lott and obtained information on thirteen of Joseph Smith’s plural wives, writing their names on Document 1. He met with Eliza R. Snow who apparently took the paper into her own hands and penned thirteen additional names. Eliza’s handwriting has many distinctive features and historian Jill Mulvay Derr, an expert on Eliza R. Snow, reviewed the document and concluded that the thirteen names have “every indication” of being penned personally by Eliza. Clearly they are not in Andrew Jenson’s handwriting. A second document in the collection dealing with Fanny Alger reads:

**Alger, Fanny**

Joseph Smith’s wife

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79 Documents 1–18, Andrew Jenson Papers, ca. 1871–1942, MS 17956, Box 49, f.d. 16, LDS Church History Library.

80 On July 25, 2008, Don Bradley, Jill Mulvay Derr, and I met at the LDS Church History Library to evaluate the documents where she made the comment; quoted by permission.
one of the first wives Joseph
married, Emma made such a
fuss about in
Sister E.R. Snow was well acquainted
with her as she and
lived with the
Prophet at the time 81

Bradley explains the significance of this information: (1) Not
only did Snow actively participate in identifying Joseph Smith’s plural
wives but she may have served as Jenson’s sole source on Fanny Alger.
Indeed, Jenson’s notes mention no second source, and the uniformity
of his handwriting suggests that he produced the document at a sin-
gle sitting. (2) Eliza was unquestionably knowledgeable, since she had
lived in the Smith home during or near the time of Joseph’s polyga-
mous relationship with Fanny and when Emma expelled her. (3)
Snow’s testimony as a contemporary witness helps to break the schol-
arily deadlock about whether Joseph and Fanny were actually married
as opposed to having an affair. If Snow had had any doubts whether
the relationship was a marriage, she could simply have remained si-
ent. It also demolishes the position, held by relatively few, that they
had no relationship. (4) Snow remembered that Emma “made such a
fuss” about it (for unknown reasons these words were crossed out pre-
sumably by Jenson), a reaction consistent with Emma’s response to
later relationships, including Snow’s own plural sealing to Joseph. 82
He summarizes: “Eliza’s late, but firsthand and friendly, testimony
concurs on this point with Oliver Cowdery’s hostile but roughly con-
temporary statements. When intimate friend and intimate foe

81 An unquoted portion of Jenson’s notes (Document 10) suggests
that Eliza knew of Fanny’s later marriage and children, and also knew of “a
brother Alger” in St. George.

82 Probably because of Emma’s outrage over the sealing, Fanny left
Kirtland with her family in 1836 but disaffiliated with Mormonism and
married another man on November 16, 1836. Jenson did not publish Eliza’s
information about Emma’s “fuss” over Fanny. He also referred to the rela-
tionship as a “sealing,” rather than a “marriage,” a pattern he followed
when he was aware that the woman was legally married to someone else
during Joseph’s lifetime. He also misrepresented Fanny as “a wife of Joseph
the Prophet, who since his death married again in Indiana.” Andrew
Jenson, “Church Encyclopaedia,” Historical Record 8 (December 1889): 942.
agree on the basic facts of Joseph Smith’s behavior, we have reason to trust their accuracy.”

More than One Woman Involved?

Some researchers have observed inconsistency in details, suggesting that the various accounts describe more than one relationship. William McLellin’s 1872 letter to Joseph Smith III reported an 1847 visit to wife, Emma Smith and “a lengthy conversation with her . . . in the Mansion House.”

I did not ask her to tell, but I told her some stories I had heard. And she told me whether I was properly informed. Dr. F. G. Williams practiced with me in Clay Co. Mo. during the latter part of 1838. And he told me that at your birth your father committed an act with a Miss Hill—a hired girl. Emma saw him, and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was true!! Again I told her I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!! She told me this story too was verily true.

McLellin appears to be telling about two separate episodes of marital infidelity, one with Fanny Alger and a second with a “Miss Hill.” However, four points suggest that McLellin was telling only one story and simply became confused in his attempt to persuade Joseph’s son that his father had violated his marriage vows. First, Richard Lloyd Anderson states: “I cannot find a possible ‘Miss Hill’ in

83 Don Bradley, Analysis of Documents 1–18, Andrew Jenson Papers MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16; copy in my possession; used by permission.
Kirtland, nor is there any verification of the story."86 I have also
found no additional evidence that Joseph Smith had a relationship
with a woman named “Hill” at any time during his lifetime including
the years spent in Kirtland.

Second, according to McLellin, Emma saw Joseph with both
“Miss Hill” and “Fanny.” It seems unlikely that, after once repenting
“humbly” and being forgiven for a first relationship, Joseph would
have soon engaged in the same behavior with a second woman and
been discovered in the exact same manner.

Third, as the quoted passage indicates, McLellin reports that Jo-
seph met Fanny Alger “in a barn.” Three years after this letter was
written, a sensationalist newspaperman, J. H. Beadle, interviewed
McLellin on September 25, 1875. Beadle reported: “He [McLellin]
also informed me of the spot where the first well authenticated case
of polygamy took place, in which Joseph Smith was ‘sealed’ to the
hired girl. The ‘sealing’ took place in a barn on the hay mow, and was
witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door.”87 The story
that McLellin, who was then seventy-nine, was told of a single woman:
a “hired girl” (like “Miss Hill”) who met Joseph “in a barn” (like Fanny
Alger).88 Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery hypothesize
that the aging McLellin “confused the hired girl, Fanny Alger, with
Fanny Hill of John Cleland’s sensational 1749 novel and came up with
the hired girl, Miss Hill.”89

Fourth, if McLellin had information on more than one alleged
sexual impropriety, it seems likely that he would have shared it in
other venues than one single confusing reference in his private 1872
letter. Beadle, for example, would have welcomed two examples of

photocopy of letter in Scott H. Faulring Papers, Box 93, fds. 1–3 (accn
#2316), Marriott Library.

87J[ohn]. H[anson]. Beadle, “Jackson County,” Salt Lake Tribune, Oc-
tober 6, 1875, 4. McLellin also told Beadle that, when he visited Emma in
1847, “she then and there declared on her honor that it was a fact—‘saw it
with her own eyes.’”

88Beadle, “Jackson County,” 4. Five years earlier, Beadle had pub-
lished the lurid exposé Life in Utah: Or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism

89Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Mormon Enigma:
Emma Hale Smith (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1984), 66.
Kirtland-period polygamy.

After evaluating all available evidence, I conclude that Joseph Smith had a relationship with a single woman (Fanny Alger) in Kirtland in the mid-1830s. The variations in the documents are not unexpected.

Why Fanny Alger?

Two closely linked questions must be considered: Why any relation with a woman other than his wife, and, in that case, why Fanny Alger? To consider the second question first, proximity may have played a role. She was close to the family, working as a hired girl, and reportedly young and attractive. However, Joseph may have considered other possibilities as well. Benjamin F. Johnson, in his late reminiscence, stated: “In talking with my mother . . . [Joseph Smith] told her that when the Lord required him to move in plural marriage, that his first thought was to come and ask her for some of her daughters; and I can now understand that the period alluded to was at Kirtland, where she had three unmarried daughters at home.”

Dating the Relationship

Due to inadequacies in the documentary records, historians have assigned the marriage or relationship between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger to several different years. Three scholars have suggested 1833 or perhaps even earlier. Martin Harris, in a second-hand account from an 1875 interview, dates it “in or about the

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91 Van Wagoner, “Joseph and Marriage,” 32–33. See also the summary in Compton, “Truth, Honesty and Moderation in Mormon History, section “The Date of Fanny Alger’s Marriage.”
92 George D. Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy: “. . . but we called it celestial marriage” (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 22, 38, 222; Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, 33; D. Michael Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 45, 587. Bushman, Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, 323, suggests that Joseph’s involvement with Fanny Alger might have been “as early as 1831” but does not document the statement.
year 1833.” William McLellin linked the episode to Joseph Smith III’s birth, which occurred on November 6, 1832. Probably the strongest evidence for an 1833 marriage is circumstantial. Mosiah Hancock’s autobiographical sketch written in 1896 reports that, sometime in the early 1830s, Joseph told Mosiah’s father, Levi: “I want to make a bargain with you. If you will get Fanny Alger for me for a wife you may have Clarissa Reed.” Levi Hancock married Clarissa Reed on March 29, 1833. Todd Compton hypothesizes that the two marriages occurred close to each other, with Joseph’s marriage to Fanny taking place “in February or March 1833.”

Other writers date the marriage to the 1835–36 period, which agrees with my research. Marquardt dates this relationship “prior to the fall of 1836.” In an October 19, 1995, letter to Gary J. Bergera, Marquardt also observed: “Concerning Fanny Alger I have compiled some material relating to what has been said concerning her and Joseph Smith. . . . It appears that whatever occurred with Fanny Alger probably happened in the year 1836 with Fanny leaving Kirtland, Ohio. This year is closer to the events relating to Oliver Cowdery since Cowdery had discussed the matter with Joseph Smith and others in

93Martin Harris, quoted in Metcalf, Ten Years before the Mast, 72.
the summer and fall of 1837. In a 1903 letter, the sixty-nine-year-old Benjamin F. Johnson dated the marriage to 1835. After Fanny Alger left the Smith home, she reportedly stayed with Chauncy Webb and Eliza Jane Churchill Webb (Ann Eliza Webb Young’s parents). Eliza Jane wrote to a correspondent: “Fanny Alger’s mother says Fanny was sealed to Joseph by Oliver Cowdery in Kirtland in 1835—or 6.” Mary Elizabeth Rollins at age eighty-six stated that Joseph told her an angel came three times commanding him to practice polygamy. The first of these visits according to Mary Elizabeth occurred in 1834: “[Joseph Smith] said God gave him a commandment in 1834, to take other wives besides Emma.” Richard Van Wagoner asserts that it was not until 1835 that Fanny became the Smiths’ hired girl and

97 Marquardt, The Rise of Mormonism: 1816–1844, 451; H. Michael Marquardt, Letter to Gary J. Bergera, October 19, 1885, in H. Michael Marquardt Collection, Marriott Library, University of Utah; photocopy of letter in my possession; used by permission.
98 Zimmerman, I Knew the Prophets, 38–39.
99 Eliza Jane Churchill Webb, Letter to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876, Myron H. Bond Collection, P21 f11, Community of Christ Library-Archives.
100 Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Letter to A. M. Chase, April 20, 1904, quoted in J. D. Stead, Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed (Lamoni, Iowa: RLDS Church, 1911), 217–18. See also Lightner, “Remarks, April 14, 1905, Brigham Young University,” MSS 363, fd. 6, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (hereafter Perry Special Collections). Lightner also wrote: “[Joseph Smith] said I was the first woman God commanded him to take as a plural wife in 1834. He was very much frightened about [it] until the angel appeared to him three times.” Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Letter to Emmeline B. Wells, Summer 1905, typescript, MS 282, LDS Church History Library. On another occasion, she recalled: “In 1834 [Joseph Smith] was commanded to take me for a wife. I was a thousand miles from him. He got afraid.” Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, “Statement, signed February 8, 1902,” original owned by Mrs. Nell Osborne, Salt Lake City, photocopy of typescript in Juanita Brooks Papers, MSB 103, Box 16, fd. 13, Utah State Historical Society; photocopy also in Vesta Crawford Papers, MS 125, Box 1, fd. 11, Marriott Library, University of Utah.
lived in the Smith home. Mark Lyman Staker informally constructs this scenario:

Mary Johnson [daughter of John and Alice [Elsa] Johnson, born in 1818] lived in the Smith home (Whitney Store) to provide assistance to Emma. She died March 30, 1833. Her death was unexpected and shook up the family. I believe Fanny Alger replaced Mary as household help for Emma. If that’s the case, it is unlikely Fanny lived with the family while they were living at the store, and it is unlikely she assisted them before mid-1833. She most likely assisted between 1834 and 1836, in their home up near the temple. After that, Eliza R. Snow moved into the house on the hill and taught school for Joseph’s children in the rear portion of the home.

Joseph and Emma were living with other families in very cramped quarters until mid-1834 when they finally obtained their own residence. It seems next to impossible for Joseph and Fanny to have concealed a sexual relationship (plural marriage) from Emma, especially for as long as three years (which would be required by a marriage date of 1833 or earlier), and strongly improbable that Emma Smith would have tolerated such a relationship had she known about it. Available evidence suggests that as soon as Emma found out about the marriage, she sent Fanny out of the house.

Marriage or Affair?

Benjamin F. Johnson, a close friend of Joseph Smith from the Kirtland period on, recalled in 1903:

And now as to your question, “How early did the Prophet Joseph practice polygamy?” . . . In 1835, at Kirtland, I learned from my sister’s husband, Lyman R. Sherman, who was close to the Prophet, and received it from him, “that the ancient order of Plural Marriage was again to be practiced by the Church.” This, at the time did


102 Mark L. Staker, Email to Brian Hales, September 9, 2008.

103 Sherman was called by Joseph Smith as an apostle but died before learning of the calling. See Lyndon W. Cook, “Lyman Sherman—Man of
not impress my mind deeply, although there lived then with his family (the Prophet’s) a neighbor’s daughter, Fannie Alger, a very nice and comely young woman about my own age, toward whom not only myself, but every one, seemed partial, for the amiability for her character; and it was whispered even then that Joseph loved her.}

According to Mosiah Hancock, writing in 1896, Joseph did not approach Fanny directly. Rather, he enlisted Levi Hancock, the brother-in-law of Fanny’s father, to serve as an intermediary. Levi asked Samuel Alger:

“Samuel, the Prophet Joseph loves your daughter Fanny and wishes her for a wife. What say you?” Uncle Sam says, “Go and talk to the old woman [Levi’s sister and Fanny’s mother] about it. Twill be as she says.” Father goes to his sister and said, “Clarissy, Brother Joseph the Prophet of the most high God loves Fanny and wishes her for a wife. What say you?” Said she, “Go and talk to Fanny. It will be all right with me.” Father goes to Fanny and said, “Fanny, Brother Joseph the Prophet loves you and wishes you for a wife. Will you be his wife?” “I will Levi,” said she. Father takes Fanny to Joseph and said, “Brother Joseph I have been successful in my mission.” Father gave her to Jo-

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104 Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets*, 38; punctuation and spelling standardized.

105 A seemingly irresolvable question involves Fanny Alger’s understanding of her relationship with the Joseph Smith. No historical data have been discovered providing her views. Even if a marriage ceremony was performed, did she understand any of the underlying doctrines concerning polygamy as later taught in Nauvoo? It seems unlikely that discussions of eternal sealings, the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, or a patriarchal priesthood order would have accompanied her introduction to plural marriage. Such doctrines were not disclosed until 1840. Was her willingness to proceed primarily based upon her faith in Joseph’s prophetic calling? What role did her understanding that Old Testament plural marriage and the possible need to restore it play? Did Fanny receive a spiritual conversion experience, like those described by many women later in Nauvoo? What role, if any, did attraction play in forming the union? Did Joseph Smith tell Fanny about the angelic command? Perhaps additional manuscript documentation will be discovered in the future to help discern the details of this relationship.
seph, repeating the ceremony as Joseph repeated to him.106

Several authors have written that there was no marriage, thus dismissing this narrative as apocryphal. Historian Janet Ellingson considers the Mosiah Hancock account to be “a bit much to swallow.” She apparently considers Joseph and Fanny’s relationship as a sexual liaison: “There is no contemporary evidence, in either Smith’s words or actions, that he thought of it as a marriage.”107 Technically this is true, because no “contemporary evidence” of any kind exists “in either Smith’s words or actions” concerning the incident. In fact, nothing is recorded referring to the relationship until 1838. However, the

106Levi Ward Hancock, “Autobiography with Additions in 1896 by Mosiah Hancock,” 63, MS 570, LDS Church History Library, punctuation and spelling standardized; cited portion written by Mosiah. Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, 32. I am indebted to Compton who discovered that both published versions of the journal are incomplete, having had all references to the Fanny Alger marriage removed. These published versions are The Mosiah Hancock Journal (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, n.d.), 74 pp., and The Levi Hancock Journal (N.p., n.d.), 58 pp. See also Compton, “Fanny Alger Smith Custer: Mormonism’s First Plural Wife?” 175 note 3. Mosiah Hancock, “Correspondence: The Prophet Joseph—Some of His Sayings,” Deseret News, February 27, 1884, 15, wrote: “Concerning the doctrine of celestial marriage the Prophet told my father [Levi] in the days of Kirtland, that it was the will of the Lord for His servants who were faithful to step forth in that order. But said Brother Joseph, ‘Brother Levi, if I should make known to my brethren what God has made known to me they would seek my life.’”

107Janet Ellingson, “Alger Marriage Questioned,” Letter, Journal of Mormon History 23 (Spring 1997), vi–vii. Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 181–82, and Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, 4, 13, also consider the story apocryphal and dismiss the possibility that a form of marriage occurred. Interestingly, Van Wagoner provided this commentary: “If one views Joseph Smith’s introduction of polygamy as a reversion to Old Testament practice rather than an expansion of Christianity, then it is not so shocking to consider the possibility of no formal ceremony being performed for the women prior to Louisa Beeman. No where in the Old Testament is a marriage ceremony mentioned. The custom seemed to be that after an initial contract between the two parties, the husband-to-be, merely ‘took her according to the Law of Moses and of Israel.’” Richard Van Wagoner, Letter to Newell, n.d., Box 11, fd. 4, Linda King Newell Collection, Marriott Library. The interior quotation does not occur in this form anywhere in the Old Testament.
lack of contemporary evidence from Joseph Smith does not support either interpretation.

Ellingson also comments, “In later nineteenth-century Utah, the Hancock and Alger families had everything to gain by remembering and promoting Fanny’s relationship with Smith as a celestial polygamous marriage.”108 Again, this is probably true during the Utah period. But if there was no marriage in 1835, it seems unlikely that Fanny’s parents, who apparently understood what was happening, would have continued to follow the Prophet in view of such obviously hypocritical behavior. According to Eliza Jane Churchill Webb, Fanny’s mother told her: “Fanny was sealed to Joseph.”109 Supporting the idea that they continued to accept Joseph as prophet, they left for Missouri in September 1836, accompanied by Fanny.110 Two months later in Wayne County, Indiana, Fanny married Solomon Custer on November 16.111 Todd Compton comments: “One can only speculate on Fanny’s motives for marrying a non-Mormon, after a courtship
that could have only been a matter of weeks. Perhaps she felt that Smith had abandoned her after Emma ejected her from the household. It is also possible that she simply fell in love with Solomon, who, unlike Smith, was her own age—nineteen.”

Fanny stayed in Wayne County and raised a large family, while her parents and at least one brother, John, continued on to Missouri, then followed the body of the Saints to Nauvoo in 1839. They also joined the migration west in 1846, and settled in southern Utah where they died in the 1870s.

This course would be less likely if Joseph had violated his own publicly declared standards of sexual morality with their daughter. Nothing in Joseph's behavior with their daughter seemed to weaken the Algers' faith in the restoration. To the contrary, according to Ann Eliza Webb Young, Fanny's parents considered “it the highest honor to have their daughter adopted into the Prophet's family, and her mother has always claimed that she was sealed to Joseph.” Furthermore, Benjamin F. Johnson recalled that Apostle Heber C. Kimball introduced Fanny's brother, John, as

more than a year: “Soon after the Prophet's flight in [the] winter of 1837 and 1838 [actually January 1838], the Alger family left for the west and stopping in Indiana for a time, Fanny soon married one of the citizens there.”


Ibid., 37, 40.

Young, *Wife Number 19*, 67; see also Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” 232. Susa Young Gates reports as a family tradition: “Father and the Twelve Apostles felt the death of the Prophet far more keenly than did the people; and as we believe that children are a part of the glory we inherit hereafter, it seemed a cruel thing that the beloved leader and Prophet should be stricken down in the prime of life, and left without issue in this Church. Father went to those noble women who had accepted the principle of celestial marriage with the Prophet as their husband, and he told them he and his brethren stood ready to offer themselves to them as husbands for time, and the widows might choose for themselves. Four of these young widows chose father, and he accepted the charge thus laid upon him. He felt the grand old Hebrew impulse, to be himself the instrument by which posterity for his dead brother might be born in this life.” “Joseph Smith 'Left Without Issue in this Church,'” typescript, Susa Young Gates Collection, MS 8884, LDS Church History Library; microfilm of holograph, Utah State Historical Society, Reel 9, box 12, fd. 2. An Alger family tradition states: “Brigham
“brother of the Prophet Joseph’s first Plural wife.” Johnson’s memory is faulty in that the introduction reportedly occurred “in the Saint George Temple,” since Kimball died before it was completed.

As for Fanny herself, according to Benjamin Johnson, “She did not turn from the Church nor from her friendship for the Prophet while she lived.” Late in life she reportedly rebuffed questions about her relationship with Joseph Smith: “That is all a matter of my own, and I have nothing to communicate.” Johnson does not explain the source of his information. Research supports that she joined the Universalist Church in 1874 and remained a member until her death in 1889.

The Mosiah Hancock narrative is not without its problems. He was born in 1834 and consequently could not have been an eye witness or participant. Furthermore, he recounted the story decades later in 1896. Todd Compton provides this useful assessment: “Mosiah’s first-hand reminiscences are admittedly subject to the strengths and weaknesses generally found in Mormon and other autobiographies: inaccuracies in dates, misremembered events, an easy willingness to accept the miraculous, and a tendency to overidealize oneself or a hero such as Joseph Smith. Nevertheless, I accept it as generally reliable, providing accurate information about his own life, his family’s life, and

Young, accompanied by Fanny’s brother, John Alger, did come to Indiana, before Fanny married Solomon Custer, to ask her to marry him. She answered him by saying, ‘You are a fine young man but I want to be an only wife.’ Jo Kester, Email to Allan Alger, March 4, 2003, printout in my possession. It seems the only reason Brigham would have visited Fanny, if any of the traditions are true, would be to follow through with his commission to offer himself as a possible husband, for “time” to Joseph Smith’s plural wives and that Fanny was indeed married to the Prophet.

115 Zimmerman, I Knew the Prophets, 45.
116 Ibid., 33, punctuation and spelling standardized. The Lima Branch (Illinois) of the Church organized October 23, 1842, lists Fanny Custer as a member, but whether she was physically present there is not known. Emer Harris’s Book of Patriarchal Blessings, no. 210, cited in Van Wagoner, Letter to Newell, n.d., Newell Collection, Marriott Library.
Mormonism in Kirtland, Nauvoo and Salt Lake City.\(^{118}\)

The strengths of Mosiah’s account are its consistency with some of Joseph Smith’s later plural marriages, which involved an intermediary to teach and to ascertain the willingness of the woman.\(^{119}\) The narrative also recounts how a marriage ceremony did indeed occur, even providing the name of his father as the officiator. It also clarifies that Fanny was a willing participant.\(^{120}\)

Perhaps equally important is the behavior of eye witnesses Chauncy and Eliza Webb, who are described as “intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith and his family for eleven years” prior to his death.\(^{121}\) They “offered to take her [Fanny] until she could be sent to her relatives” after she was sent away from the Smith home.\(^{122}\) Eliza Jane recalled: “Fanny Alger had lived in Joseph’s family several years, and when she left there she came and lived with me a few weeks.”\(^{123}\) Throughout their recollections, they (and their daughter Ann Eliza Webb Young) consistently maintained that a marriage ceremony of some kind was performed, referring to it as a “sealing.”\(^{124}\)

In short, the Webbs apparently did not consider the union illicit or see the Prophet’s behavior as reprehensible. The Webbs followed

\(^{118}\)Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, 40.

\(^{119}\)Ibid., 41–42, views this conversation as an “exchange of women” between Joseph Smith and Levi Hancock. Yet the assertion is weakened because Levi and Clarissa were already mutually attracted to each other.

\(^{120}\)Ellingson, “Alger Marriage Questioned,” vi–vii, doubts that “Levi Hancock, a man who had no civil authority, willingly and quickly accepted Smith’s demand that he perform a ‘a marriage.”’ Compton, “Response to Janet Ellingson,” Journal of Mormon History, 23 (Fall 1997): xviii, disagrees: “Ellingson finds it unbelievable that Levi Hancock would consent to perform a marriage without civil authority. Personally, I find it very believable—both that Smith would place his religious authority above civil authority and that one of Smith’s disciples would give him unquestioning obedience.”

\(^{121}\)Wyl, Mormon Portraits, 7.

\(^{122}\)Young, Wife Number 19, 67.

\(^{123}\)Eliza J. Webb [Eliza Jane Churchill Webb], Lockport, New York, Letter to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876, Biographical Folder Collection, P21, f11, item 7, 8, Community of Christ Archives.

\(^{124}\)Ibid.; Young, Wife No. 19, 66–67; Chauncy Webb quoted in Wyl Mormon Portraits, 57.
the Church to Nauvoo, settling in a home on Granger Street, and were sealed in the Nauvoo Temple where Chauncy served as a temple worker. They moved to Utah and settled near Tooele; and Chauncy served a mission in 1852. These actions would be unexpected if they felt Joseph Smith was an adulterer.

**Authority to Perform the Marriage**

Another question related to the ceremony performed by Levi Hancock, as described by Mosiah Hancock, is the authority by which he acted. Obviously civil law would not ratify a bigamous marriage. Nor would the sealing keys be restored until April 1836 (D&C 110:13–16). Therefore, Levi was not acting with the authority by which plural marriages were later sealed in Nauvoo, even though “sealed” is the term used by Eliza Jane Churchill Webb. “Sealing” in Ohio seems to have been used only in “sealing up to everlasting life.” Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner wrote in 1902: “I was sealed to Joseph Smith, the Prophet by commandment. In the spring of 1831, the Savior appeared and commanded him to seal me up to everlasting life.” When Joseph performed marriages (as for Newell Knight and Lydia Goldthwaite Bailey in Kirtland in 1835), he reportedly claimed “the authority of the holy Priesthood” clarifying that “the Gentile law has no

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126Quincy Branch, Tooele Stake, Tooele Co., Utah, consisted of a few families of Latter-day Saints residing in Skull Valley, including the Quincy Ranch. Skull Valley was used as a herd ground for cattle as early as 1857, when a man named Box located there and built a herd-house. Two years later Chauncy Webb also settled in what was then known locally as “The Dell.” Andrew Jensen, Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson Company, 1941, 1901-36), 688. For his mission, see Stanley S. Ivins, Notebook 13, p. 163, Utah State Historical Society.

127Eliza Jane Churchill Webb, Letter to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876.

128Lightner, “Statement signed February 8, 1902.”
power to call me to an account for it.”  

If Mosiah Hancock’s description is accurate, most likely “priesthood authority” was invoked to perform a ceremony that “gentile law” would not allow.

*Immediate Consequences of the Alger Marriage*

Although the historical record provides no record of the chronology and interactions between Joseph and Fanny, this first plural marriage could hardly have turned out worse. Both Emma and Fanny were traumatized, and Fanny left Mormonism, never to return. Oliver Cowdery was also alienated, the situation contributing to his eventual excommunication. In addition, accusations of “adultery” required specific damage control efforts by the Prophet himself to suppress an expanding crisis in the Church.

Chauncy Webb suggested that Emma learned about Joseph’s marriage to Fanny Alger when the girl became pregnant. According to Wilhelm Wyl, who interviewed “Mr. W.”: “In Kirtland, [Joseph] was sealed there secretly to Fanny Alger. Emma was furious, and drove the girl, who was unable to conceal the consequences of her celestial relation with the prophet, out of her house.”  

There is no record that Fanny, in fact, had a child, but Emma’s angry reaction would be consistent with her later behavior under similar circumstances. She obvi-

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129 “Sketch of the Life of Newel Knight,” typescript, Ms 767, fd. 3, LDS Church History Library. Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, 88, 326 note 32, identifies this manuscript as a first draft. That designation does not appear on the document, but it is the shortest of several in the collection. Lydia Knight quoted Joseph as saying: “Our Elders have been wronged and prosecuted for marrying without a license. The Lord God of Israel has given me authority to unite the people in the holy bonds of matrimony. And from this time forth I shall use that privilege and marry whomsoever I see fit. And the enemies of the Church shall never have power to use the law against me.” See also Homespun (pseud. of Emmeline B. Wells), Lydia Knight’s History: The First Book of the Noble Women’s Lives Series (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 31.

130 The belief developed in Nauvoo that all eternal sealing ceremonies performed outside of a temple, whether monogamous or polygamous, would need to be repeated within temple walls (with the same individuals or by proxy) at some point. By this logic, the Joseph Smith-Fanny Alger plural marriage needed to be repeated in a temple to become an eternal marriage.

131 Wyl, Mormon Portraits, 57. The use of “sealed” is anachronistic if he is referring to the sealing keys mentioned in D&C 110:13–16 and 132:7, 18,
ously did not consider it a genuine marriage.  

Ann Eliza Webb Young, whose source was doubtless her parents, provided this version of events in 1886:

Mrs. Smith had an adopted daughter, a very pretty, pleasing young girl, about seventeen years old. She was extremely fond of her; no own mother could be more devoted, and their affection for each other was a constant object of remark, so absorbing and genuine did it seem. Consequently it was with a shocked surprise that the people heard that sister Emma had turned Fanny out of the house.

This sudden movement was incomprehensible, since Emma was known to be a just woman, not given to freaks or caprices, and it was felt that she certainly must have had some very good reason for her action. By degrees it became whispered about that Joseph’s love for his adopted daughter was by no means a paternal affection, and his wife, discovering the fact, at once took measures to place the girl beyond his reach.

Angered at finding the two persons whom she loved most playing such a treacherous part towards her, she by no means spared her reproaches, and, finally, the storm became so furious, that Joseph was obliged to send, at midnight, for Oliver Cowdery, his scribe, to come and endeavor to settle matters between them.

19, as that sealing authority was not yet restored in 1835 and could not have been used to perform the marriage.

132There are certainly a number of scenarios (including miscarriage and stillbirth) by which Fanny could have been pregnant but had no child who made it into contemporary records. In 1878, William McLellin told Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt: “Emma Smith told him that Joseph was both a polygamist and an adulterer.” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith, Sixth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 239. If Emma made such a statement and if McLellin reported it correctly (he would have been seventy-two in 1878), then it may mean that Emma accepted Nauvoo plural marriage as “polygamy,” but rejected Joseph’s Kirtland relationship with Alger, calling it “adultery.”

133Ann Eliza Webb Young mistakenly believed that Fanny had been adopted by the Smiths. Other accounts incorrectly refer to her as an orphan. She was neither.

What role Oliver played, if any, in trying to reduce the emotional storm is unclear.

As noted above, McLellin asserted that Joseph “confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him.” Additional details of Emma’s reaction to her husband’s first plural marriage are unavailable. However, two letters that she wrote him in 1837 contain possible hints that she may not have accepted the Alger relationship as a true marriage. While he was in hiding on April 25, she closed her letter with: “I pray that God will keep you in purity and safety till we all meet again.” A letter dated a week later was signed similarly: “I hope that we shall be so humble and pure before God that he will set us at liberty to be our own masters.” I find her mention in both closings of “purity/pure” of possible significance.

Aftermath: Rumors of Adultery, Not Polygamy

Although Joseph, Emma, Fanny, and Oliver—and perhaps a few others who were directly involved—did not leave personal statements of this crisis and were apparently silent on the topic, rumors about the event spread quickly. I hypothesize that the actual intensity and the composition of the rumors then in circulation may have been misunderstood down to the present. Benjamin F. Johnson uses the term “whispered” to describe the tale’s circulation in Kirtland. Eliza Jane Churchill Webb wrote: “What a talk the whole affair made” at the time, suggesting more than whispers. William Saints, 1830–1844 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 167.

135McLellin, Letter to Joseph Smith III, July 1872; see also Hutchins, “Joseph Smith III: Moderate Mormon.” 79–81. McLellin confuses some names in this letter. Regardless, I believe Joseph Smith was involved with only one plural marriage in Kirtland—with Fanny Alger—so the details, if true, would be referring to that relationship.


137Zimmerman, I Knew the Prophet, 38.

138Eliza Jane Webb, Letter to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876.
McLellin stated that it caused “some scandal.”\(^{139}\) Church member Fanny Brewer who traveled from Boston to Kirtland in the spring of 1837, wrote a letter in September 1842 in which she described “much excitement” about the Prophet’s “unlawful intercourse” with the “young orphan girl residing in his family.”\(^{140}\) Published in John C. Bennett’s exposé two months later, Brewer’s much-reprinted assertion has become a standard quotation, an established reference to Kirtland polygamy.

Even though a handful of Ohio Saints were apparently aware of the eventual restoration of plural marriage, my conclusion from current research shows that the tales being “whispered” or causing “excitement” in 1837 were not about polygamy. Rather the rumored activity was adultery. In trying to reconstruct the emergence of plural marriage, this distinction is critically important.

Oliver Cowdery seems to have been the primary source of rumors about Joseph’s alleged adultery. Apparently, he either did not know that some kind of marriage ceremony had occurred between Joseph and Fanny or did not think it valid. As late as September 1837, Oliver’s brother, Warren, editor of the Church newspaper, *Messenger and Advocate*, wrote “to the inhabitants of Milton and Palmyra, Portage county Ohio” defending the character of Joseph Smith against “rumors [that] were afloat . . . that were derogatory” to him.\(^{141}\) He does not describe these rumors and no supporting documents from Portage County specify their nature. Thus, they could have involved many forms of misconduct, but it seems doubtful that Warren would have defended the Prophet if he believed him

\(^{139}\)McLellin, quoted in Beadle, “Jackson County,” 4.

\(^{140}\)Fanny Brewer, Letter September 13, 1842, printed in Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 85–86. As already noted, Fanny Alger was not an orphan. A much later report from dissident Benjamin Winchester, “Primitive Mormonism—Personal Narrative of It,” *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, September 22, 1889, 2, stated: “[In 1835] there was a good deal of scandal prevalent among a number of Saints concerning Joseph’s licentious conduct, this more especially among the women. Joseph’s name was then connected with scandalous relations with two or three families.”

\(^{141}\)[Warren Cowdery], Editorial, *Messenger and Advocate* 3 (September 1837): 566. This editorial also defended Sidney Rigdon.
guilty of sexual misconduct.\textsuperscript{142}

Even so, four months later on January 21, 1838, Oliver wrote to Joseph Smith clarifying the depth of their estrangement: “I hear from Kirtland, by the last letters, that you have publicly said, that when you were here I confessed to you that I had willfully lied about you—this compels me to ask you to correct that statement, and give me an explanation—until then you and myself are two.”\textsuperscript{143}

That same day Oliver also wrote to Warren, characterizing the Joseph Smith-Fanny Alger relationship as “A dirty, nasty, filthy affair.”\textsuperscript{144} This statement has formed an important part of the evidence of authors who take the position that there was no marriage and that Joseph readily engaged in extramarital trysts.\textsuperscript{145} Regardless, my conclusion is that Mosiah Hancock’s narrative, not Oliver’s letter, gives the most probable account of the relationship between the Prophet and Fanny.

Oliver Cowdery is the only contemporary in Kirtland who accused Joseph Smith of adultery, and Joseph apparently tried to set things right between them, presumably by providing an explanation of the episode that satisfied Oliver and by trying to heal their friendship. On January 21, 1838, eight days after Joseph and Sidney Rigdon left for Missouri, Oliver wrote to Warren: “Just before leaving, [Joseph] wanted to drop every past thing, in which had been a difficulty or dif-

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{142}Warren Cowdery’s editorials mentioned polygamy only once. Editorial, \textit{ MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE} 3 (February 1837): 455, comments in the context of the Old Testament: “Polygamy and concubinage were allowable, but adultery was discon- tentenced.”
\item \textsuperscript{143}Oliver Cowdrey, Letter to Joseph Smith, January 21, 1838, copied in Oliver Cowdery, Letter to Warren A. Cowdery, January 21, 1838, and Oliver Cowdery Letterbook, 80, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.; also in Smith Research Associates, \textit{ NEW MORMON STUDIES: A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE LIBRARY}, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998). Oliver copied his letter to Joseph in its entirety in his letter to Warren, thus producing three copies: the original to Joseph, the copy written in Oliver’s letter to Warren, and the copy in Oliver’s letterbook.
\item \textsuperscript{144}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{145}See for example, Brodie, \textit{NO MAN KNOWS MY HISTORY}, 182. Kimball Young, \textit{ISN’T ONE WIFE ENOUGH?}, 91, wrote that in 1835 “it was rumored that [Joseph Smith] had seduced Miss Alger, an orphan girl of 17 years whom Emma had taken into the family.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
ference—he called witnesses to the fact, gave me his hand in their presence, and I might have supposed of an honest man, calculated to say nothing of former matters.”

That same day Oliver wrote a letter to Joseph indicating the offer was not accepted.

During this period, several prominent Church leaders apostatized. David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and W. W. Phelps were disciplined by the Far West High Council in several sessions in late January and early February 1838. On April 12, the Far West High Council brought nine charges against Cowdery. They did not include immorality or adultery, but the second charge was: “For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith jr by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery etc.” During the trial, which Joseph attended but which Oliver did not, George W. Harris testified: “[Oliver] seemed to insinuate that Joseph Smith, Jr. was guilty of adultery.” David W. Patten similarly reported: “he went to Oliver Cowdery to enquire of him if a certain story was true respecting J. Smith’s committing adultery with a certain girl, when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he was guilty; he then went on and gave a history of some circumstances respecting the adultery scrape stating that no doubt it was true.”

Thomas B. Marsh reported second-hand during the same hearing that he had heard this same account from Patten. “Patten asked Oliver Cowdery if he Joseph Smith Jr. had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver Cowdery cocked up his eye very knowingly and hesitated to answer the question, saying he did not know as he was bound to answer the question

146Cowdery, Letter to Warren A. Cowdery, January 21, 1838.
147Cowdery, Letter to Joseph Smith, January 21, 1838.
148Cannon and Cook, Far West Record, 135–40.
149It is possible that allegations against Cowdery for adultery might have provoked him to disclose his knowledge and opinions concerning the Joseph Smith-Fanny Alger relationship, which he believed to be adulterous. Possibly the Prophet withheld accusations to avoid those disclosures, even though limited evidence exists supporting Oliver’s involvement with polygamy in the early 1830s.
150Cannon and Cook, Far West Record, 163.
151Ibid., 167.
152Ibid.
yet conveyed the idea it was true."¹⁵³ Then, moving to an area of personal knowledge, Marsh continued: "He heard a conversation take place between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery when J. Smith asked him if he had ever confessed to him that he was guilty of adultery. When after a considerable winking etc, he said no. Joseph then asked him if he ever told him that he confessed to any body, when he answered no."¹⁵⁴ Doubtless Oliver intended his “winking” to counter his denial; certainly, that is how Marsh interpreted it. At one point, Joseph told the council that “Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he entrusted him with many things.”¹⁵⁵ He provided no details or examples.

Toward the end of the council meeting, the delicate issue of Oliver’s allegation regarding Joseph’s adultery was directly raised. According to the minutes, “[Joseph] then gave a history respecting the girl business.”¹⁵⁶ The minutes record no detail, but he likely gave a simple denial of adultery. He would have considered a ceremony, whatever its form, between him and Fanny as a legitimate marriage—not adultery.

No contemporary record shows that any high councilor called for further investigation, but it seems unlikely that they would have tolerated fornication or adultery in any Church member including their prophet-leader. Their attitude is important because the Far West High Council had authority to initiate proceedings against even the Church president should he transgress (D&C 107:82, 74–76).

Undoubtedly, Joseph realized that the high council (and the Church in general) was not ready for a restoration of the principle of plural marriage. Accordingly, there is no evidence that polygamy was ever discussed in the Far West High Council; thus, the question remains open about his response if he had been asked directly whether he had married Fanny as a plural wife. Regardless, Joseph’s explanation apparently satisfied the Far West high councilors and Bishop Edward Partridge. Six of the nine charges, including the second, were sustained against Oliver, and he was excommunicated.¹⁵⁷

Concerned that rumors might spread, Joseph asked Thomas B. Marsh, George W. Harris, and George Hinckle to publish statements
in the next (July) issue of the Elder’s Journal denying any rumors that might have originated with Oliver Cowdery. Biographer Richard Lyman Bushman made this summary, with which I agree:

[Joseph Smith] contended that he had never confessed to adultery. . . . In contemporaneous documents, only one person, Cowdery, believed that Joseph had had an affair with Fanny Alger. Others may have heard the rumors, but none joined Cowdery in making accusations. David Patten, who made inquiries in Kirtland, concluded the rumors were untrue. No one proposed to put Joseph on trial for adultery. Only Cowdery, who was leaving the Church, asserted Joseph’s involvement. On his part, Joseph never denied a relationship with Alger, but insisted it was not adulterous. He wanted it on record that he had never confessed to such a sin. Presumably, he felt innocent because he had married Alger.

Before Oliver died in 1850, he was rebaptized, doubtless because of the power of his pre-1838 experiences; but he was apparently never reconciled to the practice of plural marriage, which also strongly argues against the possibility that he had personally engaged in the practice in the early 1830s.

LACK OF POLYGAMY RUMORS

Reports from Kirtland

As noted above in the discussion of Fanny Alger, some rumors circulated in Kirtland, after 1836–37, of adultery involving Joseph Smith; however, listeners seldom took them seriously because they were promulgated by dissidents and he vehemently denied all charges.

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158[No title] Elders’ Journal 1, no. 3 (July 1838): 45.
159Bushman, Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, 324–25.
160On July 24, 1846, Oliver wrote to his sister, Phebe, and her husband, Daniel Jackson, in New Mormon Studies: “I can hardly think it possible that you have written us the truth—that though there may be individuals who are guilty of the iniquities spoken of,—yet no such practice can be preached or adhered to as a public doctrine. Such may do for the followers of Mohamet; it may have done some thousands of years ago; but no people professing to be governed by the pure and holy principles of the Lord Jesus, can hold up their heads before the world at this distance of time, and be guilty of such folly—such wrong—such abomination. It will blast, like a mill-dew their fairest prospects, and lay the axe at the root of their future happiness.”
Also, no contemporary document associates Joseph Smith with polygamy in Kirtland, although once polygamy was known in Nauvoo, several authors “remembered” polygamy at Kirtland. However, during the Kirtland period itself, rumors of polygamy involving Joseph Smith were apparently unknown among the Saints and non-members alike.\textsuperscript{161} For example, Church member F. C. Rich testified in 1884:

Q. Did you know, or were you acquainted with Joseph Smith, Martin Harris and Sidney Rigdon, or either of them? Did you know their reputation for truth and veracity in the neighborhood [of Kirtland, Ohio] at the time they lived here? And were you acquainted with their moral character? A. I knew nothing against them. I was but a boy however, but the outsiders persecuted them on account of their religious views.
Q. You had an opportunity to know? A. Yes, sir; my father was here in an early day and was connected with the church.
Q. Were you in their meetings frequently? A. Yes, sir. Brought right up in the church. The first meeting I recollect very much about was after the temple was finished [April 1836]. I attended meetings right along after it was completed. I was too young during its building to take any particular notice outside.
Q. Did you ever see anything of an immoral tendency in the meetings? A. Nothing that could be considered immoral. They shouted Hosannah, and seemed to enjoy their religion; and, of course, got ex-

\textsuperscript{161}Juanita Brooks, \textit{On the Ragged Edge: The Life and Times of Dudley Leavitt} (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1973), 53–54, includes an interesting account by Rachel Judd (b. 1822 in Canada) entitled “Polygamy in Missouri”: “My sister Mary was married to Thomas B. Marsh, one of the first Quorum of the Twelve chosen in 1835. He was a good man, very loyal and active. When the law of plural marriage was started, I became his first and only plural wife. But many other things entered in, and he became estranged and dropped out, so that he did not come West.” Thomas B. Marsh was excommunicated in 1839. If this recollection was accurate, plural marriage (beyond Joseph’s marriage to Fanny Alger) would have started in Ohio, not Illinois. However, Rachel’s memory is faulty. Thomas B. Marsh was never a polygamist, and he traveled west in 1857, dying there in 1866. Rachel’s sister Mary Judd was actually married to Apostle John E. Page. Page indeed was a polygamist in Nauvoo but did not remain with the Saints nor travel to the Rocky Mountains. Mary Page was violently opposed to plural marriage, remained in the Midwest, married William Eaton, and joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1874.
cited as other people do. . . .

Q. You may state whether they believed in having more than one wife? A. I never heard they were in favor of anything of the kind here.

Q. You heard them talk with your father, heard the elders preach, was in their meetings, and mixed with them in all the affairs of life; if there had been anything wrong or bad in their teachings and habits would you not have known it? A. I am perfectly satisfied that the church did not teach or practice polygamy, or any other immoral doctrine while they were in Kirtland. 162

F. C. Rich was certainly centrally located to have heard scandal, had there been any, unless he missed it because of his youth.

Non-member A. E. Sanborn came to Kirtland in 1836. When asked if Church members were ever practicing polygamy, he replied: “Not that I knew of.” When asked whether he would have known about it were it occurring, he responded: “I ought to, my father was a Mormon . . . . I attended meetings both in Nauvoo and here in Kirtland, both in the evenings and on the Sabbath, and I never heard anything of polygamy at all until after Smith’s death.” 163 Lorenzo Snow, who also joined the Church at Kirtland similarly affirmed that he “never once heard of . . . this plural marriage business” until he returned from England to Nauvoo in 1841. 164

In 1844, Benjamin Winchester wrote that nothing was taught regarding plural marriage “from the time of the organization of the Church up to the year 1841.” It was only after 1841 that “this flagitious [sic] doctrine of polygamy was introduced into the church.” 165 Likewise, in an 1871 letter, William Law reflected: “In 1842 I had not heard of such teaching [of polygamy] . . . I think it was in 1843 that I

162Kelley and Braden, Public Discussion of the Issues, 395. I have been unable to ascertain the full name of “F. C. Rich” or his birth date.
163Ibid., 394.
165Benjamin Winchester, Letter to the Editor, New York Herald, November 11, 1844. In 1889, the seventy-two-year-old Winchester further explained: “Up to the year 1843 ‘spiritual marriage’ or polygamy had never been preached or inculcated as a doctrine of the church. Prior to that year my experience had been that the church was fully as strict and as pure with respect to virtue and morality as any other religious organization.” Benjamin F. Winchester, “Primitive Mormonism—Personal Narrative of It,” Salt Lake Tribune, September 22, 1889, 2.
first knew of the ‘plurality doctrine.’ I believe, however, it existed possibly as early as 1840.”

John H. Carter, who converted to the Church and moved to Kirtland in 1836, testified: “The polygamy doctrine was never taught in the early days up to 1843. I lived most two years with Joseph Smith in the one place and I have heard him preach, and the rest of the elders, Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and the rest of them, and I never heard the doctrine of polygamy taught by any of them, never in the world did I hear it taught. . . . Polygamy was not taught from 1830 to 1843.”

When asked about the specific problems that Joseph Smith experienced in Kirtland, Williard Griffith, who was baptized in 1831, included no allegations of adultery or polygamy: “Some of the people were not satisfied with their position in the Church and others were not satisfied with the doctrine and so forth. There was dissatisfaction there at that time for five of the Quorum of the Twelve apostatized at one time and left the Church. . . . They persecuted him principally as I got the idea, because of his personal actions and the people or some of them were dissatisfied with his dignity and they dissented from it and were disfellowshipped.”

Reports from Missouri

A search among reminiscences of Saints in Missouri again turns up no evidence that polygamy was practiced, taught, or even rumored. Emily Dow Partridge, daughter of Bishop Edward Partridge (died 1840) and a plural wife of Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, reported that she “never heard anything at all about [plural marriage] during the lifetime of my father. . . . I am certain that I never heard [Joseph Smith] teach or preach polygamy in any way at all” in Missouri.

Born in 1807, Luman Shurtleff, joined the Church in 1836, and immediately moved to Kirtland with his family. He reported that, in

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168 Williard Griffith, Deposition, ibid., Part 4, pp. 68–69, questions 625–33, 639.
169 Emily Dow Partridge Young, Deposition, ibid., Part 3, p. 355, ques-
March of 1838 on their way to Missouri, after discussing polygamy, “Sister Williams had told Br [Frederick G.] Williams and They had talked it over and concluded it was ridiculous for an Elder to believe such an awfull doctrin’.”

Cyrus Wheelock was baptized in September 1839 in Pike County, Missouri. In 1892 he testified: “I never heard anything about it [plural marriage] at that time. . . . There was no practice of that kind then that I knew anything of.” When asked: Did you think when you joined the church that you could be permitted to have more wives than one?” He answered: “I did not know anything about it at all. They preached the doctrine of the church to me, and I accepted it, and there was nothing said about it at that time.”

When Bathsheba W. Smith was asked in 1892: “Did you not hear some rumors or whisperings of the plural wife doctrine in 1838 in Far West, or in Caldwell County [Missouri], when you were there?” she responded: “No, sir. . . . I am positive of that for I know I never heard of it.” Joseph Kingsbury agreed: “We never heard anything of the kind in those [Missouri] days at all.” Mercy Fielding Thompson, a British convert, in describing her stay in Missouri, recalled: “It [plural marriage] was not either taught or practiced until along about 1841 or 1842. . . . I did not hear anything about it before 1841.” These three all participated in polygamy in Nauvoo.

_Lack of Newspaper Reports_

Particularly significant negative evidence is a lack of reports about Kirtland polygamy in the press. Don Bradley and I have conducted an exhaustive search of periodicals, books, and pamphlets published prior to July 1842, when John C. Bennett published claims

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171Ibid., p. 545, question 197.
of Joseph Smith’s polygamy in the Sangamo Journal.\textsuperscript{175} We have not located any, although newspapers often published items about Mormons and also mentioned polygamy from time to time; but the two subjects were not linked before 1842.

For example, the subscriber list in the Cleveland Liberalist for late 1836 and early 1837 included the names of several Kirtland men, among them Mormons.\textsuperscript{176} An article in February 1837 advocated abolishing the law against polygamy, arguing:

It would be more desirable to be the second or even the third wife of a generous man than to remain an old maid, neglected and laughed at. It would relieve one wife from the burden of bearing many children and give the husband who had a barren wife the chance of having children by another. It would eminently lessen prostitution in one sex and ranging in the other. It would be no more expensive for a man to have two wives than to have one wife and hire a seamstress. It appears that a host of evils which now exist would at once cease.\textsuperscript{177}

Eva L. Pancoast, in a 1929 thesis, accused Joseph Smith or some other Mormon of authoring the letter but offers no supporting evidence.\textsuperscript{178} It seems obvious that if any tales of Joseph Smith and polygamy existed anywhere close to the ears of the Cleveland Liberalist writer, they would have been included, if not exploited. Other newspapers would have been equally eager to republish those details.

Commenting on the Missouri problems, the Peoria [Illinois] Register and North Western Gazetteer reprinted an article from The Missourian in November 1838: “It has been stated by diverse men, who stand fair in society, that the present difficulties with the Mormons amounts to a political quarrel.”\textsuperscript{179} The article makes no mention of moral issues. In fact, an unnamed correspondent in 1839 wrote a letter published in a Boston paper and reprinted by a New York City newspaper:

\textsuperscript{175}We also examined the copious sources included in the Stanley S. Ivins Collection, Notebooks 1–15, Utah State Historical Society, and the H. Michael Marquardt Collection, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

\textsuperscript{176}“Subscriptions,” Cleveland Liberalist, December 24, 1836, 11, and February 10, 1838, 162.

\textsuperscript{177}“Enquirer,” Cleveland Liberalist, February 4, 1837, 164.

\textsuperscript{178}Eva L. Pancoast, “Mormons at Kirtland” (M.A. thesis, Western Reserve University, 1929), 108.

\textsuperscript{179}Article from The Missourian, reprinted under the title of “From the
I have yet to learn that their faith taught them immorality. I have yet to learn that it encouraged disobedience to the laws or encroachments on the rights of any fellow-citizen.

The Mormons were in truth a moral, orderly and sober population. They were industrious farmers, and ingenious mechanics. They were busy about their own affairs, and never intermeddled in the concerns of their neighbors. They were exceedingly peaceful and averse to strife, quarrels and violence. They had established schools, they encouraged education; and they all had the rudiments of learning taught under our school system at the East.

[The Missourians] were sagacious enough to know that their acts should have a “show of virtue,” and they accordingly began to misrepresent the Mormons. The charges were at first general. The Mormons were a “mighty mean people.” They were “great fools”—which in common acceptation is about as bad as being great villains. Then they were thievish (how ludicrous, when the Anti-Mormons had hardly anything worth stealing!) They “tampered with the negroes...” Finally, a fellow burnt his own corn crib and charged it on the Mormons.

The unnamed writer seemed familiar with the Mormons, but was apparently unaware of any polygamous accusations, or it seems likely that he would have included that information, even on the gossip level, with his other charges.

“Between the Lines” Readings of LDS Material?

Our review of the Church’s publications in Ohio also fails to demonstrate an emphasis on marital issues or a reactive stance to allegations of sexual misconduct that might be interpreted as preemp-

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Missourian,” *Peoria Register and North Western Gazetteer*, November 10, 1838.

180 From the *Boston Atlas*. Missouri and the Mormons. Letter from a Gentleman at the West to His Friend in Boston,” *The Emancipator* (New York City), March 25, 1839.

181 As late as 1881, newspapers bent on exposing Mormon polygamy were unaware of the Alger-Smith relationship. According to Historicus [pseud.], “Sketches from the History of Polygamy,” 1, Louisa Beaman’s sealing in April 1841 to Joseph Smith was his first polygamous marriage. However, after this assertion, the writer then hedged: “These were the first plural marriages [in 1841] of which anything authentic is known, although the fact was well established that if he had been consistent, Joseph should long before that have been sealed to a large number of women.”
tive strikes against such accusations.\textsuperscript{182} The \textit{Messenger and Advocate} between October 1834 and September 1837 contained three references to “adultery” and three to “polygamy.”\textsuperscript{183} Similarly, the \textit{Elder’s Journal}, printed in 1837 and 1838 in Kirtland, contained two references to “adultery,” two to “more wives than one,” and none to “polygamy.”\textsuperscript{184}

In summary, the level of excitement actually existing in Kirtland regarding Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger or the larger topic of polygamy evidently never expanded to newspapers, which certainly would not have been reticent to pass on sensationalistic gossip. Yet we have been unable to find a single published reference before July 1842. It is possible that further research will produce additional allegations, but the absence of such references suggests that Mormons in general and Joseph Smith in particular were not linked in the public mind with adultery or polygamy. It seems fair to say that, during the mid-1830s, a mere handful of individuals understood the relationship of Joseph and Fanny Alger as a plural marriage, and they were not talking about it. A larger circle heard rumors of adultery that were effectively neutralized by the Prophet’s damage control efforts, rendering them non-issues before the press could pick them up.

\textbf{ACCUSATIONS OF WIVES “IN COMMON”}

To this point, I have examined nine allegations of immoral behavior leveled at Joseph Smith before 1839: Eliza Winters (occurred in 1827, published in 1834), Josiah Stowell’s daughters (occurred in 1830, never published), William Bond and “a certain woman” (occurred 1829 or 1830, published in 1890), Marinda Nancy Johnson (occurred in 1832, published in 1884), Vienna

\textsuperscript{182}The Church’s earlier newspaper, the \textit{Evening and the Morning Star}, published in Independence, Missouri (June 1832–July 1833) and then in Kirtland, Ohio (January–September 1834) contains no references to “adultery” or “polygamy.”

\textsuperscript{183}“Adultery” appears in the issues of January 1836 (250), January 1837 (436), and February 1837 (455). “Polygamy” appears in the issues of August 1835 (163), February 1837 (455), and May 1837 (511).

\textsuperscript{184}Adultery is mentioned in the issue of August 1838 (59); “more wives than one” appears in the issues of November 1837 (28) and July 1838 (43). Issues of the \textit{Elders’ Journal} for October and November 1837 were published in Kirtland and issues of July and August 1838 in Far West.
Jacques (occurred in 1833, published in 1886?), Fanny Alger (occurred in 1835 or 1836, published unnamed in 1842, name first published in 1881), Athalia and Nancy Rigdon (occurred in 1837, published in 1994), Lucinda Pendleton (occurred in 1838 or 1837, published in 1885), and Presendia Huntington (occurred in 1839, published in 1860).

A broader search examined the single occasion on which the Church as an institution was accused of allowing inappropriate sexual behavior. In February 1831, the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, published in Utica, New York, reported: “They [the Mormons] have all things in common, and dispense with the marriage covenant.” This allegation undoubtedly stemmed from rumors associated with early attempts to establish the law of consecration in Ohio and would follow the Church for years to come, resulting in several denials. Historian John L. Brooke revived the charge in 1991: “Among the non-Mormons in Ohio there were suspicions that the community of property dictated in the ‘Law of Consecration’ included wives.”

Eventually, the charges were also leveled on the western frontier prompting W. W. Phelps to issue a denial in the April 1833 issue of the Evening and the Morning Star: “It has been reported that the church had settled in this country [Independence, Missouri], and

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186 Parley P. Pratt, Late Persecutions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . with a Sketch of Their Rise, Progress, and Doctrine (New York: J. W. Harrison, 1840) 10: “It is also a current report among the ignorant that we do away [with] matrimony, and that we allow unlawful intercourse between the sexes. Now this idea originated and has been kept alive by wicked and designing persons, and by the credulity of those who are more ready to believe falsehood than they are to believe truth. There has never been the shadow of anything to cause such a report.” See also Erastus Snow, An Address to the Citizens of Salem and Vicinity, by E. Snow and B. Winchester . . . (Salem, Mass.: F. Nickerson, 1841), not paginated.
were living as one family. This is not so."

In May 1837, the Missouri Republican published a story signed by Edmund F. Flagg, who claimed that, while traveling in Illinois in July 1836, he spent a day with a Mormon emigrant on his way to Jackson County, Missouri, with “a brace of wives and two or three braces of children, by way of stock in trade for community at Mount Zion.”

This intriguing story is highly improbable. If Mormon men were traveling openly with plural wives and commenting on their situation to casual wayside acquaintances, then there should have been more reports than this one; and certainly local newspapers would have had no reason to refrain from reprinting such an interesting tidbit widely and seeking additional tales. Even at Nauvoo, though rumors were rampant, plural marriage itself was a closely held secret. The scenario that Flagg describes was simply not possible, especially since the Mormons had left Jackson County in 1833; although they were founding new settlements in northern Missouri, new converts were more likely to be traveling to Kirtland to see the Prophet and the temple rather than heading straight for Missouri.

Joseph Smith addressed the role of consecration for families and married couples in a December 16, 1838, letter to the Saints:

The priests of the different sects hated us. The Generals hated us, the colonels hated us, the officers and soldiers hated us; and the most profane blasphemers, drunkards, and whoremongers hated us. And why? Because of the testimony of Jesus Christ. Was it because we were liars? Was it because we had committed treason against the government, or burglary, or larceny, or arson or any other unlawful act. . . .

Was it for committing adultery? We are aware that false and slanderous reports have gone abroad, which have reached our ears, respecting this thing, which have been started by renegades, and spread by the dissenters, who are extremely active in spreading foul and libelous reports concerning us; thinking thereby to gain the fellowship of the world, knowing that we are not of the world; and that the world hates us. But by so doing they only show themselves to be vile traitors and sycophants. Some have reported that we not only dedicated our property, but likewise our families to the Lord, and Satan taking ad-

189—E[dmund] F[lagg], “Sketches of a Traveler,” May 24, 1837, Missouri Republican (St. Louis), [1?].
vantage of this has transfigured it into lasciviousness, a community of wives, which things are an abomination in the sight of God.

When we consecrate our property to the Lord, it is to administer to the wants of the poor and needy according to the laws of God, and when a man consecrates or dedicates his wife and children to the Lord, he does not give them to his brother or to his neighbor; which is contrary to the law of God, which says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbors [sic] wife.” “He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart.”—Now for a man to consecrate his property, his wife and children to the Lord is nothing more nor less than to feed the hungry, cloth[e] the naked, visit the widows and fatherless, the sick and afflicted; and do all he can to administer to their relief in their afflictions, and for himself and his house to serve the Lord. In order to do this he and all his house must be virtuous and “shun every appearance of evil.” Now if any person, has represented any thing otherwise than what we now write they have willfully misrepresented us.

INDIVIDUALS GUILTY OF IMMORALITY

When individual Mormons trespassed the law of chastity and marital fidelity, their activities were not ignored by their non-member neighbors or by their Church leaders. In 1892, Church member John Taylor (no relation to the apostle) remembered that in Independence in 1832:

I went about visiting and teaching the people and visiting all the houses I saw. I went to a man by the name of Claudious Hendricks and there was a woman living in his house and I felt as though there was something wrong about it. . . . There was a man, this woman’s husband [who] was an elder and he was sent . . . on a mission. And she stayed there at Hendricks’ place and he went and got her with a child the same as old David and Uriah’s wife. He got her with child while her husband was gone. And he was brought up and cut off from the Church for it.\(^{191}\)

On February 3, 1834, Joseph Wood was excommunicated by the

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Kirtland High Council for fornication or some form of polygamy. Oliver Cowdery wrote to a Brother Fosick regarding Wood’s Church discipline:

We were very sorry to learn that Bro. J. Wood had gone so far astray and offered such violence to the pure principles of the Gospel of Christ. . . . After some investigation of the case of Bro Wood, in council, it was decided that he should be cut off from the Church. Accordingly the Council lifted their hands against him and he was excluded from the church on this 3rd day of Feb. 1834 for indulging an idle, partial, overbearing and lustful spirit and not magnifying his holy calling whereunto he had been ordained. These things were plainly manifest to the satisfaction of all the council, and the spirit constrained us to separate him from the church.

Similarly, on September 28, 1835, the Kirtland High Council heard charges of adultery against Lorenzo L. Lewis “according to general report amongst the brethren.” Lewis denied being guilty of adultery. Charged instead with “illicit intercourse with a female,” he again declared that he was not guilty but admitted “that he had disgraced the girl, himself, and the Church, . . . had done wickedly and had made all the reparation he could.” Lewis “requested his name to be taken off from the Church records, or dispose of him according to the mind of the Spirit” and he was “cut off.”

The next spring, on May 16, 1836, the Kirtland High Council heard a second-hand report from William E. McLellin via Joseph Smith that the defendant, Jenkins Salisbury (married to Joseph’s sister Katharine) “had been intimate with every woman he could since he belonged to the Church.” Jenkins denied “the charge of unchastity to his wife” but was excommunicated.

Eighteen months later on November 29, 1837, the Kirtland el-

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193 Oliver Cowdery, “Letter to Bro. Fosdick, February 3, 1834,” H. E. Huntington Collection, microfilm #95, Community of Christ Archives; also available in *New Mormon Studies*.


195 Collier, *Kirtland Council Minute Book*, 143; Legg, *Oliver Cowdery*,
ders’ quorum heard Solomon Freeman accused of “the crime of polygamy.” Freeman pled “not guilty,” but two witnesses then testified. Dexter Stillman stated that Freeman had abandoned a wife in “Tollan township, County of Berkshire in Massachusetts,” which Stillman had recently visited. The second witness, Harlow Redfield, testified that Freeman had “acknowledged before the quorum that he had left his first wife . . . and Soon Commenced living with another woman[.] He further Stated he did not know but his first wife was yet living. He further Stated he would not go across the room to obtain a bill [of divorce] from her. Elder Freeman Manifest a Care[less] indifferent spirit.” He was also disciplined.

Doubtless, knowledge of these cases was not kept secret—in fact, Lewis admitted that his behavior “had disgraced . . . the Church.” But if such reports circulated, so also should have the reports of disciplinary action.

**THE ARTICLE ON MARRIAGE**

A development requiring particular attention involves the “Article on Marriage,” which some historians have interpreted as Oliver Cowdery’s attempt to hastily canonize a document on monogamous marriage that would have defused problems from Joseph Smith’s plural marriage or even his own. Here is the background: Some of Lucy Mack Smith’s relatives were living in Pontiac, Michigan; and Lucy’s niece, Almira Mack, had been bap-

172–73.


198 Brian C. Hales, “Guilty of Such Folly?”: Accusations of Adultery and Polygamy against Oliver Cowdery,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 41–57; Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, 193. reported: “Brigham . . . made the damaging avowal that the Appendix [Article on Marriage] was written by Oliver Cowdery against Joseph’s wishes, and was permitted to be published only after Cowdery’s incessant teasing and Jo-
tized on a visit to Manchester, New York, in 1830.\textsuperscript{199} The following year Lucy accompanied her son Hyrum and three missionaries to Pontiac where her widowed sister-in-law, Temperance Mack, and two more nieces were baptized. Encouraged by his mother, Joseph visited Pontiac in October 1834 and again in August 1835, leaving after August 11 and returning on August 23.\textsuperscript{200} Frederick G. Williams, Joseph’s counselor in the First Presidency, accompanied him on this second visit.\textsuperscript{201}

Shortly after the Prophet’s departure, possibly on Sunday, August 16, Associate Church President Oliver Cowdery and First Presidency Counselor Sidney Rigdon, called a general assembly (equivalent of today’s solemn assembly) “for the purpose of examining a book of commandments and covenants, which [had] been compiled and written.”\textsuperscript{202} The meeting itself was held the next day, Monday, August 17, even though most Church leaders were absent—all of the Twelve, eight of the twelve Kirtland High Councilors, nine of the twelve Missouri High Councilors, three of the seven presidents of the Quorum of Seventy, Bishop Partridge, and, of course, Joseph and

\begin{quotation}

seph’s warning to him of the trouble which his course would create. . . . for he [Oliver] insisted, Brigham says, upon adding to his [Oliver’s] marital relations a young woman familiar with his family, and did hold the relation of husband to her. To silence the clamour and surmising that arose over this ‘second wife’ [of Oliver’s], he wrote that Appendix.”


\textsuperscript{200}\textit{History of the Church}, 2:168.

\textsuperscript{201}\textit{Ibid.}, 2:253. Joseph Smith was in Kirtland until at least August 11, as he made a complaint to the high council on that date. \textit{Journal History}, August 11, 1835. Regarding this trip, Richard Van Wagoner, Letter to Newell, n.d., commented, “Oliver Cowdery would seem to be the likely person to go with Joseph Smith to Michigan, but his wife Elizabeth gave birth to a daughter, Maria on 21 August 1835. Rigdon’s health is still not good, and so the only other leader aware of the Fanny Alger situation is Frederick G. Williams, who accompanies Joseph to Michigan for this very quick ‘missionary trip’ (they are back in Kirtland only six days after the conference which has accepted the ‘Article on Marriage’).” It is unclear why Van Wagoner listed the journey as a “missionary trip.” I have yet to find documentation that identifies Joseph’s exact reason for the trip.

\textsuperscript{202}Collier, \textit{Kirtland Council Minute Book}, 122.
\end{quotation}
Frederick G. Williams.\textsuperscript{203}

Regardless of the thin attendance, the assembly proceeded to its business: accepting the Doctrine and Covenants as binding on the Latter-day Saints. This 1835 edition expanded the 1833 Book of Commandments, the printing of which had been interrupted in Independence by mob action. The “Doctrine” portion of the renamed 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was the “Lectures on Faith” and an Article on Marriage, written by Oliver Cowdery. This article, which W. W. Phelps read aloud, specified: “Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”\textsuperscript{204} It was “accepted and adopted and ordered to be printed in said book, by a unanimous vote.”\textsuperscript{205} Accordingly, the marriage declaration was published in the next issue of the \textit{Messenger and Advocate} (dated August 1835, but printed sometime in September) and was included in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants as Section CI (101).\textsuperscript{206} Neither Joseph nor Oliver provided any explanation or discussion of this episode. In 1869, Apostle Joseph F. Smith, who was born in 1838, recorded a statement in his journal by Brigham Young “saying Oliver Cowdery wrote it [the Article on Marriage], and insisted on its being inserted in the Book of D. & C. contrary to the thrice ex-


\textsuperscript{204}\textit{History of the Church}, 2:247. Critical writer Davis H. Bays, \textit{Doctrines and Dogmas of Mormonism Examined and Refuted} (St. Louis: Christian Publishing, 1897), 328, commented: “You may have observed the ingenious phraseology of that part of the document which is designed to convey the impression that the assembly as well as the entire church was opposed to polygamy, but which, as a matter of fact, leaves the way open for its introduction and practice.”

\textsuperscript{205}\textit{History of the Church}, 2:246.

\textsuperscript{206}“General Assembly,” \textit{Messenger and Advocate} 1 (August 1835): 162. 1835 Doctrine and Covenants CI (pp. 251–52). Section CI (the Article on Marriage) became Section 109 in the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. It was omitted from the 1876 edition when D&C 132 was added.
pressed wish and refusal of the Prophet Joseph Smith.”207 Apostle
Smith also declared in 1878: “The publication, by O. Cowdery . . . of
an article on marriage, which was carefully worded . . . afterwards
found its way into the Doctrine and Covenants without authority.”208
A variant explanation is that Joseph, worried about embarrassing
backlash from his relationship with Fanny Alger, arranged for
Cowdery to present the Article on Marriage while he was absent.
Todd Compton sees the Article on Marriage as “an effort to counter-
act scandal and perhaps to defuse rumors of Fanny Alger’s marriage,
possible pregnancy, and expulsion.”209 Historian Max Parkin, with-
out mentioning Alger, notes: “The ‘Article on Marriage’ was written
because of rumors circulating concerning unorthodox marital rela-
tions among the Mormons. Although the Mormons continued to
deny polygamy as a principle of faith, the complaint that it was being
practiced among them was occasionally raised.”210
These explanations have a number of problems. First, although
the timing of the action certainly begs for an explanation, it is not
clear how Joseph’s absence during the canonization of the Article on
Marriage benefitted him, undercutting the hypothesis that he ar-
ranged for Oliver to present it. On the other hand, if Joseph was avoid-
ing possible associations of his relationship with Fanny Alger or some
problem associated with the Article on Marriage itself, why did he re-
turn only six days later and allow the unpublished pages to be printed
and to be immediately shipped to the bindery?211
The timing of the printing is, in fact, just as interesting as the
timing of the general assembly. Six of the galley sheets for the Doc-

207 Joseph F. Smith, Diary, October 9, 1869, LDS Church History Ar-
chives, in Selected Collections, 1:26.
and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 20: 29. See also Provo
Utah Central Stake, General Minutes, Quarterly Stake Conference, March
4, 1883, Sunday afternoon session, 271–72, LR 9629 11, Reel 2, LDS
Church History Library.
209 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, 36.
211 H. Dean Garrett, “The Coming Forth of the Doctrine and Cove-
nants,” in Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio, edited by
Milton V. Backman (Provo: Utah: BYU Department of Church History and
Doctrine, 1990), 97.
trine and Covenants had been printed by May 26, 212 A galley sheet contains eight pages on each side, which are afterwards cut and sewn to create one signature. The various signatures are then bound together to form a book. Six galley sheets would comprise the first ninety-six pages. By August 15, W. W. Phelps, the publisher, had almost certainly finished ten more sheets for a total of fifteen (or 240 pages of the book’s eventual 288 page length). 213 At that point, he had to stop because pages 255–57 (located on the sixteenth galley sheet) were designated to include an account of the general assembly, which had not yet convened. 214

Presumably, after conference action on August 17, Phelps hastily completed printing the last three galley sheets comprising the final forty-eight pages. The next tasks were compiling a three-page ta-

212 W. W. Phelps, Letter to Sally Phelps, May 26, 1835, photocopy of holograph, W. W. Phelps Papers, Vault Mss 810, Box 2, fd. 1, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; originals are in Box 1 (oversize). The “Lectures on Faith” comprise pages 5–74 and were part of these first six sheets. Accordingly, Joseph Smith was undoubtedly aware and supportive of their inclusion in the edition.

213 Printing on the presses of the time allowed for eight book-size pages on one side of a large sheet of printing paper or sixteen pages per two-sided sheet, constituting a signature. After the ink dried, the pages would be cut, folded, and sewn in as a section of the book. The number of the sheet is found at the bottom of the first page of the sixteen pages being printed. Page 243 of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants shows “16*” at its foot, meaning that fifteen sheets of sixteen pages each had already been printed. The next sheet, “17*” appears on the first page of the index, corresponding to page 259. Number 18 appears on the foot of p. 275 (roman numeral xvii of the index section). If the printing was done in numerical order, Section CI (109) was published prior to the last two sheets being printed, which would likely be at least a week or more.

214 The account of the assembly contained in the Kirtland Council Minute Book, mentioned a “book . . . [with] 284 pages” (with four blank pages totaling 288, to make it divisible by 16. It seems probable that the number of pages was inserted by the scribe as he was transcribing the actual minutes weeks later. Since pages 255–57 include an account of the meeting itself, the book circulated during the meeting could not have contained those pages. Since the minutes clearly state that a “book” was passed around, it most likely consisted of 240 sewn but unbound pages from the first fifteen signature sheets then completed.
ble of contents (confusingly labeled “Index”) beginning on the seventeenth galley, and a twenty-five-page index (confusingly labeled “Contents”). The eighteen stacks of a thousand galley sheets each had to be cut and sewn. The unbound copies were then delivered to the Cleveland bindery by early September. On September 16, Phelps wrote: “We got some of the Commandments from Cleveland last week.”

Given this compressed timeline, it seems unlikely, if not impossible, that the described work could have been completed in the nine days between August 17 and the 26 when Joseph returned. Doubtless the final pre-binding stages were accomplished after the Prophet’s return to Kirtland. Accordingly, he could have intervened to stop or delay the publishing of the Article on Marriage if he had felt it was necessary. He could even have called his own General Assembly to address the issue; such an assembly would arguably have had more Church leaders in attendance than this first gathering.

As a second problem with the hypothesis that Cowdery was trying to maneuver around Joseph Smith (or that Joseph authorized Cowdery to take action from which he could publicly disassociate himself), the Article on Marriage did not present any new doctrine for Church members who had always understood that fornication and adultery were forbidden. The article states that the marrying couple should keep themselves “wholly for each other, and from all others during your lives” (1835 D&C 101:2). This language was similar to a revelation received in February 1831: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else.” That revelation was included in the Book of Commandments (44:22) and was also published in the July 1832 edition of the Evening and the Morning Star. Importantly, it was part of the same set of revelations Joseph and the committee had submitted to the General Assembly for approval for publication in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (13:7) and is Doctrine and Covenants 42:22 today.

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216 History of the Church, 1:270; see also p. 222. The Book of Commandments was approved for publication by a council on May 1, 1832.

Another restrictive statement found in the Article on Marriage—that a man “should have one wife”—was part of a March 1831 revelation: “And again, I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry, is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man: Wherefore it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh...” (Book of Commandments 52:16–17; emphasis mine). These verses were published in the *Evening and the Morning Star* in Independence in November 1832\(^2\) and were also included in the revelations approved by the assembly to be printed in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (65:3). They appear in the current LDS Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–16.

In short, the Article on Marriage did not advance a new doctrine. In important ways, it had already been articulated in Joseph’s earlier revelations and teachings, which were already published and circulated among the Mormons.

Third, there is a common assumption that the “crime of fornication and polygamy” mentioned in the Article on Marriage was in some way connected to Joseph Smith’s behavior. However, as already discussed, it appears that very few members understood the Smith-Alger relationship to be the restoration of plural marriage, and they kept their knowledge to themselves.\(^3\) The rumors at that time spoke of possible adultery (or fornication). If the article was designed to neutralize accusations spread about Joseph Smith and his alleged “crimes,” that crime would not have been “polygamy” because that was not the allegation being made. The disclaimer could only refute a charge of “fornication” against Joseph. In other words, the denial of polygamy in the Article on Marriage should not be used as evidence that people were talking about Joseph Smith’s polygamy in Kirtland, unless other corroborating evidence can be located. While it is impossible to prove a negative and while those informed of Kirtland polygamy may have hypothetically maintained absolute secrecy, an

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\(^2\)“Revelations: Revelation, Given May, 1831,” *Evening and Morning Star* 1 (November 1832): 47, This version mistakenly dates the revelation as being given in “May, 1831.” The correct date is March.

\(^3\)Michael Guy Bishop, “The Celestial Family: Early Mormon Thought on Life and Death, 1830–1846” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, Carbondale, 1981), 11–12, observed: “Very few Kirtland Saints actually had firsthand knowledge of this facet [polygamy] of their religion, and its practice was carefully circumscribed.”
in-depth review of available private journals and letters, published books, and periodicals fails to identify any allegations of polygamy against Joseph Smith during the 1830s.\textsuperscript{220}

Fourth, it appears likely that other circumstances were responsible for the need for Church leaders to deny the practice of polygamy. For example, as already explained, nonmembers interpreted the law of consecration in 1831 to include a “community of wives” doctrine. Further, as already noted, some members like Joseph Wood and Lorenzo L. Lewis were engaged in adultery. These acts were known, punished, and very likely discussed in the community. Richard and Pamela Price, staunch defenders of the position that Joseph Smith was never a polygamist, propose a third uncorroborated possibility: “Polygamy entered the Church during the Kirtland period through the baptism of polygamous members of the sect known as Cochranites who were led by a man named Jacob Cochran. Those first Cochranite converts were baptized into the Church by two young missionaries, Orson Hyde and Samuel Smith, a brother of Joseph the Prophet.”\textsuperscript{221}

Fifth, regardless of his feelings prior to leaving to Michigan, it appears that, after the Article on Marriage was implemented as part

\textsuperscript{220}A May 29, 1835, journal entry written by John Murdock, then on a mission, recorded: “[At] Rufus Harwood’s near Angelica [southwest New York]. Conversed with Anderson a Methodist Priest. He lied and scandalized Brother Joseph the Prophet and said he sanctioned and upheld whoredom and he bore testimony against him.” John Murdock, Journal, May 1835, 2:66, Ms 1194, LDS Church History Library. This is most likely a reference to the “common wives” or “community of wives” allegations made in conjunction with efforts to institute the law of consecration in Missouri and Ohio a few years earlier. It does not appear to be a direct accusation of polygamy or adultery against Joseph Smith himself. Angelica, New York, is more than two hundred miles from Kirtland, significantly removed from any rumors that might have been circulating there. William Alexander Linn, \textit{The Story of the Mormons from the Date of their Origin to the Year 1901} (1902; rpt., Whitefish, Mont: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), 156–57, tries to bolster the charge that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy in Kirtland by quoting Fanny Brewer’s statement in Bennett’s \textit{History of the Saints} and quotations from the \textit{Elder’s Journal} and the \textit{Messenger and Advocate}. Apparently he, too, was unable to locate a journal, letter, periodical, or other published work from the Kirtland period to substantiate his claims.

of 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith respected it as authoritative. He referred to it in performing several marriage ceremonies in the months after the publication, which seems less likely if he had originally opposed it. For example, on December 5, 1835, he penned:

> was invited with my wife to . . . join Warren Parrish and Martha H. Raymond in matrimony. We found a very pleasant and respectable company waiting when we arrived. We opened our interview with singing and prayer, after which I delivered an address upon the subject of matrimony. I then invited the couple/parties/ to arise who were to be joined in wedlock and solemnized the institution in a brief manner and pronounced them husband and wife in the name of God according to the Articles and Covenants of the /Church of the/ Latter Day Saints. \(^{222}\)

On January 14 and 20, 1836, Joseph again officiated in performing marriages “according to the rules and regulations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” a reference to Doctrine and Covenants 101. \(^{223}\) These references would be surprising if Joseph Smith viewed the article as an unauthorized Cowdery intervention. In all likelihood, if Joseph Smith had been present at the general assembly called by Oliver Cowdery, he would have been the first to sustain the Article on Marriage since it simply echoed accepted revelations already published and clearly stated as official Church teachings.

Two related questions are the timing of Joseph’s visit to Michigan, and Oliver Cowdery’s evident haste in calling the assembly. I have been unable to document the activities of Joseph’s relatives in Pontiac or the status of its LDS branch. Thus, the question remains open that some Church or family concerns may have required his personal attention.

As to the second question, a possible explanation may lie in Phelps’s publishing activities. On November 14, 1835, he wrote to his wife: “My time and that of President John Whitmer is all taken up

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Price’s theory is problematic because the missionaries who interacted with the Cochranites did not learn of plural marriage until later in Nauvoo. If polygamy was mentioned in Kirtland meetings, Church members undoubtedly would have condemned the practice.

\(^{222}\)Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, 70.

\(^{223}\)Ibid., 104, 116. I am indebted to Michael Marquardt for bringing these additional marriages to my attention.
in the printing office. We have, when all are in the office, three apprentices and four journeymen, and we shall have to employ more men, as our work is so far behind.” One factor that slowed down productivity and tied up needed resources was the unfinished Doctrine and Covenants. Its unbound pages cluttered the printing office work space and may have prevented the start of new projects.

The two-story printing office was located immediately behind the Kirtland Temple. Phelps was responsible for reprints of the Evening and Morning Star (Oliver Cowdery editor) and the more recently published Messenger and Advocate (editor switched from Oliver Cowdery to John Whitmer in May 1835). Undoubtedly both men were encouraging Phelps to keep up. I hypothesize that on Saturday, August 15, Phelps had either caught up with his printing obligations, or felt that the stagnated Doctrine and Covenants was an insurmountable roadblock to beginning any new project. As the former editor of one of the newspapers and the active editor of the other, Cowdery alone may have been personally motivated to also keep the printing presses working. If so, after Joseph Smith had departed for Michigan, Phelps, Cowdery, and Rigdon may have decided to finish the Doctrine and Covenants, whose galley sheets and sewn signatures were demanding much space and other resources. If this scenario is accurate—and I stress that it is speculative—then Cowdery and Rigdon would have announced the general assembly during Sunday meetings on August 16 and convened the assembly on Monday.\textsuperscript{225}

The questions of when the decision was made to include the Article on Marriage in the Doctrine and Covenants and whether Joseph Smith was part of that decision cannot be conclusively answered at present. However, helpful clues are found by examining the twenty-five-page “Contents” at the back of the book. The “Contents” functions as an index and was evidently compiled after the decision was made to include the Article on Marriage (Section 101) in the Doctrine and Covenants because it contains four references to Section CI (101) under headings “Husband and wife,” “Marriage in this church,”

\textsuperscript{224}W. W. Phelps, Letter to Sally Phelps, November 14, 1835, quoted in Van Orden, “Writing to Zion,” 568.

\textsuperscript{225}I am indebted to Michael Marquardt for his assistance in piecing together this interpretation of those events.
“One wife and one husband,” and “Record all marriages.”

If we could ascertain the date the “Contents” was compiled, we could infer that the decision to include the article had occurred previously. The “Contents” index contains no page numbers, only sections and paragraphs. It seems likely that the compiler would have used page numbers, if they had been accessible. They were not available until the sixteenth galley was printed a few days after the document was accepted during the August 17 assembly.

If the “Contents” section was compiled prior to page numbers being available, how much earlier might it have been? On August 4, 1835, before leaving for Michigan, Joseph Smith referred “to the book of covenants, 2nd section, 2nd part, and 12, paragraph” in a letter. This statement did not include a page number and is thus similar to the format in the “Contents.” Whether the Prophet was working from unbound pages, a printer’s copy, or some other collection is not known. However, his citation demonstrates that some form of an indexing system had been established at that point, perhaps even weeks before. If that indexing system included references to the Article on Marriage, then the decision to include it in the Doctrine and Covenants would have been made before Joseph Smith left for Michigan.

It is possible that Joseph and Oliver were at odds regarding the decision to include the Article on Marriage in the Doctrine and Covenants. Nevertheless, I conclude from the evidence currently available that any possible disagreement was resolved before the Prophet left for Pontiac and that he accepted the article after its adoption. Of particular importance for the focus of this article, Joseph Smith’s absence from the August 17 general assembly was not a reaction to negative fallout from his plural marriage to Fanny Alger.

**ADDITIONAL DENIALS OF IMMORALITY AND POLYGAMY**

The 1835 Article on Marriage, however, can be viewed as the first of four authoritative denials issued between 1835 and 1838 about immorality and polygamy. The next three follow.

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226 The “Contents” or functional index is repaginated with roman numerals. The headings are located on pages xii, xv, xvi, xix respectively.

227 The text of the letter was copied into Joseph Smith’s Letterbook and appears to be an epistle from the high council, although the recipient is unidentified. See August 4, 1835, Letterbook 1 (January 1834-August 1834 [sic; should be August 4, 1835], p. 91, in Selected Collections, 1:20.
1. On April 29, 1837, the Seventies at Kirtland: “Resolved: That we have no fellowship whatever with any elder belonging to the quorum of seventies who is guilty of polygamy in any shape and does not in all cases of like nature conform to the Laws of the Church as made known in the book Doctrine and Covenants and in the Bible.”

2. As the editor of the Elder’s Journal in the November 1837 issue, Joseph Smith acknowledged twenty questions that were “daily and hourly asked by all classes of people whilst we are traveling” and promised a response in the next issue. The seventh question was: “Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?” In the next issue of the Elder’s Journal, which was not printed until July 1838, the Prophet gave this answer: “No, not at the same time. But they believe that if their companion dies, they have a right to marry again.” Important context is Question 6: “Do the Mormons believe in having all things common? Answer. No.” As noted above, the Latter-day Saints had been accused of having a community of wives in 1831, so the proximity of the two questions, while possibly coincidental, may have indicated a continuing belief that Mormons had “common wives.”

3. In December 1838, the Prophet published a letter (quoted above) to Church members that also contained a denial of adultery: “Was it for committing adultery [that the Saints were mistreated]? Sociologist Thomas F. O’Dea commented: “It is curious also that in [Joseph Smith’s] letters from Liberty Jail in Missouri [December 1838 to April 1839], when he answered charges that the gentiles had made against his people, Joseph Smith denied polygamy—curious because it was one of the few things that had not been charged against

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228 “Minutes Book of the Seventy,” April 29, 1837, LDS Church History Library; typescript in Alan H. Gerber, comp., “Church Manuscripts Collection,” Vol. 2, not paginated, Perry Special Collections. This resolution was published as “To Our Readers,” Messenger and Advocate 3 (May 1837): 511.
230 Joseph Smith, Editorial, Elder’s Journal 1, no. 3 (July 1838): 43.
them.” In fact, O’Dea had misread the letter. Joseph Smith was not issuing a denial of polygamy but a denial of adultery, a charge which he had also denied in Kirtland.

Authors throughout the decades have cited these few denials as evidence that “rumors of Kirtland polygamy” were perhaps “widespread.” Fawn Brodie assured her readers: “Rumors of polygamy among the Mormons were not loud, but they were persistent.” However, no documented accounts of such rumors from the rumor mongers themselves are quoted. Neither is specific evidence of the actual practice of polygamy among the Latter-day Saints found in private or published writings prior to 1842. In essence, the primary evidences for polygamy in Kirtland are comprised of denials by Church that it existed.

It is also important to realize that adultery and polygamy were just two of many allegations that were leveled at the Church and its members. Oliver Cowdery wrote in the Messenger and Advocate in 1836: “It would be a Herculean task to point out the innumerable falsehoods and misrepresentations, sent out detrimental to this society. The tales of those days in which Witches were burnt, and the ridiculous inconsistencies of those who directed the building of the funeral pyre, could be no more absurd than the every-day tales, relative to the conduct and professions of the ‘Mormons.’”

**SUMMARY**

This article has identified nine allegations of sexual misconduct against Joseph Smith between 1831 and 1839, before he and the Latter-day Saints settled in Nauvoo, Illinois where the practice of plural marriage was established. With the exception of the Fanny Alger relationship, the believability of the other eight accusations is seriously compromised. Only three of the nine charges were leveled during the

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234 Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 186.

235 Oliver Cowdery, Editorial, Messenger and Advocate 3 (October 1836): 395. Unfortunately, a sweeping and general denial is no more helpful than a sweeping and general accusation.
Prophet’s lifetime. The Broome County prosecutor’s allegations died quickly. E. D. Howe’s third-hand accusation was not repeated in other 1830s publications often, if at all. Only the Fanny Alger relationship was talked about locally, but it was treated as adultery, not polygamy, and did not appear in the Gentile press.

In the decades after the Prophet’s death, writers published six more accusations. However, there is no indication that any of them affected Joseph Smith while he was living. The shrewd and discerning William Law arrived in Nauvoo in November of 1839. After observing the Prophet for a year, he wrote to a close friend: “I have carefully watched his [Joseph Smith’s] movements since I have been here, and I assure you I have found him honest and honourable in all our transactions which have been very considerable[,] I believe he is an honest upright man.”

In summary, then, I conclude that Joseph was able to enter a new chapter of his life in Illinois in April 1839, his reputation undamaged by credible accusations of previous immorality or even whispered allegations of restored plural marriage.

EDUCATING THE LAMANITES:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LDS INDIAN STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Brandon Morgan

After taking in fourteen Navajo foster students over the course of sixteen years, Kay H. Cox, a Mormon mother in northern Utah, admitted that the Indian Student Placement Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was “not the best way to rear children.” As a faithful member of the Church, however, she believed the program to be divinely sanctioned. Her willingness to open her home to Indian children reflects the belief held by Latter-day Saints that Native Americans are the descendants of a civilization described in the Book of Mormon. Throughout much of the Church’s history, Mormons have traditionally believed that they have a special responsibility for the welfare and conversion of all American Indian peoples.

By the early 1950s, that belief prompted the creation of the Placement Program, which was designed to supply educational opportunities impossible to attain on the reservations of the American West. Latter-day Saint families voluntarily allowed Navajo youngsters

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1Kay H. Cox, Without Reservation (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), ix.
(later expanded to include children from over sixty tribes in the United States and Canada) to become their “foster” children, enabling them to attend the superior schools available in white communities throughout the Mormon culture area, but primarily in Utah.  

This well-meaning program was intended to provide them with educational and spiritual growth that would allow them to undertake leadership positions, both secular and ecclesiastical, as adults. The program reached its enrollment peak in 1970 with approximately 5,000 Native students placed in white homes.

However, during that decade, critics increasingly voiced their concerns that the program caused emotional and psychological difficulties for its participants because it placed traditional indigenous culture and white customs at odds. These critiques coincided with the rise of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and caused negative publicity for the Church and a reappraisal of the program’s effectiveness.

Graduates’ reactions to the program were mixed. Some praised the program for giving them added confidence which allowed them to succeed in white American society, while others scorned it for disconnecting them from their culture. Despite measures ostensibly intended to keep the students’ original culture intact, in most cases placement strained their cultural identity. Even former placement students who praised the experience admitted to a weakening of fa-

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2Although program administrators referred to participants as “foster” children, biological parents did not legally give their children up to white parents, as the term seems to imply. “Foster” parents were to provide for the children only during the school year. Biological parents were encouraged to write letters to and visit their children, though most did not have the means to do so regularly. Throughout this study, I use the terms “foster” and “adoptive” parents because those were the terms employed by program officiators. It should be understood, however, that biological parents lost no legal rights whatsoever by placing their children in the program.

Indian children from various tribal groups participated in the program, but Navajos comprised a majority of the total body of placement students. Navajo students have also been the focus of most scholarly studies of the program. For this reason, I tend to focus on Navajo participants here. See James B. Allen, “The Rise and Decline of the LDS Indian Student Placement Program, 1947–96,” in Davis Bitton, ed., *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 96.
milial bonds and a loss of cultural ties.

Although the Placement Program affected thousands of Native American students, mostly Navajos, over four decades, scholarly works on the subject are comparatively few. LDS Social Services worker Clarence R. Bishop wrote a master’s thesis in 1967, “Indian Placement: A History of the Indian Student Placement Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” which provides the most comprehensive account of the program’s early history. Bishop was a Church employee, serving as the program’s director at the time his thesis was submitted. Despite the potential for a conflict of interest, his work generally avoided bias because it focused on simple facts rather than systematic analysis. Although he offered a brief evaluation of the program, Bishop himself explained that the purpose of his study was “to assemble under one cover a descriptive history of the Indian Student Placement Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”—not to assess its effectiveness.3

A handful of theses and dissertations dealing with the Placement Program followed during the 1970s and early 1980s.4 These works rely heavily on Bishop’s study for historical background; I will do the same in this article, underscoring the need for further research and analysis by contemporary scholars. Through a framework of pertinent questions and preliminary answers, I hope to reintroduce the Placement Program as a topic of scholarly inquiry. This article surveys much of the relevant literature, both primary and secondary, and suggests various lenses and methodologies through

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4 Examples of other theses and dissertations relying on Bishop’s work include Howard Rainer, “An Analysis of Attitudes Navajo Community Leaders Have toward a Religion Sponsored Program, Based upon Membership of That Faith and Amount of Information Attained” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1976); Grant Hardy Taylor, “A Comparative Study of Former LDS Placement and Non-Placement Navajo Students at Brigham Young University” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1981); and George P. Lee, “A Comparative Study of Activities and Opinions of Navajo High School Graduates among Four Selected School Models” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1975). A more recent article that describes the program’s history is, Allen, “Rise and Decline.”
which the subject may be approached.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Only five months after the Mormon Church’s formal organization on April 6, 1830, in upstate New York, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson were commissioned as the first missionaries to the Indians in Missouri (D&C 28:8, 30:6, 32:1–3). These early efforts stemmed from the belief that Native Americans were the descendants of a branch of the house of Israel which God led to the American continent about six hundred years before Christ. This ancient civilization left an account of its history and religion, which Joseph Smith, the first prophet-leader of the Church, translated and published as the Book of Mormon. According to the Book of Mormon, soon after their arrival in the Americas, this group of people divided into two factions known as Nephites and Lamanites; the former chose to follow God’s commandments while the latter rejected them. Because the Lamanites “had hardened their hearts against him [the Lord],” they were cursed with a “skin of blackness” to distinguish them from the righteous Nephites (2 Ne. 5:21). The ensuing centuries were composed of alternating periods of peace and bloodshed caused by animosity between the two groups. By about A.D. 400, however, Lamanite warriors had eradicated the entire Nephite group and inhabited the land alone until the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492.

Based on this view, early LDS leaders felt driven to instruct Native Americans concerning their true ancestry and teach them the true faith. Missions to tribes in the East and Midwest met with mixed results. After the 1847 Mormon migration to Utah, missionary efforts focused on southwestern tribes such as the Utes, Navajos, and Hopis. Jacob Hamblin was among the first missionaries to the Indians in the St. George, Utah, area. In August 1857, following three successful years of preaching, Brigham Young appointed him president of the Southern Indian Mission. Only one month later, the infamous Mountain Meadows Massacre occurred, nullifying the progress made with local tribes. Shortly thereafter, Church leaders abandoned missionary work in the area and redirected their efforts toward the tribes of northern Arizona.

In the fall of 1858, Brigham Young authorized Hamblin’s expe-
dition to the Hopis. The following year, missionaries made their first contact with members of the Navajo tribe; and by the mid-1860s, two missions had been established at Ramah, New Mexico, and Tuba City, Arizona. Simultaneously, white Mormon settlements developed, the two largest being Farmington, New Mexico, and Snowflake, Arizona. Despite the successful growth of such communities, the Navajo people generally resisted the gospel message, although they maintained friendly relations with the Latter-day Saints. Due to the lack of converts, both Navajo missions were closed in 1903.

In spite of the absence of an official mission, Mormon settlers attempted to proselytize their Indian neighbors from time to time. In 1941, after years of perseverance, Farmington traders George and Lucy Bloomfield converted the family of George and Mary Jumbo. Mary became an effective missionary to her people; by 1943 around forty more Navajos had accepted baptism. George Albert Smith of the Council of the Twelve, encouraged by the successes he witnessed during a visit to the Navajo Nation in 1942, advocated the expansion of missionary activity and the reestablishment of an official mission. On February 26, 1943, his vision was realized in the organization of the Navajo-Zuni Mission with Ralph Evans, another Latter-day Saint trader, as its president.

By 1946 Smith had become president of the Church and was in a position to expand Native American programs. In September of that year he appointed Spencer W. Kimball of the Twelve to head the General Lamanite Committee with the charge “to see that the gospel was carried to all the children of Lehi [or descendants of the Lamanites] . . . all over the world.”8 Kimball, who had grown up in Arizona, accepted the assignment energetically, developed Indian policy, and increased the scope of existing programs such as the Lamanite Seminary and the Brigham Young University Lamanite Education Pro-

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6 Ibid., 79.
7 Ibid., 112–14.
8 Lamanite Handbook of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, December 1, 1968, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).
gram. In 1947, an experiment in informal adoption by a white family came to Kimball’s attention and initiated a Churchwide policy that eventually developed into the Indian Student Placement Program. Over the next forty years, the program became the largest and most controversial of the General Lamanite Committee’s efforts, with Kimball leading the charge as its most ardent advocate.

The catalytic 1947 incident occurred in Richfield, Utah, when Navajo workers moved north for the autumn to labor in the area’s beet fields. That year was also marked by a severe winter which left many Navajos destitute. Kimball led a drive to provide aid to the starving Native Americans, both in their reservation homes and in the beet fields. Golden Buchanan held a prominent position in the Richfield community as the owner of a lumber mill and a member of the Sevier Stake presidency. Responding to Kimball’s outreach efforts, Buchanan made several visits to the Navajo camps to “inquire as to their welfare” and was stunned by their abject poverty. The fortunate lived in tents, while others possessed no shelter and many did not have enough to eat. Desiring to aid them in their plight, Buchanan delivered an address at the fall 1947 Sevier Stake conference in which he admonished fellow Latter-day Saints to aid the migrant workers. He found that, although a few “wanted the Indians to work for them . . . they didn’t want to do anything for them [the Indians].”

After a few days, however, a local woman, Amy Avery, visited Buchanan’s office to relate a conversation she had with Helen John, a seventeen-year-old Navajo working alongside her parents in the beet fields. John had attended two or three years of school, spoke English, and interpreted for her family. She told Avery of her desire to remain in Richfield and attend school, rather than return to the reservation. She promised “that she would be no trouble to her [Avery] if she would just let her pitch a tent in the back yard and live there so she

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9 The Lamanite Seminary was a program that provided instruction in LDS doctrine to Indian high school students throughout the United States and Canada. The BYU Lamanite Education Program was designed to provide Native Americans with aid, including funding, that allowed them to attend the Church university in greater numbers. M. Dallas Burnett, “Lamanites and the Church,” *Ensign*, July 1971, 11.


could go to school.”

Avery felt moved by John’s plea but already had three teenage daughters and felt unable to tutor and care for a Native girl who, she believed, was years behind her own daughters’ education level. She asked for Buchanan’s counsel.

Buchanan accompanied Avery to the John family camp in a heavy snowstorm and found Helen, her older sister Bertha, and a friend, Lois Begay, huddled together inside a tent, struggling to stay warm. Only Helen spoke English, although Lois had attended a year of school. All three were covered in mud from the waist down. Avery introduced Buchanan to the girls, and Helen determinedly announced: “I am just going to stay. I am not going home. I am going to get an education.” Following this visit, Buchanan sent a letter to Kimball outlining a possible solution to the problem. Two days later, Kimball visited the Buchanans. Golden had not reported his camp visit to his wife, and she was therefore taken aback when Kimball asked her to consider inviting Helen to live with the family and attend school. Mrs. Buchanan had always been apprehensive of Indians because she did not understand their language or culture. After talking the matter over with Golden and their children, however, she was willing to make the attempt, and the Buchanans welcomed Helen John into their home. The first student placement had been made.

Before moving in with the Buchanans, Helen John accompanied her family to Cedar City to help her parents get settled for the winter. (After initially refusing to let her participate in the program, Helen’s father, Willie John, gave her his blessing.) When she returned to Richfield in December, her sister Bertha, Lois Begay, and another friend, Garnet Lewis, accompanied her. Bertha decided to return home within a few days of their arrival. The Buchanans arranged for the other two girls to live with the Warner and Augustus families, also of Richfield. John was initially placed in the seventh grade and excelled in her schoolwork, especially in art. She continued to live with the Buchanan family throughout her school years. Each

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12 Buchanan’s account of his conversation with Amy Avery, quoted in ibid.
13 Buchanan, quoted in ibid., 32.
14 Ibid., 33. Bishop did not provide Mrs. Buchanan’s first name, referring to her only as “Mrs. Golden Buchanan.”
15 Allen, “Rise and Decline,” 91.
summer she rejoined her family to work in the beet fields, returning to the Buchanan home each fall. During her years with the family, her foster parents provided food, clothing, books, and other needs, treating her as if she were their own daughter. Stories of her success spread by word of mouth throughout the Navajo community and soon the influx of Indian students seeking foster homes and educational opportunities exceeded Richfield’s capacity. Miles Jensen from the nearby community of Gunnison offered to oversee the placement of Navajo students in his town to help alleviate the burden.\(^\text{16}\)

By 1951 Indian students were being placed in Mormon homes through Utah, and also in southern California, Idaho, and Oregon. Interest in the program continued to increase, and each year more families welcomed Native children into their homes. In July 1954 the First Presidency (then headed by George Albert Smith’s successor, David O. McKay) and the Council of the Twelve declared Indian Placement an official Church program.\(^\text{17}\) The First Presidency appointed new administrators to organize and regulate the placements. They selected caseworkers to instruct both Navajo and foster families about their specific responsibilities to child participants and also set the requirement that program participants be baptized members of the Church, thus linking the program closely with the Church’s missionary effort.

On September 7, 1959, *Time* published a preliminary evaluation of the Placement Program’s first five years.\(^\text{18}\) It found that many Indian children met with great success in white schools. Over 20 percent were elected to student body offices, indicating their ability to overcome racial barriers, make friends, and adopt white leadership styles. At the same time, most Native American students struggled to engage in a full social life. Although Church policy did not formally prohibit interracial dating, General Authorities opposed the practice, a position that reflected the general societal norms of the day.\(^\text{19}\) The article’s unidentified author suggested a balance of male and female Indian students to help remedy the problem. Regarding the students’

\(^{16}\)Ibid., 34–37.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., 41–42.


\(^{19}\)Spencer W. Kimball was ambivalent about interracial dating and
futures, most planned to return to the reservation as doctors or teachers to help bridge the divide between the two cultures, hoping to improve living conditions for their families. Of course, not all were successful, but the program afforded them opportunities they otherwise might not have received. Social worker Margaret Keller, the Placement Program representative from the Relief Society, explained, “The Indian youngsters are just like all our children; some succeed, some don’t. But the important thing is that they be given the opportunity to succeed.” Overall, initial reactions to the program were positive. Arguments claiming that the program was damaging to the students’ psychological health and cultural identity did not emerge until the 1970s.

LEADERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE PLACEMENT PROGRAM

To explore the perceptions that program administrators held of the Placement Program over time—perceptions that presumably reflected the instructions and orientation of the General Authorities who authorized and oversaw it—I consulted official program handbooks and manuals. These guidebooks outline the requirements for student participants, biological parents, and foster parents. Such an

marriage. The June 17, 1978, issue of the Church News, which followed-up on the previous week’s revelation extending priesthood ordination to “all worthy male members” included a column of statements Kimball had made over his career as a General Authority discouraging interracial marriage: “Interracial Marriage Discouraged,” Church News, June 17, 1978, 4. Although Kimball discouraged the practice at that time, his earlier actions seemed to indicate a conviction that interracial Mormon couples would not be condemned for their relationships. Fifteen years earlier in 1963, the parents of a young white woman who was considering marriage to a Native American consulted Kimball, then an apostle. They strongly opposed the union and, although Kimball agreed that interracial marriages presented certain added challenges to both spouses, according to his biographers, he informed them “there was no wrong in it.” He did not go so far as to encourage the marriage, but neither did he attempt to discourage it. Furthermore, he officiated at their sealing when they wed the following year in the Salt Lake Temple. Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977), 342.

20 Margaret Keller, quoted in “Red and Delightsome.”
approach, however, does not provide access to the manifold interpretations of the program by local Church leaders, such as bishops and stake presidents, who were charged with matriculation. Although ultimately subordinate to the General Authorities, local leaders adapted Church programs to the needs of their congregations based on a combination of local needs, personal inspiration, and individual interpretations. Like other large social or religious institutions, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not monolithic.

A useful entry point into an investigation of local variations is the LDS Native American Oral History Project, conducted by the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University. Those who participated in the program reported actions of local leaders that impacted policy and procedure. Although the leaders themselves were generally not interviewed, such interviews would enhance and provide additional perspectives on the records currently available.

Throughout the program’s first fourteen years (1954–68), permission slips signed by the child’s birth parents were virtually the only written documents used by program administrators and caseworkers. Such documentation provided the legal foundation for placing students with host families. However, they provide researchers with virtually no details except for the student’s name, address, age, and parents’ names. Beginning in 1964, the English-language *LDS Indian Student Placement Program Newsletter* circulated to promote the program on the Navajo reservation. It related success stories of individual children living in white foster homes. The March 1964 issue, for example, reported that seventeen-year-old Raymond Roper of Crownpoint, New Mexico, had joined a civic committee to represent the students of Cedar City High School and that Elaine Rose Long had “been getting straight ones [the equivalent of “A’s”] in her fifth grade class.”

The newsletter ran from 1964 to 1980 for the purpose of generating a positive image of the program on the reservation. Program participants and their parents welcomed the possibility of receiving a solid education and participating in civic positions, though most placement students were never presented with the opportunity of joining a municipal committee. The mere possibility of Navajos holding civic responsibility was encouraging, however, to program administrators.

21 *LDS Indian Student Placement Program Newsletter*, 1964–69, LDS Church History Library.
like Margaret Keller and Spencer W. Kimball who believed that no such opportunities existed for Native Americans without the Placement Program.

By the late 1960s, the program was shifted to the auspices of the new Unified Social Services Department of the Church. In 1968, new Placement Program manuals were issued to more clearly define program requirements and procedures.\textsuperscript{22} Individual booklets were geared specifically to local Church leaders, white potential foster parents, Navajo birth parents, and the students. According to one manual, 3,132 Indian students were placed in white homes during the 1968–69 school year by 46 caseworkers.\textsuperscript{23} After peaking at 5,000 in 1970, yearly enrollment hovered around 2,500 for the rest of the decade; but for reasons discussed later, by the late 1980s participation dropped to 300–400 placements annually, due to stricter program requirements and an increase in the number and quality of reservation schools.\textsuperscript{24}

The \textit{Lamanite Handbook of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints} was designed for local leaders, such as bishops and branch presidents, who were responsible for selecting program enrollees. To be eligible, Navajo children had to be at least eight years old, baptized members of the Church in good standing, current recipients of average grades, and “comparatively free” from emotional disturbances.\textsuperscript{25} These guidelines helped leaders identify students who already held Latter-day Saint beliefs and who desired to receive an education. In turn, program administrators hoped the requirements would lessen culture shock and hasten acculturation. Students not meeting these criteria, they feared, might resist the discipline of their foster parents and hold values incompatible with Latter-day Saint ideals. The stated purpose of the Placement Program was to provide “educational, spiritual, social, and cultural opportunities for Latter-day Saint Lamanite children,” thus enabling them to fill Church assignments and leader-

\textsuperscript{22}All of the manuals discussed here were used during the entire decade of the 1970s with only minor editing corrections. I used copies from a variety of years depending on their availability.

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Lamanite Handbook of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints}, December 1, 1968, 8, Perry Special Collections.


\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Lamanite Handbook}, 9.
ship positions at work and in the community.\textsuperscript{26}

Program administrators, perhaps unrealistically, expected placement students to teach their birth families what they had learned each summer when they returned to the reservation. In his 1972 \textit{Faith Precedes the Miracle}, a doctrinal exposition, Elder Kimball described the ideal outcomes of the program through the hypothetical story of Barry Begay, who entered the Placement Program at age ten. Although he lived distant from his biological family during the school year, both he and his parents were willing to endure the separation because it allowed him to “live in a good home, attend a superior school, and be given other advantages not afforded on the reservation.” In his foster home, he learned to pray daily and observe gospel standards. He learned English and excelled in his scholastic endeavors. When he returned to the reservation in the summertime, he taught his parents to speak better English and helped his family to form the habit of daily prayer. By the time of his high school graduation, his parents no longer spent money on tobacco or liquor. Instead, they used their savings to move from their hogan into a “two-room frame house” decorated with curtains and rugs and stocked with dishes. According to Kimball’s narrative, Barry’s participation in the program was the catalyst for the success of the entire family.\textsuperscript{27}

The Barry Begay scenario was highly idealistic, but Placement Program leaders sincerely believed that, if they exercised faith in guiding and implementing the program, lofty results would follow. Effective foster parent training, therefore, was vital to success. Prospective foster parents also had to meet certain standards before being called to participate in the program. Bishops and branch presidents were instructed to select parents on the “basis of their strong marital relationships, high moral standards, activity in the Church, family constellation, financial circumstances, and . . . desire to help a Lamanite child gain an education.”\textsuperscript{28} Participation was completely voluntary, but couples lacking in any of these areas would not be allowed to become foster parents.

The \textit{Foster Parent Guide} was designed to educate potential foster parents in matters of Navajo culture, enabling them to provide a loving

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{27}Spencer W. Kimball, \textit{Faith Precedes the Miracle} (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 353–54.
\textsuperscript{28}Lamanite Handbook, 9.
environment in which “adoptive” children could thrive. The guide suggested that “the Indian child in a foster home has the same needs as do other children, plus a few additional ones.”

Foster parents were instructed to never attempt to replace the child’s biological parents because the program’s intention was to preserve original family bonds while providing otherwise unavailable opportunities for the student. For example, this guide suggested learning how the children usually addressed their biological parents and finding alternative titles for the foster parents. For example, if a child already used “Mom and Dad” with his biological parents, the guide suggested a variation such as “Mother and Father” for the foster parents. This method would allow children to keep the two sets of parents in separate spheres. Although foster fathers and mothers filled the parental role for the sake of providing an education, the role of the biological parents as the “real” parents remained unchallenged. The guide also instructed foster parents to encourage students to write home regularly.

A brief description of Navajo language and culture provided orientation for foster parents in overcoming predictable difficulties. Grammatically, the Navajo language is the structural reverse of English. For this reason many students learning English for the first time misplaced nouns and verbs when attempting to communicate. Fearing to speak incorrectly, Navajo children tended to be silently unresponsive. The guide instructed foster parents to be patient and encouraging when communicating with the students, thus helping them build confidence in their new language abilities. They were also instructed not to inquire about the children’s reservation lives, since such curiosity was considered offensive to traditional Navajo culture. It was better to let the children volunteer information as they gained confidence in the foster family. While such suggestions were intended to facilitate immersion of Indian students into white Mormon family life, the guide cautioned foster parents to be patient. The students’ values and behaviors would not change overnight. Faith, respect, and self-confidence would not “suddenly appear within the student as if by a miracle.” Instead, such traits would develop slowly when foster parents “teach and enrich the Indian child’s life little by little

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29 Unified Social Services of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Foster Parent Guide, March 1970, 14, Perry Special Collections.
30 Ibid., 15.
and endure to the end.”

A separate manual, the *Natural Parent Guide*, was issued to explain the benefits of the program to the Navajo people. (Like all of these manuals, it was written in English.) It stressed that, although the children would be living in a foster home, “no one can take your place as parents.” It emphasized that “this program can only help you to help your child” by providing educational, spiritual, and leadership opportunities. The guide advised biological parents to help their children by writing regularly, visiting if possible, following guidelines for sending money, and working closely with the Church Social Services Department. The rules for sending money to placement children were straightforward: Don’t do it, unless some major need arises, in which case the money should be sent to the foster parents—not directly to the children. The general assumption seemed to be that biological parents would not have extra money to send anyway. If non-monetary problems should present themselves, biological parents were instructed to work them out through their bishop or branch president—not directly with their children.

The booklet also explained the expectations of the program. Children should live LDS standards and maintain good grades. The Church would transport the children to and from their placement areas free by bus at the beginning and end of the school year. Other trips were not covered financially. Caseworkers were to chaperone students during all travel, even if their biological parents were paying for travel expenses. Participation in the program was completely voluntary, so parents had the right to remove their children at any time. Caseworkers also reserved the right to expel students who did not adhere to program guidelines. The 1979 edition of the pamphlet ended with a series of encouraging statements from President Kimball, “The day of the Lamanite has arrived. . . . As you help him [the placement student] in this program, you will be helping the In-

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32Unified Social Services of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Natural Parent Guide*, June 1968, 1, Perry Special Collections; LDS Social Services, *Parents’ Guide to the Indian Placement Service*, 1979, 1, Perry Special Collections.
dian people fulfill their destiny.” The overall point seemed to be that by properly following the rules, parents would theoretically maintain a close relationship with their children, in spite of geographical separation.

The Student Guide reiterated many of the same policies outlined in the Natural Parent Guide and added other specific recommendations to allow the students to take full advantage of the experience. They should contribute to the foster home, participate in school activities and clubs, and “accept the social worker as a special friend and counselor.” Since the foster parents had voluntarily invited them into their homes, students would “be happier if they do their best to fit in to the family,” even if this family was very different than their biological family. The guide advised them to address the foster parents by the same titles that the biological children in the family used—interestingly, a contradiction of instructions in the Foster Parent Guide. Students should also refrain from speaking Navajo in front of non-Navajo speakers but should continue to do so with other Navajos. This process would let them retain their native language and avoid potentially hurtful situations with English speakers. During the summer months they were to help their native family live the gospel by maintaining high moral standards. In this way, not only the student, but the entire family, would benefit from the program.

The Program and the Indian Education Generally

Some of the theses and dissertations compare the LDS Placement Program with other U.S. Indian education programs. In general, placement differed from other government and religious Indian education efforts by completely immersing Native children in white society. Catholic and Protestant educational programs typically used either a missionary approach or reservation boarding schools. Although most missionaries and teachers were white and boarding school students’ access to their homes was severely restricted during the school year, such programs left the students on the reservation. The federal government provided boarding schools while state gov-

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33 Parents’ Guide to the Indian Placement Service, 2.
34 Unified Social Services of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Student Guide, June 1968, 3, Perry Special Collections.
ernments provided access to public schools adjacent to reservation areas. These types of schools also employed mainly white teachers but left students immersed in their traditional cultures because they either lived at home or associated only with other Indian children; the ultimate goal of such schools, however, was assimilation to white social norms. By the mid-1970s, Indian-operated schools emerged on the Navajo reservation, the most notable in Ramah, New Mexico. Most tribal leaders preferred this type of school due to lingering suspicions about the intentions of whites. They wanted to keep Navajo children at home with their biological families so they would receive instruction in traditional culture and customs.

The consensus among government officials, educators, and psychologists during the early 1970s was that Indian education programs in general, including the Placement Program, were extremely poor. A 1969 Senate report found that the Indian student high school drop-out rate was twice the national average; in certain school districts, it approached 100 percent. Native American students’ achievement levels lagged two to three years behind those of white students. One-fourth of elementary and secondary school teachers admitted that they would prefer not to teach Indian children. Only 1 percent of Indian elementary school children had Native American teachers or principals. Most staggeringly, the report found that Indian children, more than other minorities, believed themselves to be below average. In most instances, this report concluded, the education programs failed because they did not reflect the needs of Native American children and parents. Teachers’ paternalistic attitudes were especially prevalent in government-sponsored programs. They simply expected Indian children to behave like white children, but they did not.

Behaviors differed because of distinct cultures and backgrounds. While white-American society emphasized competition, Navajo society prized cooperation. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon value sys-

37Taylor, “A Comparative Study of Former LDS Placement and Non-Placement Navajo Students,” 10. For an overview of Native American education programs throughout the twentieth century, see Margaret Connell-Szasz, Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination since 1928 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974).


39Ibid., 5.
tem in which the individual reigned supreme, Navajo tradition stressed the importance of the group. Working together and sharing for the mutual good were praiseworthy attributes. Those striving to rise above the others by exhibiting special abilities, energies, and ambitions were scolded and rebuked. Thus, in a school setting, Navajo children normally remained quiet, unwilling to offer ideas or suggestions unless directly questioned because they had learned in their homes that such action could be interpreted as showing off. Also unlike white Americans, Navajos felt no urgency to meet time schedules and appointments. Their organization of time was much more flexible, seldom becoming more specific than morning, noon, and evening. Many times teachers attributed students' unconcerned, laid-back attitude to apathy, but an understanding of their basic cultural beliefs explained that their difference in attitude was not due to indifference or laziness. They were simply accustomed to their own traditions and lifestyles.

Congressional studies revealed other causes for the failures of Indian education. In many areas, below-average educational attainment was “directly linked to inadequate educational materials, school curriculums [sic] which are not relevant to the Indian culture, substandard facilities, lack of enough competent teachers, and failure to place appropriate decision making responsibility in the hands of the Indian people.” Such deplorable conditions were directly attributed to the federal government’s failure to uphold its responsibilities to educate Indian children.

Another reported problem was the fact that all Indian education programs, government or religious, sought the children’s acculturation. Unlike assimilation, the goal of acculturation is to combine attributes of two cultures rather than simply subsume minority cultures within the dominant one. To attain true acculturation, mutual respect for both white and Navajo customs had to exist. In most cases, however, it did not. Teachers expected students to conform by accepting white behavior patterns and attitudes, thus negating the children’s own belief systems. This attitude implied the superiority of white culture and left some students ashamed of their heritage, while others reacted by participating in “nativistic movements” that empha-

41 Senate Bill S. 2724, section (a), 20 October 1971, quoted in Rainer, “An Analysis of Attitudes Navajo Community Leaders Have,” 7–8.
sized their Native cultural traits at the expense of those imposed by whites.  

The Placement Program sought acculturation, but in a slightly different manner. By accepting baptism into the LDS Church, Navajo parents and children manifested a desire to embrace new beliefs and lifeways. Although Latter-day Saint missionaries approached Navajo families about the benefits of their faith, official Church instructions prohibited them from forcing their religion on those families wishing to retain traditional beliefs. Baptism was completely voluntary, although necessary to program participation. Missionaries were given a basic understanding of Navajo religion to help them understand the people they would teach. At the same time, however, they were warned to “be careful not to study Navajo religion out of mere curiosity.”  

This guideline was probably prompted by fears that such study would distract the missionaries from proselytizing. Missionaries were to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ in an effort to allow their contacts to draw their own conclusions. Those electing to be baptized were welcomed wholeheartedly into the faith, while those rejecting the message were still to be treated with kindness and respect as friends and neighbors. Missionary efforts and the Placement Program both stressed faith rather than culture. Mormon converts still observed some ele-

42Rainer, “An Analysis of Attitudes Navajo Community Leaders Have,” 13. As a possible methodology, the framework of assimilation and acculturation might be used to compare the experiences of placement students with the experiences of immigrants. For the classic immigration studies that utilize this framework, see Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); and Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City, 2d. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970). Nathan Glazer, “Is Assimilation Dead?,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 530, Interminority Affairs in the U. S.: Pluralism at the Crossroads (November 1993): 122–36, is a more recent reassessment of the use of assimilation and acculturation as analytical tools. Glazer argues that, although assimilation has become a somewhat pejorative term in everyday practice, it still has utility as a term of analysis.  

43Language Training Mission, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Culture for Missionaries: Navajo (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Printing Service, 1978), 99–104.
ments of Navajo culture, such as clan relations and traditional celebrations; but these attachments created cultural conflict. Church leaders stressed that cultural traits pertaining to traditional religion should be abandoned. This stance ignored the fact that traditional religion was inseparably interwoven with virtually all Navajo celebrations. At the most idealistic level, the Placement Program sought to acculturate its students only to an extent that would allow them to live within both societies, manifesting mutual respect for both cultures. Such a view, however, was not generally manifested in reality. By the mid-1970s, placement students, psychologists, scholars, and Native American leaders presented an opposing interpretation of the program and its benefits (or lack thereof).

**Program Perceptions Voiced by Non-Mormon Critics**

As scrutiny focused on federal Indian education programs during the 1970s, the LDS Placement Program was also attacked. Among the critics were social workers and psychologists who feared that the program created undue emotional strain for its participants. Some, such as Beth Wood, an ardent Indian advocate and child psychologist, accused program administrators of kidnapping Navajo children.44 Others, like anthropologist Martin D. Topper at the University of California, San Diego, believed the program was “neither a successful missionary practice nor a means of reducing the strain of acculturation on the Navajo child,” due mostly to the great psychological stress he believed that students faced.45 Non-LDS Navajos, as well as participants in the American Indian Movement (AIM), also assaulted the program for similar reasons. Through vocal opposition, these opponents tried to eradicate the Placement Program.

Beth Wood, who contributed articles to Indian and youth rights publications, criticized the Placement Program for several reasons. She felt that it confused the children’s sense of cultural identity and subjected them to emotional and psychological disorders. It was not natural for children to be taken away from their birth parents, especially when those parents already provided a loving home environ-

ment. Placement Program students were not being removed from abusive or neglectful homes—the justification for welfare services intervention. Rather, they were taken from stable families, merely because Latter-day Saints believed they could offer the children more opportunities than their biological parents. According to Wood, the benefits of such opportunities were debatable when compared to the suffering endured by placement students.  

Wood quoted numerous critics who supported her position. Dr. Jane Van Deusen, a pediatrician at the Tuba City, Arizona, hospital, noted that Navajo children acquired emotional disorders after participating in the program because they no longer knew “whether they are Anglo or Indian.” Program officials attempted to help the students live well in both societies but actually confused many of them. Dr. Robert Bergman, founder of the Indian Health Services (IHS) Mental Health Services branch on the Navajo reservation, complained that, “although statistics are not available to prove it, the LDS Placement Program does do many children harm.” When children were moved from the reservation to an area like Salt Lake City, they were led to believe that “what you left behind was no good,” he said. The students were able to think of themselves as good only when thinking that their families and heritage were bad. Such scorn toward their origins led to shame and conflict within the biological family. For example, during their first summer back on the reservation, children often refused to use the outhouse or herd sheep because such activities were considered “dirty” and “lower class.”

Martin D. Topper agreed that the greatest emotional stress was placed on placement students when they returned home to the reservation for the summer. Not only did the children again face the ordeal of culture shock, but they also had to deal with the reemergence of the painful memories that accompanied the initial break with their biological families. Topper found that these factors caused Navajo adolescents to “act out even more than usual teens.” To counter such responses, the children’s biological parents often performed traditional Navajo ceremonies to help them regain a sense of their native culture. Both non-Mormon and active Mormon parents drew on tra-

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47Jane Van Deusen, quoted in ibid., 17.
48Robert Bergman, quoted in ibid., 19.
49Topper, “Mormon Placement,” 149.
ditional religious practices in this way. James Dandy, a Navajo who went on placement at age eighteen (he felt a bit self-conscious because he was older than most high school students), belonged to an inactive Mormon family living near Blanding, Utah, on the Navajo reservation. Dandy was placed as a sophomore in Tremonton, Utah. When he returned to the reservation after his first year on placement, his grandfather, who was a medicine man, performed various ceremonies to help ease the transition back to Navajo life.\(^{50}\)

Although a report in the July 1978 *Navajo Times* defended the program against Wood’s allegations that it was a form of kidnapping, leaders of the Navajo nation generally opposed placement. The majority of the tribe’s elected officials, who were educated professionals, believed that the Placement Program harmfully disrupted Navajo family life. Additionally, a 1974 Ramah High School publication declared, “The Anglos and Mormons did not respect Navajo culture. They did not respect Navajo law. The Anglos and Mormons wanted the Navajos to become little brown Anglos. . . . Anglo and Mormon teachers told the kids in school not to speak Navajo. Many Navajo began to think that it’s bad to be Navajo and good to be Anglo or Mormon.”\(^{51}\) Native Americans associated with AIM actively demonstrated against the program. In 1974 the group marched on Temple Square in Salt Lake City and “demanded one million dollars in reparations.” In April 1974, AIM further demanded that Mormon missionaries be removed from all reservations.\(^{52}\)

The opposition of Wood and other social workers, as well as that of Navajos themselves and AIM participants, contributed to debate over legislation designed to limit the separation of Native children from their biological parents for educational purposes. In 1978 Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act to “set standards for the breakup of Indian families.”\(^{53}\) The law stopped short of dismantling the Placement Program, allowing the program to survive federal intervention.

\(^{50}\)James Lee Dandy, Interviewed by Jesse L. Embry, October 2, 1990, 4, 6–8, LDS Native American Oral History Project, Perry Special Collections.


**Placement Students’ Reaction to the Program**

Despite his difficulties upon returning to the reservation, James Dandy remained an advocate of the Placement Program throughout his life. Before his baptism and placement education, he had attended a Presbyterian boarding school in Tuba City, Arizona. He felt like a prisoner there. All of the students received “G.I. haircuts” and were subject to strict discipline. Several times he hitchhiked across the reservation to return to his family, but each time he found government vehicles waiting to take him back to school. He was always in trouble and constantly sad. By age seventeen he had become an alcoholic. Later that same year, however, he and his family were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At that point he entered the Placement Program to catch up and complete high school. His foster family lovingly helped him overcome alcoholism and receive his high school diploma. Dandy later served a Church mission on the Navajo reservation and married a Mormon Navajo woman. In his opinion, the Placement Program allowed him to be successful in all aspects of his life, and he was greatly disappointed when the program was cut back in the mid-1980s.54

Johnny Benally’s experiences in the program led him to extremely different conclusions. He spoke negatively of his years in the program because he missed the closeness that could have come only through growing up with his biological parents. Opportunities to share “common experiences and beliefs” with them were lost. Since he spent most of his childhood (beginning before he turned ten years old) and adolescence in a Latter-day Saint foster home, he never understood his biological family or native culture. Although he continued to love his birth parents, he lamented, “The things that are Navajo about them I cannot share.” Specifically, Benally regretted the unbridgeable distance between him and his biological father. He knew that his father loved him and wanted him to enjoy traditional elements of Navajo culture, but it was as though his father thought, “You’ve done well, but you aren’t Johnny anymore.”55

By 1979, Benally had become a successful city administrator in the Phoenix area; but to him, this success did not justify broken family

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54Dandy, Interview, 3–5, 11–14. Dozens of former placement students’ oral histories are filed in the Perry Special Collections. The few cited here are only a representative sampling of the varied opinions voiced by students.

ties caused by the Placement Program. As he explained: “I am successful, but I’ll never be white; yet I don’t have a sense of being Navajo. The sense of loss won’t destroy me and I will do well within the white man’s society. But I could never go back and live on the reservation. The only things I know about Indians I learned from books. . . . If the Mormons haven’t created the cultural clash there, they sure as hell have aggravated it.”\textsuperscript{56} Benally’s comments perfectly illustrate Wood’s concerns. He saw himself as a man without a family or a culture—an example of what scholar Milton Gordon has termed “the marginal man.” Someone who fits this category “stands on the borders or margins of two cultural worlds but is fully a member of neither.”\textsuperscript{57}

Carletta Yellowjohn praised the program. She was grateful for the opportunity of living with a loving family while attending school. Like Dandy, she attributed her later success in life to her participation in the program. Also like him, however, she admitted that the program was “sad in the long run because you’re not close to your family. . . . I think they [program administrators] thought that maybe the Indians weren’t strong enough to raise their children. I don’t know what that meant. If I were to be a parent, I would never be able to give up my kids and say, ‘Go. Go to another home, a white home and live with them.’” Like Johnny Benally, she could no longer share the lifestyle of her biological parents. Although her love remained strong, she felt distanced from them because she lacked an understanding of Navajo culture. Yet Yellowjohn believed that such a cost was minimal when weighed against the benefits of placement participation. She witnessed changes in members of her biological family as they learned to live Latter-day Saint standards. Such changes were not as far-reaching as those of Elder Kimball’s hypothetical Begay family, but she viewed them as important. Her parents and siblings learned English and, most importantly, found the strength to overcome the alcoholism so

is important to note that Benally’s negative assessment of the program was not found in an interview in the LDS Native American Oral History Project but in Wood’s article. Most of the oral histories cast the program in a positive light, probably because those interviewed for the project continued to participate in Church activities. Many placement students, however, did not continue to affiliate with the Church. Sources such as Wood’s article provide access to their opinions.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{57}Gordon, \textit{Assimilation in American Life}, 56.
prevalent in Navajo society.\footnote{Carletta O. Yellowjohn, Interviewed by Odessa Neaman, July 10, 1990, 13–16, LDS Native American Oral History Project, Perry Special Collections.}

Mabel Yazzie, a program graduate interviewed by Beth Wood, also spoke highly of her placement experience, although the initial adjustment was traumatic. Mormon social workers took her, at age eight, from her home in Sheep Springs, Arizona, and put her on a bus bound for Roy, Utah. She recounted: “I cried all night long on the bus. I’d never been in a big city. I didn’t speak one word of English. The only thing I knew about placement was that when my cousin came back from her placement home she had nice clothes and pretty patent-leather shoes.”\footnote{Mabel Yazzie, quoted in Wood, “Mormons and the Indian Adoption Racket,” 51.} Little Mabel did not understand the program in which she was participating or the new culture she was about to encounter. Once the initial shock subsided, however, she regarded the experience in a completely different light. Looking back on her years in the program, she remarked, “It was fantastic. I am adapted to both cultures. I feel equally comfortable [sic] in them. I had a really good family and the community accepted me.” To her, the benefits were not only spiritual, but also social. Navajo women were normally extremely quiet and shy, but those who participated in the Placement Program became outgoing and talkative. These social skills helped her become a legal administrator for the Navajo Nation. Still, she admitted, “Placement has made me lose touch with my culture. I respect it, but I don’t really feel [that it’s] mine.”\footnote{Ibid., 18. Although Wood includes Yazzie’s positive comments, her main point is that the program caused Yazzie to become disconnected from her native culture.} Despite the cultural losses, Yazzie continued to promote the Placement Program. She sent her own brother and sister to placement homes because she felt that the advantages greatly outweighed the disadvantages.

**Program Administrators’ Reaction to Criticism**

Leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continued to promote the program’s benefits despite its critics. Spencer W. Kimball, president of the Church between 1973 and his death in 1985, persisted in advocating the continuation of the program. Elder George
P. Lee, the only Navajo to serve as a General Authority, also emerged as a symbol of the program’s success. After rising through the Placement Program, he received a Ph.D. in educational administration and was called to serve as a mission president and member of the First Quorum of Seventy in the early 1970s. Placement students revered him as a hero. Such efforts allowed the Placement Program to survive the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, although by the mid-1980s the increasing quality of reservation schools caused it to fade to obscurity.

In the midst of all the controversy relating to the Placement Program, President Kimball continued to promote its benefits, although he felt personally betrayed by the actions of AIM and other program critics who misrepresented the “unselfish motives” behind Latter-day Saint efforts to improve Indian education. Through addresses on national television and radio, he pled with the nation as a whole to reach out to Indians. He also continued his long-standing tradition of issuing such pleas to members of the Church, among whom he had gained a reputation as the champion of the Lamanite. Since the early 1960s he had been constantly troubled by the realization that Church Indian programs were hampered by a lack of interest on members’ part. In a meeting of the Council of the Twelve in 1963, Kimball was shocked to learn that many of his fellow apostles believed that Indians held no special priority for missionary or other work. He was also greatly distressed at cases of excommunications when Native American members fell away from Church doctrinal and behavioral standards. Such reports hinted at the failings of Indian programs for which he had labored so intensely.

Still, President Kimball never gave up. He promoted George P. Lee as an example to the Navajo people. Elder Lee emerged in his own right as a special Latter-day Saint ambassador to his people. The 1978 guide for missionary instruction among the Navajos declared:

It is not the Navajo way to look up to some hero, the way Anglos might look up to George Washington, and say, “I want to become the kind of person he was.” It would be most unusual for a traditional Navajo to say to his child, “Work hard and you’ll grow up to be like Manuelito.” . . . But as the Navajos find their lives more intimately con-

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61 See interviews with Dandy, 17–18, and Yellowjohn, 24–25.
nected to the world around them, they may realize that they need some heroes they can look up to, heroes who can show them how to survive in two cultures—especially men whose examples teach them how to combine the best elements of the Navajo culture with the principles of the gospel so that they can live lives pleasing to God. One such beacon is George P. Lee, Navajo mission president and General Authority.64

Elder Lee represented the benefits and successes of the Placement Program. In 1977, he testified before a Senate committee considering the proposed Indian Child Welfare Act, whose original form threatened to effectively end the Placement Program. Elder Lee told the committee that through his experiences in placement he had gained a true sense of identity and that he learned “how to rise above the problems that have kept my people from progressing.” He found a way to bridge the gap between white and Navajo society, in order to become a successful member of both.65 The Parents’ Guide attributed modification of the act in large measure to his testimony, thus enabling the continuation of the Placement Program into the 1980s.

CONCLUSION

By the late 1980s, improved Navajo-operated reservation schools led to the eventual end of the Placement Program. Many graduates—for example, James Dandy—lamented its passing but also believed it had served its purpose in bringing confidence to its participants. New programs and better schools on the reservations obviated the need for the program to bridge white and Indian societies. In spite of a general loss of cultural understanding, many program graduates, such as Mabel Yazzie, returned to the reservation to aid their people. Lamentably, George P. Lee was excommunicated on September 1, 1989, largely over issues connected to the end of Lamanite programs. In a letter to the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve, Lee sharply “criticized the leaders for pride, unconcern for the poor, materialism, prejudice against Indians, and depriving the Lamanites of their special place in Mormon theology.” He also stated, “I feel like the only person who completely trusted me was President

64 Language Training Mission, Culture for Missionaries: Navajo, 79.
Lee strongly endorsed a statement made by Elder Kimball early in his career as a General Authority: “I am conscious of the fact that the Lord has not forgotten the Lamanites, but sometimes I think maybe we have [as a Church].” Many former placement students, such as Carletta Yellowjohn, had looked to Elder Lee as an inspiration and were saddened by his defection but expressed determination to press forward in the Latter-day Saint faith.

The Indian Student Placement Program was a well-intentioned, though idealistic, effort made by leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to uplift their Native American brothers and sisters. In spite of official policies that encouraged efforts to honor and preserve Navajo culture, however, nearly all program graduates experienced a disconnection from their native culture and biological families. Critics cited these losses as the basis for grave psychological and emotional problems suffered by program participants. An objective appraisal of the actual outcomes is difficult to determine. Many Navajo children indeed experienced such problems, but many others did not. Those in the second group received a boost of confidence and acquired flexibility and skills that allowed them to fill meaningful roles within the Church and in their communities.

Quite predictably, those graduates still active in the Church apparently view their placement experience in a positive light while those who have separated themselves from the Church view it negatively. While this article is general in its scope, more extensive research is needed to reveal possible correlations between continued Church service and attitudes toward the Placement Program. This article points out various sources and methods that could be employed to undertake more detailed and systematic investigation; and since only one scholarly work on the subject has been published since the late 1970s, the time is ripe for a reappraisal of this interesting and important historical program. It may have new relevance as the Church continues to expand internationally and to deal in its core culture area with heightened rates of immigrants.

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67 Ibid., 289.
68 Yellowjohn, Interview, 21, 24–25.
69 Allen, “Rise and Decline.”
THE CHURCH ENTERS THE MEDIA AGE: JOSEPH F. MERRILL AND GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Rob Taber

FOR THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST of Latter-day Saints, 1933 was a year of grave concern over economic conditions. The Church had approximately 700,000 members, primarily concentrated in the Intermountain West of the United States, and unemployment reached over 50 percent in Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake City.1 Because of financial concerns, it became rare for individuals to serve full-time proselyting missions. In 1933, only 525 missionaries were sent to thirty-one missions.2 It was under these circumstances that, on August 25, 1933, the First Presidency selected Joseph F. Merrill, the Church Commissioner of Education and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to lead the European Mission.3 During Merrill’s three years of service, he created a method of proselytizing that improved the effectiveness of missionaries in Europe and led to

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3First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,
the creation of the Church Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee. In doing so, Merrill helped the Church leadership conceive a strategy for actively presenting a public face to the world, drawing into the process a young missionary named Gordon B. Hinckley who never lost sight of the good done through public relations during a long Church career that included being a General Authority for almost fifty years (1958–2008), counselor to three Church presidents (1981–95), and Church president (1995–2008).

Merrill was born on August 24, 1868, in Cache County, Utah, to Marriner Wood Merrill and Maria Loenza Kingsbury Merrill. Joseph Merrill received his B.S. in chemistry from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1893, followed by a Ph.D. in physics and electrical engineering from the Johns Hopkins University in 1899. He was one of the first native Utahns to receive a Ph.D. After his graduation from Michigan, he joined the science faculty of the University of Utah, teaching physics and electrical engineering until 1928.

Exposed to Church leadership through his father, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and president of the Logan Temple, Merrill demonstrated in his Church service an ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to develop new techniques for the achievement of traditional goals. At the turn of the century, the Church still operated several academies to provide its youth with a secondary education. As public schools became more available, the Church decided it was time to close the academies, but it still desired to provide members with religious training. By 1912, Merrill was a member of the Granite Stake presidency in Salt Lake City. One of his responsibilities was religious education. He persuaded the local public school district to allow high school students the option of leaving campus for one class period a day to take classes in Church doctrine and scriptures in a nearby but off-campus Church building. This “released time” approach was a success, and soon similar seminaries were founded in other predominantly LDS communities. By the time of the Great Depression, Merrill was the Church’s Commissioner of Education, and in 1931 he was ordained an apostle.

Letter to Joseph F. Merrill, August 25, 1933, Joseph F. Merrill Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Merrill Collection).

4 The Church has no seminary-trained clergy, so “seminary” in an LDS context refers to its program of daily religious education designed for teenag-
At that point, the Church was faced with another educational crisis; it was too expensive to operate its six remaining colleges (upgraded from their former status as academies), and the state of Utah was developing a competing junior college system. It was Merrill’s task to oversee the transfer of Weber, Dixie, and Snow colleges to the state of Utah and Gila College to the state of Arizona. Although these decisions were complicated and painful, particularly for loyal members who had sacrificed much to support these institutions, Merrill succeeded in his assignment. Throughout his Church service, Merrill demonstrated his ability to improvise in the face of changing conditions.

In 1933 when Merrill was appointed as mission president, the president of the European Mission was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve who, from an office in London, oversaw the proselytizing work and other Church affairs in missions in Europe, Palestine, and South Africa. Not directly responsible for any particular area, he worked closely with the local mission presidents and acted as the Church’s top representative in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. At this time, besides the missions under the purview of the European Mission, the Church operated only eight missions outside North America. From around 1840 until early in the twentieth century, foreign converts were encouraged to immigrate to the Great Basin. However, a policy change at that point encouraged converts to stay in their native lands and establish strong congregations. This policy allowed more local participation and the training and growth of local leadership. After World War I, the Church gained momentum in Germany and Austria; and under the Weimar Republic, baptisms in this region led the Church. By 1930, only the United States had more Latter-day Saints than Germany.

Before Merrill’s departure for Europe in 1933, the First Presidency blessed him that he would have “increased liberty of utterance and that your mind may be lit up by the light and inspiration that
come from your Heavenly Father.” These gifts became important during Merrill’s term of service because of the increasingly tense political situation. By the time he completed his assignment in 1936, it was illegal for missionaries serving in Germany to advertise meetings publicly, and missionaries in Czechoslovakia were soon afterwards arrested as alleged spies.

Despite the fact that he had not served a mission as a young man, Merrill had strong views on the importance of missionary work. He believed that the gospel message was directly applicable to the problems confronting the people of Europe. Merrill felt that if everyone “actually lived according to the teachings of Jesus—really observed the two great commandments ([to] love God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself)—our social and economic troubles would vanish and peace, happiness, and security will prevail.” Merrill’s optimism was due to faith, not ignorance; he understood well the international situation, at one point stating that Europe was “passing through the darkest period of its existence since the War”—by which he meant World War I. He posed the question, “Are we on the brink of another conflagration?”

Because of the developing crisis, Merrill was concerned about the tools available to help missionaries in their work. It is clear that he wanted to improve their effectiveness so that more people could be contacted in a shorter period of time. Traditionally, missionaries had used street meetings, tracting (calling on households and requesting the opportunity to present a message), exhibits at fairs, meetings held in homes of members or in chapels, and presenting public addresses as

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7“A Blessing upon the Head of Elder Joseph F. Merrill by Presidents Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, and J. Reuben Clark, Jr., President Grant Being Voice, Setting Him Apart to Preside over the European Mission,” August 25, 1933, Merrill Collection.

8Roy A. Welker, Berlin, Letter to First Presidency, Salt Lake City, September 11, 1936, Merrill Collection. See also Wallace F. Toronto, Prague, Letter to Joseph F. Merrill, Salt Lake City, September 15, 1936, Merrill Collection. Toronto was president of the Czecho-Slovakian Mission; and after explaining the missionaries’ arrest, he lamented, “The devil himself seems to be taking advantage of every opportunity to destroy our work.”


10Joseph F. Merrill, Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Richard S. Bennett, March 12, 1936, Merrill Collection.
their chief proselytizing repertoire.\textsuperscript{11} Other than a few tracts and pamphlets\textsuperscript{12} such as Charles W. Penrose’s *Rays of Living Light* and B. H. Roberts’s *Why Mormonism?* no published materials existed on a Churchwide basis to aid missionaries in contacting interested persons.\textsuperscript{13}

Given this dearth of effective materials, Merrill improvised by writing informative articles about the Church for British newspapers, writing corrective letters to the editors of newspapers that published false statements about the Church, and supporting the publication of the British Mission’s newspaper, the *Millennial Star*, and its counterparts in various languages for the missions on the Continent.\textsuperscript{14} As early as January 1934, the First Presidency suggested that Merrill develop new methods for disseminating favorable information about the Church.\textsuperscript{15} Merrill looked at the contemporary methods of other churches and organizations and decided that the radio and the cinema were “the popular contact agencies. By their use it would be possible to preach the gospel to all the world in a day.”\textsuperscript{16}

To this point, Church publicity had primarily promoted the

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\textsuperscript{12}One series used biblical evidence to support the Church’s position and another was published in commemoration of the Church’s centennial in 1930. These tracts were effective enough that missionaries frequently wrote to Merrill requesting more copies.

\textsuperscript{13}“Report of the Conference of the Presidents of the European Missions Held at Berlin, Germany, June 11th to 15th (Inclusive),” 1936, Merrill Collection.

\textsuperscript{14}Joseph F. Merrill, Letter to the Editor, *Glasgow Herald*, January 21, 1935, Merrill Collection.

\textsuperscript{15}Joseph F. Merrill, “Visit to the Canadian Mission, July 3rd to 18th, 1937,” Merrill Collection; Joseph F. Merrill, Untitled notes on proselyting methods, September 29, 1933 and October 3, 1933, Merrill Collection. Merrill placed a high priority on active engagement in public affairs. In his September 29 notes, under the headings of “Publicity,” he listed the importance of speaking with editors and writers. He then wrote “Winnifred Graham,” a reference to the author of *Trapped by the Mormons*. On the next line, he wrote: “Never let an attack pass without an answer (Unwritten law of defense 50–50 space).”

\end{quote}
Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Cinematic publicity on a Churchwide level was nonexistent. In March 1934, Merrill selected as his assistant Gordon B. Hinckley, a missionary who had just graduated from the University of Utah with a degree in English. Hinckley possessed substantial journalistic abilities; he had been admitted to Columbia University to pursue graduate studies in journalism but had opted to postpone his studies and instead serve a mission. Merrill gave him the task of overseeing the mission’s publicity. While being chosen as an assistant surprised Hinckley, he was not unfamiliar with Church administration and publicity. His uncle Alonzo A. Hinckley, also an apostle, had served as president of the California Mission in the early 1930s; and his father, Bryant S. Hinckley, was a Church and educational leader who wrote dozens of articles for the Church’s *Improvement Era*, the *Juvenile Instructor*, and the *Millennial Star* and who served as president of the Central States Mission (January 1936–April 1939).

When Gordon Hinckley showed a marked ability to communicate information about the Church in a positive light, Merrill commissioned him to prepare three black-and-white filmstrips to help missionaries in their contacting and teaching. The filmstrips focused on the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, important events in Church history, and the attractions of Salt Lake City. The LDS Church needed favorable publicity in Great Britain, where the anti-Mormon film *Trapped by the Mormons* had been popular only eleven years previous and where, throughout the 1920s, Britons heckled the missionaries and frequently looked upon the Church with a high level of suspicion. Merrill wrote in the *Improvement Era*: “The proselyting activities of the L. D. S. missionary shall center in *The Book of Mormon*.” He described the use of filmstrips and radio as a means to the end—to get people to listen to the missionaries—for “people everywhere in these modern times do not seem to be interested in at-

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18Dew, *Go Forward with Faith*, 69, 71.
19Ibid., 43–44, 105, 120.
20Ibid., 72.
21Ibid., 63–64.
tending religious services.”

The scripts of five filmstrips Hinckley produced after his return home still exist, and it appears that he embodied Merrill’s philosophy of attracting attention by offering interesting information, not a theological debate or doctrinal principles. In the preface of the script for Forgotten Empires, he instructs the lecturer who will present the filmstrip:

The material in these scripts, for use with film-slides of corresponding titles, while confirmatory of the Book of Mormon, is not put forth as “proof” of its authenticity. Rather, these lectures have been prepared in the hope that on hearing them listeners will have aroused within themselves a desire to learn more of early American civilization. If this interest is aroused there will have been provided a valuable approach to discussions of the Book of Mormon, which may eventually lead to its reading. The book itself, prayerfully read, offers the finest evidence for its divinity.

The filmstrip opens with a map of the Americas, then pictures of shell heaps, burial mounds, and cliff dwellings before moving on to central Mexican structures, including the Pyramid of the Moon and the Pyramid of the Sun. The lecture touches on archaeological proof of horses and toy wheels in the ancient Americas, Maya cities and temples, and Inca artifacts. The lecture then ends with this poetic conclusion:

The sun sets over Titicaca, the highest large lake in the world. No longer the commerce of the Incas plies across its waters. Ruins here and there speak mute. From the plains of North America to the pampas of South America are a thousand mighty works to attest to the presence of once great civilizations. They present a kaleidoscopic picture of great nations, of their rise to power—and of their falling star. . . .

Where did their culture originate?

Many theories have been advanced in explanation of the known facts. In this connection it is interesting to note the account found in a book first published in 1830.

This interesting book tells the story that at least three groups came to America from across the sea—one from the land of the tower of Babel at the time of the confusion of tongues and two from Jerusa-

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23Preface, Forgotten Empires and Before Columbus: Two Film-Slide Lectures, booklet, 42 pp., 1938 revision of 1936 edition, BX 8608 .A1 no. 992, Americana Collection, Perry Special Collections.
lem about 600 B.C. Upon their arrival they found among other animals, the horse and the elephant. In their new home they developed a high degree of culture on the foundation of learning they had brought with them. They used chariots and mastered a process for making steel. They were architects and builders of great skill, and a scarcity of wood in the land compelled them to become proficient in the use of stone and cement. According to the story, at its height their social order was unexcelled, but through long periods of war, provoked through greed and pride, they fell into a state of barbarism.\textsuperscript{24}

Compare this framing for the Book of Mormon with that given by Charles Penrose in his \textit{Rays of Living Light}:

The colonization of America by the seed of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, fulfills the blessings pronounced on the head of Joseph and his sons by the patriarch Jacob. (See Gen. xlvi, also xliv, 22–26, also the blessings pronounced by the Prophet Moses, Deut. xxxii; 13–17.) The historical portion of the Book of Mormon shows that the American Continent, possessed by a “multitude of nations,” the seed of Ephraim and Manasseh, is the “blessed land” bestowed in the addition to his portion in Canaan. . . . That the word of the Lord was to be given to the seed of Ephraim, may be seen from Hosea viii: 11, 12: “Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is foreshadowed by Isaiah the prophet, Chapter xxix:4–19. It is the voice of a fallen people whispering “out of the dust.” It has come at a time when the world is “drunken, but not with wine,” staggering under the influence of false doctrine, and without prophets and seers. It is the “marvelous work and a wonder,” which the Lord was to bring to pass for the confounding of those who had turned things upside down, and who worshiped him with their mouths while their hearts were far from him.\textsuperscript{25}

Hinckley takes a more secular approach than Penrose. He never cites specific passages of the Bible and mentions only one story, the Tower of Babel. Both authors construct a sweeping narrative in which they place the Book of Mormon. For Penrose, the story focused on the Bible and worked well in a Bible-literate and book-reading society.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 22–23.

Hinckley, who had met many people who had not been interested in the Bible or in reading any religious book, framed the Book of Mormon as a human drama: pride, greed, war, and the rise and fall of empires. The potential contacts did not have to think of themselves as partakers of religious material before being interested. The filmstrip format, with speaking and images, also allowed for a more passive, and therefore relaxed and enjoyable, experience for the watcher.

To help the missionaries adapt their presentation to different audiences, Hinckley told them they had flexibility in what they said in the lectures that accompanied the filmstrips. In the presentation *Landmarks of Church History*, the missionary had the option of reading the presentation, at least in English, or using the commentary as a guide.\(^\text{26}\) Most telling, perhaps, is the booklet that accompanied *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Pictures*.\(^\text{27}\) While the author is not identified in the booklet, it is almost certain that Hinckley wrote it, as he was working for the Church’s Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee in Salt Lake City at the time of the script’s production. This filmstrip incorporated his earlier filmstrip on Salt Lake City, which he had produced as a missionary, into the second half of the filmstrip. It includes 190 photos, but the author gives extended commentary for only nineteen. Part 1, which focuses on Joseph Smith’s history, primarily quotes the canonized 1838 version in the Pearl of Great Price. The filmstrip includes an image of the granite shaft at the Joseph Smith birthplace in Vermont, characters copied from the gold plates, sheets from the first edition of the Book of Mormon, a diagram of the Church’s priesthood organization, images of the Kirtland and Nauvoo temples, and a photograph of the watch carried by John Taylor in Carthage Jail at the time of Joseph Smith’s assassination.

The commentary, to be read aloud by the lecturer, in addition to quotations from Joseph Smith’s 1838 history, also quotes Martin Harris’s description of his visit to Charles Anthon, and, as the longest entry, Thomas Kane’s description of Nauvoo after the Saints’ departure. Part 1 ends with a description of the last camp before Brigham Young


\(^{27}\)The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Church Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee, *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Pictures*, 22 pp. 1936, BX 8608 .A1 no. 991, Americana Collection, Perry Special Collections.
and his party arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847.

Part 2 focuses on the growth of Salt Lake City, the construction of its temple (1893) and tabernacle, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad (1869), rather than a history of the Church. The Logan and St. George temples are shown in one photo each, but the lecture makes no mention of Brigham Young’s successors, other than Heber J. Grant, the living Church president. Needless to say, neither polygamy nor the Mountain Meadows Massacre, traditionally two of the sorest points in Mormon-Gentile relations, are mentioned.

The still photos include a contour map of Lake Bonneville, a street scene of Salt Lake City around 1860, several depictions of the tabernacle and temple during their construction, the Saltair Bathing Resort, and Episcopal, Christian Science, Presbyterian, and Catholic houses of worship in Salt Lake City. The filmstrip also includes photographs of the Church Administration Building, the Bingham copper mine, an aerial view of Brigham Young University, and the attractive grounds of Temple Square.

Unlike Part 1, which relies heavily on quotations, most of the commentary for Part 2 is written by the author (presumably Hinckley) and focuses on pioneer industry and ingenuity. For example, in describing a photo of the rock quarry in Little Cottonwood Canyon, Hinckley wrote: “This picture will give you some idea of the difficulties encountered by these workmen in breaking the huge stones and shaping them for use in the Temple. Rock was plentiful but there was no modern equipment to handle and cut it. Every stone for this building was cut by hand by devoted men spurred on by faith that [their] reward would be eternal.”

Like the first two filmstrips, this one also focuses on providing “general interest” topics. Although it would be easy, in follow-up conversations, to talk about the pioneers’ foundation of faith which fueled their devotion and determination, none of the three systematically teaches the gospel.

Hinckley intended these filmstrips to attract the attention of the irreligious; and in most cases, the missionaries used them effectively to gain entrance to homes and correct some of the more prevalent

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28Ibid., 17.
negative views of the Church and its members. They were so successful that, the nine presidents of the European missions decided, at a conference in Liège in June 1935, to use them wherever possible to generate interest in the Church. Merrill characterized the filmstrips as “one of the best contact means now available.”

While missionaries in the European missions were using Hinckley’s filmstrips to good effect by 1935, Merrill wanted to shift their production to Salt Lake City so they could be used Churchwide. He therefore sent to Church headquarters a copy of the filmstrip on the Book of Mormon so that the leadership could distribute it. He also made Hinckley his personal envoy and gave him two tasks: to report the need for filmstrips to the First Presidency and to produce materials that could be used worldwide.

Hinckley returned to Salt Lake City in late July 1935 and spent his first week home working on a filmstrip about the pioneer trek. He met with David A. Smith of the Presiding Bishopric who, along with Apostle John A. Widtsoe was in charge of mission publicity. Bishop Smith told him that, when Elder Widtsoe got back in town, he would speak to Hinckley about making the young man’s continued work on the materials a permanent assignment.

President Grant had spent much of the summer traveling in the eastern United States. Awaiting his return, Hinckley continued to work on filmstrips, polishing the written lectures, and tracking down suitable photos. On August 19, 1935, Hinckley met with President Grant and David O. McKay, with Joseph Anderson taking shorthand notes of Hinckley’s report. As he told Merrill, “Brother McKay expressed himself as being heartily in favor of the [filmstrips]. The President was non-committal.” Grant and McKay apparently took the report seriously but told Hinckley to keep working with Widtsoe and David Smith.

Widtsoe had the responsibility for publicity and had to give his personal approval on any new tracts or filmstrips before the staff sent

29Dew, Go Forward with Faith, 72.
31Dew, Go Forward with Faith, 77.
them out to the missions, but he was frequently too busy with other duties to push the development of filmstrips or read and approve new tracts. A couple of days after the meeting, Hinckley received Merrill’s response to his letter of August 7. Apparently cautioning Hinckley against excessively high hopes, he wrote: “The brethren are sympathetic but they are extremely busy, particularly Brother Widtsoe and Bishop [David A.] Smith. I do not see how the latter has any time at all to devote to our project. Of course we are very grateful for the sympathy and hope that they will put you on the job.”34 Significantly, this letter contains the first reference to Merrill’s desire—apparently fully shared by Hinckley—that he have an official role in producing these new materials.

After a month passed with no word from the First Presidency, Hinckley followed up on his meeting with them by writing: “Some time ago I presented to you President Joseph F. Merrill’s desires relative to the preparation of a series of filmstrips to be used in proselyting activities. . . . Now I am in receipt of two letters from President Merrill urging me to hasten on with the work. He also repeats the suggestion . . . that I be employed by the Church to expedite the completion of this work. I think he has already written you to that effect.”35 Hinckley’s employment by the Church, while it was unusual given the tightness of funds during the Great Depression,36 was a sensible proposal given the tremendous workload already being carried by the small staff at Church headquarters. Hinckley understood the needs of the European missions, he had practical experience in creating useful filmstrips, and he was personally interested in seeing the task through to completion.37

Only a month later on October 16, 1935, the First Presidency formally approved the creation of a new entity—the Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee, chaired by Elder Stephen L. Richards of the Twelve, then age fifty-six, who had been an apostle since 1917. That same day, Hinckley wrote enthusiastically to Merrill, “The committee [will] engage me to do the work, perhaps

35 Gordon B. Hinckley, Salt Lake City, Letter to the First Presidency, September 18, 1935, Merrill Collection.
36 Dew, Go Forward with Faith, 87.
37 Merrill’s correspondence with the First Presidency and with other General Authorities is not yet available to researchers.
some other work besides.”

This committee was the beginning of a Churchwide public relations initiative, but many details remained unresolved. After telling Hinckley he was hired, Richards left to complete assignments in California, leaving Hinckley on his own to get the work started. After two weeks spent trying to get official approval for his work thus far and his ideas for the line of production, Hinckley reported to Merrill: “I am tired of waiting for this thing to get going, and have decided to plug in, come what may.” Merrill was delighted that his former assistant was being put to work, commenting in early November: “Be assured we shall try to keep you busy.”

During the next seven months, Hinckley polished the filmstrips on the Book of Mormon, the history of the Church, the General Authorities, the pioneers, and possibly the Word of Wisdom. He also worked on streamlining production of the photos, including getting them colored. In May 1936, Hinckley learned with delight that Merrill would be returning to Salt Lake City that July. He wrote enthusiastically that Merrill would be “a real power for this work and in making known the necessity of new projects.” He reported progress on his end: “We are . . . getting this film business going on a satisfactory basis.” The publicity committee was on firm footing, producing filmstrips, radio programs, and other useful materials for the Church’s missionary and public relations efforts.

As the political situation in Europe grew increasingly tense, missionaries found the filmstrips progressively more useful, fulfilling a need created by the breakdown of more conventional missionary techniques. In Germany, where government regulations hampered tracting and placing Church-related articles in newspapers, the filmstrips provided an alternative means of communicating the Church’s message. This was particularly true in areas where the Church’s presence was limited or non-existent. The filmstrips were an effective tool for spreading the gospel and educating the public about the Church’s teachings and history.

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40 Joseph F. Merrill, London, to Gordon B. Hinckley, Salt Lake City, November 12, 1935, Merrill Collection.
42 For more information on Hinckley’s career at Church headquarters, see Dew, Go Forward with Faith. Chapters 6, 8–13, have particular information on Church publicity.
pers, the missionaries showed the filmstrips in homes and lecture halls. Roy A. Welker, president of the German Mission, described the country as a land “full of faithful people who would readily come to the Church if prejudice could be broken down, if we could but reach them more perfectly in order to lead them to an understanding of the message we have.” He noted that baptisms had increased and that the filmstrips had “proved to be very fruitful. These can be used in the homes of saints and friends, in halls, schools. . . . [M]any, many people have been reached that way. Prejudice has been broken down and understanding developed.”43 Using the filmstrips, missionaries continued to effectively proselyte in Germany until the outbreak of World War II in the fall of 1939. Only Wallace Toronto, president of the Czecho-Slovakian Mission, reported a negative aspect to the program. While projectors “have been useful . . . the Elders have been loathe to use them, due to their inability to speak effectively.” The lack of a full script written in the native language was thus a major drawback; still, despite the language barrier, Toronto reported that the missionaries planned to use the pictures “for publicity purposes.”44

A year later, shortly before Merrill departed for Salt Lake, he called another conference, this time in Berlin. Again, he sought information from the mission presidents about the effectiveness of the filmstrips. At least five of the missions were using them actively. President Milton Knudsen of the Norwegian Mission said, “Emphasis on the Book of Mormon has brought favorable results and a great increase in the number of Books of Mormon sold. Illustrated lectures (the filmstrips) have aided greatly in this work.” President T. Edgar Lyon of the Netherlands Mission reported, “Three projection machines have been purchased and are in almost constant use. These have resulted in numerous invitations [for the missionaries] to visit people in their homes.” President Joseph J. Cannon of the British Mission stated that the mission’s six machines and lectures were “doing much good.”45

The filmstrips themselves and, more broadly, the method of proselytizing by first raising interest in related, but not specifically re-

45LeGrand Richards, quoted in ibid.
ligious, subjects spread to missions outside Europe. LeGrand Richards, president of the Southern States Mission, wrote to the Missionary Committee in August 1936: “You may feel that our wants are excessive, but our missionaries are having so much success . . . in getting into homes and opening doors for preaching the Gospel, that it seems not a shame to supply their needs. Kindly do all you can for us to enable us to supply the missionaries with the necessary films at the earliest possible date.” Other mission presidents in the United States expressed the same enthusiasm for the filmstrips and reported the same success in using them effectively in proselytizing efforts.⁴⁶

The changes initiated by Joseph F. Merrill and Gordon B. Hinckley transformed missionary work, making it easier for missionaries to attract the attention of the irreligious. They also resulted in the formation of a Church committee specifically charged with presenting a public face to the world. The efforts of the Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee in creating filmstrips, writing radio programs, and organizing effective exhibitions at World Fairs launched the Church into the era of mass media. They laid the foundation for the modern Church program that uses DVDs, television commercials, the internet, and visitors’ centers throughout the world to improve public perceptions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.


REVIEWED BY H. MICHAEL MARQUARDT

*Journals, Volume 1* is the first volume in a three-volume set of journals kept for Joseph Smith, founding president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This handsome book is the inaugural volume in the Joseph Smith Papers project that church scholars have been working on for the last number of years. This is an official publication, massive in its scope and a welcome addition to historical documents in the study of the history and scriptures of the Latter-day Saints. Additional information on the project, including color images and an index to this volume, can be found on its web site at http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/Default.htm.

This book contains reference materials, illustrations, source notes that include dimensions, the names of the scribes of each journal, and other useful information about the volume. The paper and binding are library quality, designed for long use. Likewise the historical introductions give an overview of events that occurred during the time period of each journal. There is some repetition in the introductions if the book is read straight through, although the overlap is useful for readers looking at a particular document or period.

It is important to read the pages on the editorial method, especially for the transcription symbols (lix–lxiv), with which the reader of the text will need to be familiar. Though transcribers of documents will not agree precisely on the way to present a handwritten text, this volume of the pre-
Nauvoo journals of Joseph Smith will be the standard.

The five journals printed in this volume are: (1) Journal, 1832–34; (2) Journal, 1835–36; (3) Journal, March-September 1838; (4) Journal, September-October 1838; and (5) Journal, 1839. The first journal’s opening entries are in Joseph Smith’s hand, which he kept sparingly during the early years of the Church. The second journal includes a few entries by Smith (62, 64, 135); and the rest are by scribes. Each of the 1838–39 journals was kept by a scribe who reported Smith’s activities, usually from a distance. These journals were used as a source for the multivolume manuscript history of the Church, commenced in 1838–39, but not completed until the 1850s. The opening entry of the 1832–34 journal includes these words written by Joseph Smith: “Joseph Smith Jr’s Book for Record Baught on the 27th of November 1832 for the purpose to keep a minute acount of all things that come under my observation &c— oh may God grant that I may be directed in all my thaughts Oh bless thy Servent Amen” (9).

Thus began Joseph Smith’s attempt to keep a record of his activities and preserve letters sent from Church headquarters. Record-keeping had actually started in 1830—an effort to which Joseph Smith attached considerable importance—but now he started working on a brief history of his life, making his record in what would become the first of two letter books. Joseph Smith commenced this attempt on November 27 but stopped a few days later on December 6, 1832. The record recommences, again in Joseph’s hand, in October 1833 in preparation for a Church mission to Upper Canada. Smith wrote entries in a narrative style reflecting what occurred on the trip. This style was continued by Sidney Rigdon who at times is off by one day in dating the events he is recording. Smith and Sidney Rigdon took turns keeping the record until they arrived back in Kirtland. Oliver Cowdery dates that return, in Joseph’s voice, at November 4 “at 10, A.M. found my family all well according to the promise of the Lord. for which blessings I feel to thank his holy name; Amen” (16).

Accounts of important meetings were copied into the journal at a later date, including the January 11, 1834, meeting of the United Firm (25–26), and events connected with Philastus Hurlbut’s opposition to Joseph Smith on March 13 and 18 and June 21, 1833 (27). Smith, brought suit against Hurlbut for threatening his life, and in preparation for the civil court trial, wrote that he was a wicked man and hoped that the Lord would “deliver him to the fowls of heaven and his bones shall be cast to the blast of the wind” (37). Hurlbut died in 1883 at the age of seventy-four. As Joseph Smith’s earliest journal, it contains the greatest percentage of entries in his own handwriting but also launched the pattern that later became standard of having scribes record his activities.

The next journal begins September 22, 1835, and ends with the entry of April 3, 1836. In contrast to the 1832–34 journal, the 1835–36 journal is a
carefully constructed record that may have been written with an audience in mind. It began about the time that Oliver Cowdery was recording patriarchal blessings in a separate volume for Joseph Smith Sr., the Prophet’s father and the first Church patriarch. Cowdery made the first entry in Joseph Jr.’s journal on September 22, 1835: “This day Joseph Smith, jr. labored with Oliver Cowdery, in obtaining and writing blessings. We were thronged a part of the time with company, so that our labor, in this thing, was hindered; but we obtained many precious things, and our souls were blessed. O Lord, may thy Holy Spirit be with thy servants forever. Amen” (61–62).

Joseph Smith also wrote an entry that same day but incorrectly recorded the date as September 23: “This day Joseph Smith, Jr. was at home writing blessings for my most beloved Brotheren, <I>have been hindered by a multitude of visitors but the Lord has blessed our Souls this day” (62). This 1835–36 journal is the longest in this volume, with 195 handwritten pages, and contains a record of events not found elsewhere. On the first page Oliver Cowdery includes the title of the work, “Sketch Book for the use of Joseph Smith, jr” (61). It is a description of this particular journal of Smith which includes minutes, revelations, letters, Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision and Book of Mormon, the days he worked on translating the Egyptian papyri that became the Book of Abraham, and both full texts and synopses of patriarchal blessings. Letters were copied into the book, and there is a partial record of the construction of the “House of the Lord” (Kirtland Temple).

Frederick G. Williams was the scribe for entries made between October 3 and 7, 1835. On October 29, 1835, Warren Parrish became Joseph Smith’s scribe (76), recording daily events from Smith’s dictation and possibly from written notes or a combination of both, covering the preceding three weeks (October 8–29). The October 8 entry says only: “nothing of note transpired as we now recollect” (71).

What we learn that was previously not emphasized is that there are six “marks of adhesive wafers” (53) where either notes or pages were attached to the journal page for the scribe to copy into the journal. The entry for November 12 includes instructions to members of the Council of the Twelve. Joseph assures them that he has the utmost confidence in them and announces the ordinance of washing of feet. Smith asked a question and answered it when he said, “When or wher[e] has God suffered one of the witnesses or first Elders of this church <to> fall? never nor nowhere” (96–97). Joseph emphasized: “The order of the house of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same, and we shall finally roll into the celestial kingdom of God and enjoy it forever” (98).

On November 14 a revelation for Warren Parrish told that he should be “privileged with writing much of my word” (100), foreshadowing his scribal
work with Joseph Smith on what became the Book of Abraham. For one four-day stretch when Parrish was not available, Smith wrote his own entries; Frederick G. Williams also made entries for another four days (135–38). Other identified scribes included Sylvester Smith and Warren Cowdery.

A significant number of 1836 entries describe meetings in which priesthood holders cleansed themselves for the forthcoming promised endowment with power, and many entries appear to have been dictated by Joseph Smith personally. For example on January 21, 1836, Church leaders washed their bodies in water, perfumed themselves, and later met in President Smith’s west room on the third floor of the “Chapel” (Kirtland Temple). The Church presidency anointed their heads and pronounced blessings upon them. Joseph told of receiving a glorious vision of the celestial kingdom, including the gate and the throne of God. “I saw father Adam,” Smith said, “and Abraham and Michael and my father and mother, my brother Alvin” all in the highest kingdom. The voice of the Lord said that those who would have received the gospel if they had been permitted to live were heirs of the celestial kingdom. Children who died before they are accountable are saved in the same kingdom (167–68; now LDS D&C 137). Smith saw the Twelve Apostles in the celestial kingdom of God. Others also received visions that evening and the group dismissed between 1:00 and 2:00 in the morning.

The first session of the long-promised solemn assembly in the Kirtland House of the Lord was held on March 27. Joseph Smith delivered the dedicatory prayer. A few days later on April 3, Smith and Oliver Cowdery, after prayer, beheld in vision the Savior who accepted the dedication. They jointly received three visions in which the “Keys of the gathering of Israel” were committed to them by Moses, followed by the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” by Elias; and the “Keys of this dispensation,” (that is, the last dispensation) by Elijah the Prophet (219–22; now LDS D&C 110).

The March-September 1838 journal or “Scriptory Book” follows the activities of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon of the First Presidency. Most of this record consists of copies of documents including letters, minutes of meetings, and revelations. Except for one revelation the handwriting is that of George W. Robinson. The record book commences on March 13, 1838, and notes the arrival of Joseph Smith and family the next day at Far West, Missouri. Included are the explanations of the book of Isaiah (239–40), and a September 4, 1837, letter that included the minutes of a conference held the previous day in Kirtland (240–45). These items are of interest as George Robinson arrived in Far West at the end of March, for a letter states “yesterday br Robinson arrived here” (247). Robinson, who was a clerk in Kirtland, would have needed to copy the various documents in this record after his arrival. The daily journal entries start on April 27 including Robinson’s words, “myself also engaged in keeping this record” (260).
A few observations can be made at this point. In a Joseph Smith letter dated March 29, 1838, and copied into the record book, he mentions the destruction of the printing office in Kirtland on January 16: “we presume to believe must have been occasioned by the Parrishites or more properly the Aristocrats or Anarchys as we believe” (246). There is no footnote here to indicate that Smith was mistaken and that the building in which the press was contained was burned by Church members and not by the rumored “Parrishites,” although it is true that Warren Parrish was no longer affiliated with Mormonism by the end of December 1837. Benjamin F. Johnson wrote in his life’s story, “The printing office and material which our enemies thought to use to bolster up a church organization opposed to the Prophet was set on fire by Bro Lyman R. Sherman and destroyed.”

Another insight into the Scriptory Book is a letter by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on April 9, 1838, to John Whitmer, who served as Church historian before his excommunication on March 10. They wanted a corrected version of his Church history, since “we never supposed you capable of writing a history” and “[know] your incompetency as a historian.” If they did not receive his history (which they did not), they announced their intention to write another (249). Later in the month on April 27, they commenced a draft of the early life of Joseph Smith that eventually became the history of the Church (260).

The Church trial of Oliver Cowdery is mentioned “as will be found recorded in the Church record of the city of Far West Book A,” also the trials of David Whitmer and Lyman E. Johnson in the same record (256–57). This record is a separate manuscript book from “Minute Book 2,” more commonly known as the Far West Record. The reason for the separate record is that Ebenezer Robinson wrote the original minutes, which Hosea Stout then copied into the Far West Record (“Minute Book 2”) in the early 1840s in Nauvoo.

It is always nice to read about Joseph Smith’s dogs. During a trip exploring the northern Missouri counties, he “put on his dog” after a large black wolf (271). The wolf survived the encounter by running faster than Smith’s dog. After the Fourth of July 1838 in Far West, when George Robinson wrote: “Shortly after Pres’t J. Smith Jr S, Rigdon H. Smith and myself, left this place for Adam Ondi Ahman [Adam-ondi-Ahman] we saw a deer or two on the way. Prest Smith set his dogs after them one of which was a gray hound which caut the deer but could not hold him, although he threw him

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down, yet he injoured the dog so badly that he let him go, and we lost him. The race was quite amusing indeed” (276).

A highlight of this journal is contained in the historical introduction and footnotes describing the Danites, an extralegal body of men originally instructed to cleanse the Church of dissenters. Though the majority of Church members sustained Joseph Smith, some “prominent excommunicants,” such as Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Lyman E. Johnson, and John Whitmer, “remained in Caldwell County.” The editors explain: “Active in compelling their [the excommunicants’] departure was a new volunteer paramilitary organization of Mormon men called the Danites, of which Robinson was an officer. The Danites sought to rid the church of dissent, to ensure the fulfillment of church leaders’ directives, and later to help combat external threats against the Saints” (231).

One portion of the “Scriptory Book” was subsequently crossed out. It contained a mention of the Danites including the words “This company or a part of them exhibited on the fourth day of July.” One word, written above the first line in George Robinson’s handwriting, is not part of the printed text (see photograph p. 292). It is appears to be “Revelatr” [sic]. There is no note explaining why this word was omitted in the printed transcription (293). The notes for the entry of August 7, 1838, describing the First Presidency, General Elias Higbee, and others riding together, explain that Higbee “was ‘Captain General’ of the Danites—the ranking officer in the organization” (299 note 222). The glossary gives a lengthy definition of the organization (464).

What we learn in evaluating these three journals is that not all historical records were written on the days indicated. Some entries were made days or weeks afterward. In fact, most of the records we read are copies—not the original letters, minutes, or revelations. This information helps us appreciate having the records in their present form. These records are also characterized by gaps. The longest of these gaps occurs in Kirtland between April 1836 and August 1837.

The last two journals (September-October 1838 and 1839) are different than the first three. James Mulholland kept the fourth journal from September 3 to October 6, 1838. It covers ten pages, beginning with this entry:

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2Here are some examples demonstrating the lag between the date of an event and, set off with //, the approximate date of the event’s transcription. Page numbers are in parentheses: January 11, 1834 (25–26)//January 28, 1834; March–June 1833 (27–28)//January 28, 1834; October 8–29, 1835 (71–79)//October 29, 1835; October 23, 1835 (111–12)//November 28, 1835; March 13–19, 1838 (237); March 29, 1838; September 3–4, 1837 (240–45)//March 29, 1838//January 12, 1838 (281–84)//July 8, 1838; July 23, 1837 (306–8)//September 3, 1838; June 15–26, 1839 (341–43)//June 26, 1839.
“Commenced to write for President Joseph Smith Junr on Monday the 3rd September 1838” (324). The entries are very brief. For example, the entry for September 20 states, “At home from morning untill about 10 oclock went out on horseback & returned at about sunset or rather before it—at home all evening” (328). The editors of Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839, did not include Mulholland’s personal journal, which immediately follows the closing entry in the same notebook. This first entry is: “Commenced again to write for the Church on Monday the 22nd Aprile 1839.”

The fifth journal, again kept by Mulholland, includes entries from April 16 to October 15, 1839. On May 10 he wrote, referring to Joseph Smith in third person: “Moved with his family To Commerce Hancock Co. Ill.” (338). Entries starting on June 15 contain Smith’s dictation after visiting relatives and his return to Commerce on June 26 (341–43). In June and July, Mulholland worked on a manuscript draft of Joseph Smith’s history (entries for June 11, July 3–5). Mulholland later that year copied and enlarged this draft into what became Manuscript History Book A-1, pp. 1–59 and, later still, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, published in six volumes in 1902–12, after B. H. Roberts’s editing, with a seventh volume following in 1932.

Typographical errors are few. John H. Boynton should be John F. Boynton (188 note 383) and Oliver Cowdery’s letter is misdated 1837 instead of 1838 (251 note 90). Dean C. Jessee’s earlier edition of The Papers of Joseph Smith, Volume 2: Journal, 1832–1842 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:288–300, 308–16, included a December 16, 1838, letter of Joseph Smith copied into the Scriptory Book and an additional journal of James Mulholland covering April 22–October 23, 1839; but neither item appears in this compilation.

I was disappointed in the compiled biographical directory near the end of the book. Only a glance shows mistaken information. For example, Lyman E. Johnson died in 1859 not 1856; Luke Johnson arrived in Salt Lake Valley in September 1853 not July 1847; William E. McLellin died on March 14, 1883 not April 24; and Brigham Young was baptized on April 9, 1832 not April 15.

Journals, Volume 1 is a beautifully bound volume with high-quality paper. The typeface is easy to read. The book is a significant improvement in historiography of Joseph Smith. This is a scholarly work but simple enough for a general audience. The editors should be proud of their work. I recommend the book.

H. MICHAEL MARQUARDT {research@xmission.com}, an independent historian and research consultant, is the compiler of Early Patriarchal Blessings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007) and author of The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999).

Reviewed by Daniel Walker Howe

On June 7, 1844, the *Nauvoo Expositor* published its first and only issue. Founded by dissident Mormons, the newspaper accused Joseph Smith and a few of his close disciples of practicing plural marriage and teaching a plurality of Gods. Both charges were essentially true, but the Prophet was not ready to have them made public. He persuaded the Nauvoo City Council to suppress the newspaper and destroy its press. This action initiated the chain of events that led to his own arrest by Illinois state authorities and his lynching by a mob. In this volume, a present-day Mormon iconoclast, George D. Smith, the publisher of Signature Books, in effect revives the *Expositor*’s cause and publicizes the practice of polygamy in 1840s Nauvoo.

This is a long book, and it takes the reader through a series of enterprises. The first is to track the secret life of the Mormon prophet during his years in Nauvoo, trying to figure out how he fit so many courtships and marriages into his busy schedule, “unseen amidst his public life as a religious and community leader who would even become a candidate for the U.S. presidency” (55). The author treats each of thirty-eight wives separately and in detail; he lists six other “women of interest” (224) as possibilities.

George Smith next turns to the ways the Prophet spread the practice of plural marriage within his inner circle of followers without publicly announcing it. Starting around 1840, Joseph would approach individual men privately and persuade them to follow his example; then in 1843 he dictated a revelation from God legitimating plural marriage (LDS Doctrine and Covenants 132), though this revelation still remained a secret in his lifetime.

The author then turns to the subject that interests him the most—the efforts by Mormon authorities to conceal the practice of polygamy. These continued after Joseph’s assassination and characterized both Josephite and Brighamite official histories of the Nauvoo period. George Smith pursues the historiography through the first half of the twentieth century and the formation of “analytic Mormon history” by Stanley Snow Ivins, Juanita Brooks, Dale Morgan, and Fawn Brodie (470–71), which faced up to the practice of plural marriage. What most concerns George Smith is the tendency of present-day Mormon General Authorities to minimize the importance of polygamy, which he interprets as a continuation of a legacy of sup-
pressing the truth. His book concludes with a history of the Munster Anabaptists of sixteenth-century Germany, offered as an analogous example of millenarians who restored the Old Testament practice of polygamy and suffered persecution in consequence. While the parallel might be worth exploring in a scholarly journal article, it struck me here as a forty-eight-page digression in an already long book.

A certain ambiguity exists about the intended audience for this book. If the audience is the general Mormon public, then perhaps they do need reminding about the importance of plural marriage to early Mormonism, and that it was practiced not only in Brigham Young’s Utah but also in Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo. The Community of Christ, as the former Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is now known, no longer denies that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy and declares a willingness to accept historical inquiry on the subject. But the sheer length of George Smith’s volume and his massive, conscientious research in primary sources imply a scholarly audience. The question then arises, do we historians need someone else to go over the same ground that Todd Compton covered not long ago in his In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 1997, 788 pp.)? To be sure, the point of view is different. Compton undertook to write about the wives; George Smith is, on the whole, more interested in the husbands, though he treats Emma Smith extensively and sympathetically. But there is no reason I know of to think that the existence of Nauvoo polygamy has been doubted within the scholarly community for a long time.

George Smith counts thirty-eight probable wives for Joseph; Compton, thirty-three with eight more as “possible.” Richard L. Bushman, in his recent biography, Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), decided that the “most likely” number was between twenty-eight and thirty-eight (440). Fawn Brodie, in her second edition revised of No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971, pp. 457–88), came up with forty-eight. Compton and Bushman consider that the Prophet must have married his Kirtland housekeeper Fanny Alger, but Brodie, like George Smith, judged their relationship an affair.

The most significant contribution that George Smith makes in this book does not seem to be recalculating the number of secret wives the Prophet managed to wed during the last two and half years of his ministry, for this is to a considerable extent a matter of surmise based on scanty evidence. Rather, it is the author’s research on how many of the Prophet’s followers embraced plural marriage during a period when the LDS Church was emphatically denying the practice. Smith found 196 men and 717 women who contracted plural marriages in Nauvoo. (Many of the men married still
more wives after going to Utah.) The marriages included both polygynous and polyandrous relationships. The author tabulates demographic and marital information on all these people (574–639). If this seems like overkill, it results from his conviction that he is struggling to overcome a legacy of suppressing the truth. Here is how he sees it:

From the earliest whisperings of extramarital relationships in the 1830s to official records kept in the 1840s, Mormon authorities downplayed reports of polygamy as “anti-Mormon” rumors. However, an 1852 announcement in Utah led to a period of openness about plural wives. Then the polygamists retreated into the shadows again in 1890 when, for reasons of survival and statehood, the church withdrew its endorsement of plural marriage. Thereafter, the LDS church in Utah tried to distance itself from its polygamous roots, just as the RLDS Church (recently renamed the Community of Christ) had already done. The two communities became united on one front: their mutual disavowal of a doctrine that was once said to be essential to salvation. Yet the memory of Mormon polygamy was kept alive, in part, by contemporary “fundamentalist” Mormon societies, primarily in Utah. (xiii)

George Smith combines a lucid writing style with an impressive dedication to amassing data. One must admire his love for the subject of Mormon history. He clearly wants the Mormon community to own up to its past, an ideal which commends itself to any community.

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Reviewed by Kim B. Östman

Only the British Isles produced more converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in nineteenth-century Europe than Scandinavia. The significance of the Nordic countries as a mission field is further evidenced by the thousands of Mormon emigrants who relocated to Utah because of their newfound faith. Moreover, the Mormon message was often brought to these individuals by their own countrymen, who had converted in Scandinavia, emigrated, and then returned to their native lands as “Elders from Zion” for missions averaging about two years
in length. Considering the import of this effort to the development of Mormonism, it is not surprising that the field continues to attract study. One recent publication in this regard is *Legacy of Sacrifice: Missionaries to Scandinavia 1872–1894* by Susan Easton Black, Shauna C. Anderson, and Ruth Ellen Maness.

The Scandinavian Mission was organized in 1850 and continued as a single mission until 1905. The years covered by *Legacy of Sacrifice: Missionaries to Scandinavia, 1872–1894* are thus a subset of this mission’s existence, although no explanation is provided for the book’s border years. In any case, data on hundreds of missionaries are available for this period. The authors see their effort first and foremost as a family history resource and list as their major goals:

1. To provide the dates and places of missionary service . . .
2. To document in original sources to the extent possible the birth date, exact birth name, exact birthplace, and exact names of each missionary found herein . . .
3. To give brief biographical and historical information about each missionary. (xxi)

The entries are arranged alphabetically. Primary sources such as parish records have been used to ascertain the missionary’s birth, parents, and marriage. Time of arrival in and departure from the mission are listed, as is the general area of proselytizing work. Biographical sketches have been compiled from published secondary sources (for example, Andrew Jenson’s 1927 *History of the Scandinavian Mission*) and information drawn from autobiographies, the missionary’s descendants, the missionary’s journal, or contemporary newspaper articles. Many of the entries are illustrated by a photograph of the missionary (often from later in life), giving a real-life feel to the data covered.

Reid L. Neilson provides an interesting introduction (xiii–xix) that discusses these Mormon missionaries “Laboring in the Old Country” between 1850 and 1899. Neilson’s essay, the only regular text in the book, gives among other things useful statistical data on the missionaries. According to Neilson’s original research, Denmark was the most common assignment for Scandinavia-bound missionaries (42.9 percent) during this period, followed by Sweden (35.7 percent) and Norway (14.3 percent). Finland, Germany, Iceland, Russia, and Switzerland were destinations for a handful of others. In contrast to Mormon missionaries in modern times, the average age of the missionaries between 1850 and 1899 was 38.6. Thus they were often more experienced men, leaving behind family and societal responsibilities for the duration of their missions.

The book also incorporates a bibliography and two appendices which provide a rich resource for the researcher. The bibliography, arranged alphabetically by the missionary’s surname, lists a substantial number of relevant autobiographies, journals, diaries, and other records that are found in
published sources, various archives, and in private collections. The first appendix, “Contributors,” lists the names and city of residence of descendants who served as informants. The second appendix, “Birth Date Records,” provides a tabulated listing of all missionaries with their birth dates, birth places, and call number for microfilm/microfiche at the LDS Family History Library from which these data have been extracted.

A majority of the missionaries in the book were “native sons who had left the old country” but returned “to share their new beliefs” as Mormon elders (xxi). For these, birth data in original sources are provided “so descendants who wish to follow their missionary’s ancestry in the old country will have a valid starting point” (xxi). A minority of the missionaries were born in Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming from Scandinavian parentage (see, for example, 38, 146, 242, 323, and 425). The numerous local missionaries who worked in their Nordic homelands before emigrating to Utah are not included in the book.

In addition to the wealth of dates, places, and names provided in each entry, the accompanying biographical sketches are also enlightening. For example, one gets a sense of the precarious nature of proselytizing when Lars M. Olson in Sweden explains how, “in this branch within the last three and one-half months, our brethren have had fourteen notifications to appear before the Kyrkoråd [Church Council] for speaking in public” (337). One also gets a sense of the sacrifices involved in accepting a mission. Simon Christensen, for example, “had three small daughters ages seven, five, and three, and his wife was expecting another child. There was only one sack of flour and forty cents in the house when Simon left Richfield[, Utah] bound for Denmark” (83). Black, Anderson, and Maness express the hope that the story of family members remaining behind will also be told at some point (xxi). One also hopes for a future study of Scandinavians who worked as local missionaries before emigrating.

Some matters of detail would have merited closer attention. For example, the Scandinavian letters of the alphabet with their diacritical markings are generally dealt with well, although “län” (Swedish for “province”) is at one point written as “län” (52) and the Danish locality “Sørø” as “Sørø” (330). The grammatical forms required by “lääni” (Finnish for “province”) are not always handled correctly. “Vaasa lääni” (50) and “Turku-Pori lään” (252), for instance, should read “Vaasan lääni” and “Turun ja Porin lääni.” Christiania (modern Oslo) is spelled twice as Christiana (306). Sometimes the word for “province” is mistakenly omitted (“Malmöhus” instead of “Malmöhus län”, 416). These small errors will probably be visible only to native readers; but to the extent that this work serves as a reference, they will likely be perpetuated in family histories and should be corrected in future editions.

I also observed more substantive errors. For example, the mother of mis-
sionary John Berg was called “Anna Beata,” not “Anna Maria” (50). The missionary August L. Hedberg (served 1885–87) is confused with the local missionary Alexander S. Hedberg when an 1884 letter of the latter is quoted as being written by the former (162). Furthermore, Lars F. Swalberg, missionary to Sweden and Finland, is said to have arrived in the Scandinavian Mission in late September 1883 (417). However, contemporary documents indicate that he was present by June and that he baptized someone in Finland that August. In the first case, the error is in the reading of primary sources, while the second perpetuates a mistake by Andrew Jenson in *History of the Scandinavian Mission* and the third is a misreading of Jenson’s work.

Such shortcomings in an otherwise fabulous compilation show that the serious researcher may need to consult primary sources to be absolutely certain that the data are correct. Furthermore, the scholarly use of the book is somewhat hampered by the incomplete discussion of methodology. For example, how comprehensively have the missionaries to Scandinavia from 1872 to 1894 been included, and what sources were used to identify them?

In the making for several years, this book is an important tool and represents an enormous amount of research in primary and secondary sources. As a family history resource, it is first class. The insider perspective (shown also by the omission of “Mormon” or another such descriptor in the book’s title) may disturb some and be appealing to others, but the data provided by the book are of undisputed value. It is thus highly recommended for anyone studying Mormonism’s nineteenth-century history in the Nordic countries, whether because of family history interests or for other purposes.

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1Record of births and christenings, Mustasaari Lutheran Parish, Finland, 1804–18 (August 19, 1817), n.p., and Record of births and christenings, Mustasaari Lutheran Parish, Finland, 1835–47 (December 31, 1839), 178.


3See *Nordstjerna* 7, no. 12 (June 15, 1883): 187 and Finland Branch Record, 1876–97, LR 14149 21, LDS Church History Library.
I started this book with great expectations. Its last two pages list 199 titles that make up what the Oxford University Press hopes to be an expanding catalog of books in “A Very Short Introduction” series. The eclectic collection includes Newton, Economics, Buddha, The Crusades, Nuclear War, and Art Theory just to name a few titles. I thought this would be a great set of books to have on any life-long learner’s library shelf. Reading them and absorbing the information would provide a good grasp of a wide range of subjects, at least at an introductory level. And the assumption would be that the author of each was chosen because he or she is a recognized authority in his or her field with the ability to condense the essentials of the subject to 120 to 140 pages.

In the case of Religion in America: A Very Short Introduction, author Timothy Beal has impressive credentials. He is the Florence Harkness Professor of Religion at Case Western Reserve University, and the introduction lists a number of his religious studies publications. I began the book with great anticipation; but by about page 60, that anticipation had turned to disappointment and bewilderment. Rather than focusing on the history of religion in America, the first two sections turn out to be little more than an odd autobiography. Beal first lays out his own religious situation. His wife is a minister of the Presbyterian Church, which he categorizes as a “reserved, liberal-intellectual” organization, while their congregation is “liberal and radical,” expressing “much concern about compromising biblical values of social justice, locally and globally, by state interests and power politics” (4).

Chapter 1, “Exploring the Neighborhood,” is a tour of Cleveland, Ohio, the city in which he lives and works. He spends 11 pages describing the churches he drives past. It is a breathtaking range of religious manifestations: Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church, Temple Tifereth Israel, Antioch Baptist, the City Buddha store, and the Unitarian Universalist Church, among others. This approach is obviously intended to demonstrate the surprising religious diversity that can be found all over America, once one makes a closer inspection. This particular literary device is not inherently off-putting, but my disappointment stems from Beal’s failure to provide objective, historical information throughout the rest of the book, even given the limitations of imposed brevity. What becomes painfully obvious is that this whole book is going to be little more than Beal’s view of the world. I don’t think, except in an autobiography, I have ever seen “I” and “me” used so often. Given his obvious embrace of diversity, I was astounded that he makes no mention of Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, or Mormons, except in charts, graphs, or in passing mentions such as: “As we might expect, the majority of evangelical Christians (58 percent) and Mormons (55 percent) are Republican, whereas only a small number of them are Democrat” (38). The Church
of Christ, Scientist gets one paragraph. Yet these religions are generally accepted as prominent examples of "American Religions."

Sadly, the first time Beal names the Mormon Church he gets it wrong. As he is driving around Case Western Reserve University, he points out the "Latter-day Saints [sic] Church Institute," then parenthetically adds, "The university's School of Dentistry has a large number of Mormon students" (16), as an explanation for their presence, though he feels no need to give such an explanation for any other group.

In Chapter 3, Beal begins a survey of the history of religion in America, covering briefly topics such as revivalism and the two Great Awakenings. But he also takes a lengthy detour into what he sees as a pre-meditated and carefully executed plan by the European settlers to wipe out Native Americans. He summarizes it as "a grim and shameful story indeed. It is not an exaggeration to describe what happened as ethnic cleansing" (62). The whole diatribe is completely off the subject. He does not claim that religious values prompted this deadly agenda, does not examine how religious people justified their determination to displace and kill Indians, and does not even explore facets of Native American religions for as much as a single paragraph. I would have welcomed a discussion of Native religious thinking and practices and the influence of European settlers on them and their religion, through conversions or otherwise. I would have liked to learn something about the differences and similarities of religion between the various tribes in different parts of the continent. Disappointingly, Beal uses ten pages—almost 10 percent of the book—to berate European settlers' relationships with Native Americans, to remake an already often-made point and to push a conspiracy theory that is no more convincing than most conspiracy theories. The fact that Beal personally feels "a sense of inherited guilt and sorrow" (67) over past events fails to provide the historical information I anticipated when I began reading this book. While I am sympathetic to the historic oppression of Native peoples, I have no sympathy for Beal's assumption that everyone should share this same sense of "inherited guilt."

In this context, I see an example of the historical fraud with which Peter Charles Hoffer charges some "New Historians" in his Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, Fraud. American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004, esp. chaps. 3, 5). While every historian has biases and every historian is responsible for analyzing the meaning of historical events, such agenda-driven history subverts what I consider to be the foundational duty of historians, namely, to determine "what happened" by a conscientious and comprehensive presentation of the documentary evidence. I cannot recommend Beal's work as meeting even these minimal criteria.

The last two chapters are covered in just 25 pages. In Chapter 4, "Looking
Ahead,” Beal outlines what he sees as trends for the future in the religious landscape of America. He predicts that this country will become more pluralistic, especially with the continuing influx of non-Christian immigrants. Chapter 5 concludes with a rather one-sided berating of contemporary American religions for what he sees as a conservative political orientation.

My distress with Beal’s shortcomings raises questions about the series and its editors: Why did they allow a prestigious and presumably profitable series to be subverted into what amounts to a personal soapbox? The following quotation demonstrates what Beal believes most Christian religions have as their core beliefs: “Among religious people, especially conservative Christians, there is a general tendency toward nationalism and an almost religious reverence for war, which is often sanctified in political rhetoric through the language of sacrifice and the battle of good against evil; at the same time, there is a growing interreligious countermovement of people who believe that their various religious convictions call them to struggle against nationalism and war; within the various religious traditions, we find core values of care and hospitality towards the stranger . . . and we find fear of the stranger” (5). This assessment would come as a real surprise to most of the leaders of the largest churches in America. I don’t believe they see themselves as fundamentally political structures, which is how Beal appraises them. The underlying theme of Beal’s book, it seems to me, is that the new battleground of polemics and apologetics in religion is not over theology or doctrine but over politics.

There are some good things to be said for the book. The section that deals with the First Great Awaking and the revivals in the Cane Ridge, Kentucky, area were interesting and informative. Beal also commendably includes information on what he calls “storefront religions,” those small and transient churches that sometimes are quite literally housed in an old strip mall store front. I agree with Beal that they form an important and vibrant part of the American religious scene but, unfortunately, are too often passed over in the attention given to the larger organized religions.

For readers interested in the actual history of religion in America, I suggest that they check out the library copy of Beal’s book, photocopy the bibliography and further readings list, and start there.

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The title of this book immediately captured my attention. Most students of Mormon polygamy are familiar with the role Joseph Bates Noble played in conducting, under Joseph Smith’s direction, the Prophet’s first dated sealing, to Louisa Beman on April 5, 1841—and in testifying under oath during the Temple Lot case in 1892 that such plural unions not only occurred but were physically consummated. However, the general outline of Noble’s life may be less well known. David L. Clark, Noble’s great-great-grandson, has chosen the three best-known elements of his ancestor’s life in the title to this biography, weaving them into a compelling, but relatively brief, recital of Noble’s life and role in the activities and development of the early Church and beyond.

In the Temple Lot Case (1891–96), the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, now Community of Christ) was suing the defendant Church of Christ (Temple Lot) in U.S. District in Kansas City, Missouri, over possession of the Independence property designated by Joseph Smith in 1831 as the site at which a temple would be built and to which Christ would return to launch the Millennium. The RLDS Church, then presided over by Joseph Smith III who had trained as an attorney, made no attempt to disguise its undisclosed secondary objective: to prove that Joseph Smith had never taught or practiced polygamy and that the RLDS Church was the legitimate successor to Joseph’s original church founded in 1830.

In Chapter 1, Clark provides Joseph Bates Noble’s biographical background and the reasons he was subpoenaed to testify in the Temple Lot Case and recorded his deposition in Salt Lake City on March 21 and 23, 1892. Attorneys E. L. Kelley, the RLDS Presiding Bishop, and Charles A. Hall, Church of Christ president, represented their respective organizations. Hall had arranged for fourteen other individuals in Salt Lake City to be deposed, including Wilford Woodruff and Lorenzo Snow, between March 14 and March 23. Noble was not represented by counsel.

Clark quotes some of Hall’s early questions and Noble’s answers, which focused on Noble’s conversion to Mormonism in 1832 and his courting of Mary Beman (Louisa Beman’s sister), his pre-Nauvoo, Nauvoo, and post-Nauvoo residences, his religious affiliations, his priesthood offices, etc. E. L. Kelley then took over the questioning and conducted most of the two days of interrogation. Both attorneys frequently objected to the questions of

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1Mary Adeline Beman Noble, Autobiography, 3, MS 1021–2, LDS Church History Library. Her surname is spelled Beman, Beeman, and Beaman. Clark uses “Beman,” the spelling on Mary Noble’s tombstone and the Boltwood genealogy section by Joseph B. Noble.
the other. The record noted these objections, but the interrogator instructed Noble to answer. As Clark points out, Kelley, unlike Hall, had relatively little interest in the actual Temple Lot real estate, focusing instead on polygamy, or as Kelley calls it, “the law of the church” (67–68), and Noble’s part in it. Kelley particularly wanted to identify the extent to which Noble was involved in “the commission of the crime yourself” (21), other Nauvoo-era doctrines, and the Utah practice of rebaptism.

David L. Clark, who is W. H. Twenhofel Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, also taught at Southern Methodist University and Brigham Young University. His work on LDS subjects has been published in the *Journal of Mormon History* and *BYU Studies*.

Clark uses different type fonts for quotations from the Temple Lot court transcript (and his analysis of it) and the biographical information. He obviously felt considerable sympathy for the eighty-two-year-old Noble, who was not feeling well on the first day of his deposition and whom Kelley badgered by asking and “re-asking” the same questions to try and confuse the elderly man. For example, “Kelley then tried to discredit Noble’s memory of anything by asking him again when he arrived in Salt Lake. If Noble couldn’t remember this date, perhaps Kelly could claim that he also didn’t really know the date when he had performed the polygamous marriage (to Louisa Beman), and perhaps the reason he could not remember the date was because it had never happened. Noble was prepared for this (at least this time) and replied to Kelley: ‘Well good gracious, how many more times are you going to ask that question—didn’t I tell you that I got here in ’47?’” (84).

Beginning and/or ending each chapter with Kelley’s questions and Noble’s answers, Clark then provides a series of chapters dealing with Noble’s involvement in Zion’s Camp, the Kirtland period, Missouri, Nauvoo, Winter Quarters, life in early Utah, and his own (Noble’s) plural marriages. Clark puts these chapters in chronological sequence which was not necessarily the order in which the questions were posed by Kelley.

Noble’s testimony, despite the repetition, is interesting and compelling. At the time he performed the sealing of Joseph and Louisa, Noble was bishop of the Nauvoo Fifth Ward (73). When Kelley asked Noble about the sealing, Noble responded feistily: “I sealed her to him, and I did a good job too” (79). Kelley repeated variations of this question; but “no matter how Kelley framed his questions, and he tried a number of different ways, Noble insisted that Joseph Smith had taught the doctrine privately to members of the church” (79). Noble sometimes gave different years in answer to the same question about the date, but he never vacillated on the fact that he married or sealed Louisa Beman to the Prophet, that it was done in his home, and that the couple then spent the night together (78).
Kelley also asked Noble about his own wives (he had seven plus four who were sealed to him by proxy but with whom he did not live), and when and where he was taught this “doctrine.” Kelley made continual efforts to discredit Noble’s testimony; but according to Clark, “There was give and take as well as confusion at times. . . . However, in retrospect, Noble was the clear winner after two days of testimony” (85). This narrative approach—developing the incidents of Noble’s life from the hostile questioning of an attorney with an agenda—makes for an interesting story told in an engaging way.

The Noble family had left Nauvoo by April 13, 1846 (101), and possibly as early as February 15, 1846 (104). Prior to Noble’s departure, he deeded his recently completed home to Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith’s mother. Noble was Lucy’s bishop at the time. Noble returned at least once to Nauvoo (between mid-February and mid-April) and arranged for the departure of several of Brigham Young’s plural wives. After shepherding his and Young’s families across Iowa, Noble took up temporary residence in Winter Quarters, Nebraska. Here he was called as bishop of its Thirteenth Ward and later of the Twentieth Ward. Clark poses this interesting query:

So how does one care for some thirty-five hundred adults and children without adequate supplies and funds to purchase goods or housing good enough to face a Nebraska winter? For Bishop Noble, it was with great difficulty. In his ward of 213 people, according to a December 31 count, he had 24 sick persons, including 9 sick men, living in forty-one log and two sod houses. His ward included 4 widows, who collectively had 13 members in their families. An additional 17 members were part of incomplete families because husbands were serving in the Mormon Battalion or absent for other reasons. This meant that 30 of his members lived in single-parent families. (107–8)

During the fall and winter of 1846–47, Noble’s life became “more complex” (110) with the death of a toddler in November and the death of his second wife, Sarah Alley, in December. His third wife, Mary Ann Washburn, gave birth to a daughter in February; and he married his fourth wife Susan Ashby, a widow with eleven children, in March.

Noble was a captain of fifty under Jedediah M. Grant in the second and final company to depart for the Great Basin in 1847. Clark provides considerable information about the trek west including the rivalries and disputes of the various fifties as they jockeyed for position on the trail.

Upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Noble built three cabins and was again called as a bishop. In 1862, he moved to Bountiful where he stayed for the rest of his life. Marriages were contracted, children were born. Clark summarizes: “Joseph Noble was a miller, a rancher, and a farmer in northern Utah, was marriedsealed to eleven women, and fathered thirty-one children with six of his wives” (168). He served as a bishop five times and as a
counselor twice. Noble also spoke at the funeral of his friend John Taylor, LDS Church president (168).

Unfortunately, Clark’s “Introduction: Temples and Temple Lots,” presents some misinformation about the background of the Temple Lot case itself. Clark states, for instance: “The RLDS Church occupied most of the sixty-three acres of the originally dedicated temple site and wanted this final two acres as well” (2) and gives the date of the original purchase by Edward Partridge as 1831 (1). First, it is not clear that the entire sixty-three acres were, in fact, dedicated as “the” temple site. Second, in 1892 the RLDS Church probably did not own any of the sixty-three acres (let alone sixty-one) and developed its interest in acquiring property within the bounds of the original sixty-three acres only after the Temple Lot case’s conclusion. In fact, the LDS Church acquired twenty plus acres of the sixty-three acres in 1904. Third, the Church of Christ in 1892 owned 2.5 acres. Clark uses both “two acres” and “1.5 acre lot” in this chapter. To some extent the confusion regarding these points and others is understandable in that there is considerable misinformation in the various available sources that refer to this property and the purchase of same in 1867–77.2

Another error is dating the Church of Christ’s acquisition of the disputed 2.5 acres to 1863 (3). The Church of Christ actually began its acquisition of the 2.5 acres in 1867 (through John H. Hedrick), approximately twenty years after Lydia Partridge “quit claimed” (1848) the original sixty-three-acre parcel to James Pool, an Independence resident. Subsequently, Pool sold to John Maxwell in 1848. Maxwell partnered with Sam-

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2The best sources for accurate information are Clarence L. Wheaton, Historical Facts Concerning the Temple Lot “That Interesting Spot of Land West of the Court House” at Independence Missouri (Independence: Board of Publications, Church of Christ [Temple Lot], 1952), 1–3; Arthur M. Smith, Temple Lot Deed (Independence: Board of Publications, Church of Christ [Temple Lot], 1973), 3–12; Andrew Jenson, Historical Record (Salt Lake City, Utah, n.p., 1888), 7:647–48 (although note that Jenson refers to “three acres” and states that the members bought the lots at different times to avoid suspicion. This alleged tactic lacks realism: Independence was a very small town in 1867; and when several Illinois families arrived together in February, their identity was well known); Craig Campbell, Images of the New Jerusalem: Latter Day Saint Faction Interpretations of Independence, Missouri (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 102–5; Ronald E. Romig, “The Temple Lot Suit after 100 Years,” John Whitmer Historical Association Journal 12 (1992): 3–15.; Paul E. Reiman, The Reorganized Church and the Civil Courts (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1961), 101–7. Three additional references that contain incorrect details and should be used cautiously are B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 5:592–33; Julius C. Billeter, Temple of Promise: Jackson County Missouri (Independence: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, n.d.), 106–7; W. P. Buckley, A Brief History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) (Independence: n.p., 1929), 9–10.
uel Woodson; and in 1851, they platted into lots what is known as the “Woodson and Maxwell’s Addition to the Town of Independence.” Various individuals acquired the eight lots comprising the 2.5 acres known as the “temple lot.” William Eaton completed the last purchase in 1874, with quit-claim deeds to the Church of Christ’s trustee-in-trust, Granville Hedrick, recorded in 1869 and 1877.

Clark uses the nickname “Temple Lot Church” instead of the formal name, the Church of Christ. Given the number of churches named the Church of Christ or something similar, this faith movement began to refer to itself as the “Church of Christ (Temple Lot),” but the Church of Christ does not now nor has it historically referred to itself as the “Temple Lot Church.”

Edward Partridge, the Church’s first bishop, had recorded the purchase of the sixty-three acres in his name in December 1831 (not 1832). After his death in 1841, his widow, Lydia, held the title. With Brigham Young’s blessing, she sold it in 1848 to finance her family’s move to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1848. Clark somewhat misleadingly cites, not this documented chain of title but the one claimed (inaccurately) by the RLDS Church in 1891: that the title was passed from Partridge to Oliver Cowdrey, then to the Cowdrey heirs, and then to the RLDS Church through a series of three quit-claim deeds. Most contemporary historians find this second chain of title highly questionable.

Clark also states that the Church of Christ came into being nineteen years after Joseph Smith’s death (1863). In fact, this group was in existence by 1852, calling itself the “Crow Creek Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ (of Latter day Saints).” It claimed then, as it does now, that it is a “remnant” of

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3 “Plat of Woodson and Maxwell’s addition to the Town of Independence, filed for record March 31, 1851,” Jackson County, Missouri, Property Records, Plat Book 1:7, Independence.


6 *Crow Creek Record*, 1.
the 1830 church. A gradual transition to the name “Church of Christ” began in the early 1860s. Finally, there is no evidence that any of the original members of the Church of Christ were former RLDS members as Clark claims (3).

Although these errors are regrettable and should be corrected in a future edition, they are not the main focus of Clark’s book. As a biography, it is fascinating and very enjoyable, with much of the pleasure coming from Clark’s innovative approach. The reader is primed, chapter by chapter, for Kelley’s bristling questions, Noble’s answers, and Clark’s continued reconstruction of the life of a devoted disciple of the early Church and a personal friend of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff. For those interested in what the “Temple Lot Case” was all about, this book will definitely whet their appetites.

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Reviewed by Ronald G. Watt

Almon Whiting Babbitt was born in Massachusetts in October 1813 and was baptized, probably in 1830, at Amherst, Ohio, graduated with a law degree from Cincinnati College, and married Julia Ann Johnson in Kirtland, Ohio, on November 23, 1833. He showed himself a fervent member of the Church by going on several missions. In 1840 Joseph Smith made him the president of the Kirtland Stake. In June 1842, he left Kirtland and moved to Nauvoo, where his legal skills were in demand, especially by Joseph Smith. Babbitt was in Carthage a day or so before the Prophet’s death, providing some type of legal assistance. Upon hearing of the assassination, he sobbed, “This day has been the hardest day in all my life” (50).

7Ibid., iii.
8Ibid., 10.
When the Mormons evacuated Nauvoo, he stayed behind as a trustee to sell the property, so others could go West. In 1851 he arrived in Salt Lake City, established a very successful carrying and transportation company between Salt Lake City and the Midwest, and reached the pinnacle of his political success when U.S. President Franklin Pierce appointed him Secretary of the Territory of Utah in 1853. Brigham Young even had him preach from the pulpit in general conference. On September 7, 1856, in Nebraska Territory Babbitt was killed by Indians as he was crossing the plains going west to Utah.

This outline sketches an image of Almon Babbitt as a faithful and contributing Saint of the Restoration. However, as the authors suggest in their well-chosen title, *Neither Saint nor Scoundrel*, Babbitt was a more complex character. He was disfellowshipped or excommunicated at least seven times in his life. He probably could have helped the Prophet Joseph Smith in his final days more than he did. Brigham Young held him responsible for not deflecting the Battle of Nauvoo in September 1846. He encouraged the Mormons in Kirtland to stay there instead of gathering to Nauvoo. He schemed against Brigham Young and by all reports wanted the governorship of the territory. He aspired to be great and conspired to tear down his own Church leaders. Apostle Orson Hyde in Kanesville did not trust him. Colonel Thomas L. Kane from his first experience with him did not like him. He wanted money and glory; and to a degree, he achieved both these things. Although the authors leave open the question of whether he was an alcoholic, he certainly drank throughout his life—often to excess. An experienced traveler, he was aware of the Indians’ hostility in 1856, and his decision to cross the plains, traveling with only a small group, may have been a reckless decision made under the influence of alcohol or an equally reckless sense of invulnerability.

I was pleased that the authors squarely faced the issue of how Babbitt was killed, providing in a skillfully reconstructed and carefully documented account that he was killed by Indians. This account should definitively lay to rest the persistent rumor that an angry Brigham Young had ordered his execution.

Whitman and Varner scrupulously present both Babbitt’s good characteristics and his bad. At times I had the feeling that the authors needed to evaluate and label each of the busy Babbitt’s actions, whether positive or negative, as though they were writing to the title: *Either Scoundrel or Saint*. For example, in writing words of praise and condemnation, after the Prophet’s death the authors comment, “Ever more independent than obedient, he [Babbitt] did not take orders easily, even from the Mormon Prophet. He seems to have carried grudges too long and too far. Nevertheless, his actions in supporting a doomed Prophet do not appear to be those of a coward or a traitor. He showed moments of indomitable courage and allegiance and did what he thought would serve his Prophet leader best” (52).

Yet during the Church’s first quarter century, Babbitt seems to be every-
where, usually with challenging assignments. He used his legal skills for both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Young needed him as much as Bab-
bitt needed Young. It seems that Babbitt, though, only needed himself, with
the result that he was more often a scoundrel than a Saint. I felt sympathy for
this genuinely talented man with the potential for greatness, who consist-
tenly scuttled his own chances. The authors comment that he was “a fasci-
nating mix of good and the bad, of Saint and scoundrel. Babbitt’s desire to
defend the religion he could not live makes for a story worth the telling” (15).
I thought it was quite an apt epigram.

This self-published book fails to observe some of the conventions of
bookmaking. The text ends on each page before a photograph, usually with
a gap to the end of the page, suggesting that the chapter is also ending. (It
usually does not). The endnotes are in a single file and are numbered consec-
utively (there are 717), instead of beginning again with each chapter. (There
are eleven chapters and an epilogue.) Endnotes should immediately follow
the text and be followed by the index; but in this case, the index (194–201)
follows the bibliography (160–93) and precedes the endnotes (202–72). Fur-
thermore, the running heads do not identify these book parts, making it
even more difficult to find them.

However, aside from these inconveniences, the authors have done the
historical profession a favor by bringing the many contradictory phases of
the life of Almon Babbitt under one cover. The book is well researched,
drawing on primary sources from the Huntington Library, the LDS Church
History Library, Brigham Young University, the University of Utah, the Utah
State Archives, and at least one source at the Daughters of Utah Pioneers
Museum.

RONALD G. WATT {rbwatt2@msn.com} recently retired from a career
at the LDS Church History Library. His biography of his ancestor, The
Mormon Passage of George D. Watt: Britain’s First Convert and Scribe for
Zion, is forthcoming in 2009 from Utah State University.

H. Clark Co., 2008, 251 pp. Illustrations, preface, acknowledgments,

Reviewed by Henry J. Wolfinger

Gary Topping is a historiographer whose previous works have included
Utah Historians and the Reconstruction of Western History (Norman: Univer-
sity of Oklahoma Press, 2003), a useful study of twentieth-century Utah
historians. He has now turned his attention to Leonard J. Arrington, widely acknowledged as the dean of Mormon history. Though Topping’s brief account focuses on Arrington’s historical work rather than his personal life, he does examine those facets of Arrington’s background and thought that influenced his scholarly activities.

After providing chapters on Arrington’s upbringing in rural Idaho and his academic training at the University of Idaho and the University of North Carolina, Topping appraises Arrington’s magnum opus, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), which examined the region’s nineteenth-century development from the standpoint of Mormon economic and social policies. He then covers Arrington’s activities as Church historian and biographer, devoting attention to his later histories as well, and concluding with an assessment of his position in the New Mormon History. Much of the primary research is based on use of the Arrington papers at Utah State University, which contain Arrington’s own recollections and unpublished accounts of portions of his life by at least two of his research associates.

Arrington was a prolific writer and produced a prodigious number of books, articles, and papers over a career that extended more than forty years. Topping therefore limits his discussion to those works that he considers Arrington’s most important contributions, as well as to those that help illustrate his conclusions about Arrington’s scholarship. In doing so, he calls attention to the virtues of Arrington’s almost forgotten *Beet Sugar in the West: A History of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, 1891–1966* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1966). The book, Topping astutely explains, is much more than the narrow company history that its title and corporate sponsorship might suggest. Arrington places the company in the larger context of American economic history, effectively arguing that the transformation of the sugar beet industry propelled the Mormon economy into the twentieth century by grafting capitalism and industrialization onto a traditional agricultural base.

In addition to this company history, Topping identifies *Great Basin Kingdom* and *Building the Kingdom of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons*, co-authored with Feramorz Y. Fox and Dean L. May (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), a collaborative work on aspects of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mormon communitarianism, as “among the most elaborately researched and deftly interpreted histories of Mormon economic and social history” (213). He is less admiring of Arrington’s biographies of Mormon pioneers and entrepreneurs, a number of which were written on commission. Even Arrington’s best-known biography, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), is damned with faint praise, as having shortcomings “almost as conspicuous as its virtues” (161). Topping finds this biography, like most of the others, “innocent of
psychology” (162) in the sense of examining the darker side of Brigham Young’s personality and the complexity of his motivations.

Arrington has been labeled a “historical entrepreneur,” a phrase referring to the numerous projects that he undertook and to his role in building and expanding the field of Mormon history. Topping, however, avoids the term, preferring to describe him as a proponent of group endeavor, using an approach to historical research and writing that emphasized collaboration and cooperation. As LDS Church historian, for example, Arrington managed the work of the Church’s History Division by establishing priorities, moving personnel from project to project to meet deadlines, and even shifting credited authorship at times. Another aspect of Arrington’s practice of collaboration was his use of assistants in researching and writing many of the biographies that appeared under his name, invariably crediting the assistants in the body of the work.

Historiography often looks at the historian in terms of the schools of thought and academic scholarship that influenced his work, and Topping accomplishes this in discussing Arrington’s academic training as an economic historian. But it is rarer for a historiographer to look at a historian in terms of the specific cultural and religious influences that shaped his worldview and his historical work. Identifying key influences on Arrington’s approach to life and history is arguably the most important contribution of this biography. Topping not only helps explain Arrington’s approach to history, but also presents him as a fully rounded figure in the process.

Arrington’s practice of his Mormon faith deviated from the orthodox in certain respects, for he had little interest in temple work and as a youth refused to undertake a mission, much to his father’s displeasure. Nonetheless, his historical work was tied to his faith, and Topping takes special note of the three spiritual experiences that, in Arrington’s words, “sealed my devotion to Latter-day Saint history” (43). Acknowledging their importance, Topping concludes:

Somehow those epiphanies seem to have kindled an interior fire that powered one of most energetic careers in American historiography. They sustained him through discouragement and conflict with those within his own church who criticized his work. While there are notes of disappointment and even resentment in his autobiography and in his private writings late in life, they are ultimately submerged in his perennial affirmations, his optimism, and his confidence that he had done the right thing, that he had fulfilled the mission—he understood it as nothing less than that—to which he had been called. (45)

Topping persuasively argues that Arrington’s brand of Mormon thought, “progressive Mormonism,” profoundly affected his worldview and scholarship. He quotes Arrington as saying, “Progressive Mormonism, as I was taught it, said that man was innately good, that perfectibility could be
achieved by the wise exercise of one’s innate power and freedom” (207–8). In Topping’s words, this was “a theology of possibility, not of certainty, of discovery, and not dogma” (208). It provided the grounds for Arrington’s belief that faith and intellect were not enemies and that critical thinking was fully compatible with Mormonism.

Mormonism, for Arrington, was “a religion of optimism, of confident belief in the essential goodness of human nature, of the malleability of human institutions and even of nature itself as history progressed toward the building of Zion on earth” (209). While this theology helped sustain Arrington’s energy and enormous productivity as a historian, it also had a downside, for Arrington had difficulty discerning darker motives and evil in human activity. Topping relates a telling incident, when Arrington, late in life, encountered the work of Reinhold Neibuhr, with its conception of original sin and human egotism, in which good intentions could easily lead to evil results. Arrington admired Neibuhr’s reasoning but could not buy his conclusions, saying, “These are Lutheran thoughts, not Mormon thoughts, and, while they are justified, they should not force one to lose his cheerful, optimistic, hopeful outlook” (210–11).

The biography also comments knowingly on Arrington’s upbringing, noting that he inherited his father’s gregariousness, love of people, and role as mediator. As such, Arrington was not a man to rock boats. When opposition within the Church hierarchy led to the dismantling of his Church History Division, he grieved privately but accepted the decision publicly, even endorsing the rationale that the program’s move to Brigham Young University would help preserve the division’s scholarly integrity. When preparing his autobiographical account of his experiences as Church historian, Adventures of a Church Historian (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), one of his sons urged him to speak out against those who had damaged the History Division, saying, “I don’t want the catch phrases and pulled punches and weasel words that need an enigma machine to decipher. . . . Be bold, man” (205). Arrington tellingly responded, recognizing that moderation could be a weakness as well as a strength, “I have always, or nearly always, been a moderate person, going along with whatever seemed inevitable, not trying to reform anybody or anything, not getting angry or neurotically upset. . . . I realize this is a defect in my character. Some persons are born to be mediators; I may have been one of them” (206).

This review may make the biography seem a heavier and drier read than it is. The book is engagingly written and garnished with a number of stories from Arrington’s career. One of the most entertaining is the vetting by Church authorities of Arrington and Davis Bitton’s The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), a general history written for an outside audience. Although Arrington had initially
been told that the First Presidency would give the work to a sympathetic
member of the Quorum of Twelve for review, the First Presidency acted on
the advice of one of Arrington’s close advisors and assigned the work to
Boyd K. Packer, a hard-line conservative member of the Quorum. It proved a
brilliant ploy. If Packer were to approve the book for publication, as he did
despite some reservations, other conservative members of the Quorum
were likely to accept it as well.

There undoubtedly will be further biographies of Leonard Arrington
that emphasize aspects of his life and career that are not covered by Topp-
ing’s work. But Leonard Arrington: A Historian’s Life is a useful and appreci-
ative introduction to the historian who put Mormon history on the map
and helped open the vast resources of the Church archives to scholarly re-
search.

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Luckner Huggins. A Son of Ham under the Covenant: The Untold Reason the
People of African Lineage Did Not Have the Priesthood before 1978. Salt Lake
9772197–051495

Marcus H. Martins. Blacks and the Mormon Priesthood. Orem, Utah: Millen-

Reviewed by Newell G. Bringham

June 2008 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Spencer W. Kimball
revelation lifting the ban on the ordination of African American males to
priesthood office in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Two
recently published books, both written by black Latter-day Saints, at-
tempt to explain the reasons/rationale for the ban, albeit from vastly dif-
ferent perspectives.

Luckner Huggins, a Haitian American of mixed African European back-
ground presents his arguments in A Son of Ham under the Covenant using “a
combination of both personal and other people’s experiences with a twist of
fiction” (3). It is, in fact, a fictionalized autobiography, recounting his com-
ing of age in Haiti, vividly recalling that nation’s widespread poverty, political
corruption, and voodoo religious practices. The heart of the book relates
the near-death experience of Luke (Huggins’s protagonist based on him-
sell). He enters the spirit world where he encounters Egyptus, a Canaanite
woman, who enlightens him concerning the “fallen nature” of his black African ancestors—i.e., “the descendants of Ham” and the reasons they were denied the priesthood. After receiving this supernatural enlightenment, Luke is “returned” to mortal life, where he encounters LDS missionaries and subsequently converts to Mormonism.

In his account, Huggins minimizes the problems of “racism” and “discrimination,” asserting that “racial differences among LDS Church members . . . [is] an old story of the past—a dead horse needing to be buried” (12). “If the racism of a few people exists in the Lord’s Church, it is simply a test,” and “discrimination is a false alarm that goes off without the evidence of a real fire” (13).

Turning to the problem of black slavery, Huggins theorizes that people of black African ancestry “fell under slavery” because of their “wickedness” and “spiritual weakness” (17). He cites the biblical curse of servitude (Gen. 9:25) that Noah imposed on Canaan, the son of Ham, who was the alleged father of all black people and from whom all black people inherited the curse. Ham was cursed because he had “defiled” his father Noah’s “sacred garment” and “played a crafty maneuver in order to detour the first Patriarchal calling to his lineage”—ideas drawn from Huggins’s liberal interpretations of Genesis 9:25–27 (165–67).

Ham, moreover, “would not repent” of his transgression and “past [sic] the grudge on to his children,” born to him and dark-skinned Egyptus, from whom sprang the Egyptian civilization (163). “Ham’s disobedience to Noah’s commandments had a transcendental consequence over his entire lineage for many future generations” in that his “descendants were excluded from the privilege of receiving the Priesthood—the patriarchal authority to spiritually lead their families” (164–65).

Such assertions are clearly inspired by Huggins’s interpretation of certain parts in the Pearl of Great Price, i.e., that his ancestors as “descendants of Ham” were “cursed as pertaining to the priesthood” (Abr. 1:27) and eerily resemble beliefs expressed by nineteenth-century LDS Church leaders and spokesmen, beginning with Brigham Young and continuing into the mid-twentieth century. They are particularly evident in the writings of Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie. But in two significant respects, Huggins’s views on the place of black people in Mormonism differ from these traditional positions.

First, Huggins rejects the prevalent nineteenth-century Mormon interpretation that the dark skin was “the mark placed on Cain for killing Abel as well as the curse of our lineage” (202–3). Instead, he sees Cain’s “dark skin” as “a shield or a protection to prevent any of Adam’s posterity from killing him for revenge” (203). He concedes that Egyptus “probably got her skin tone from a parent who descended from Cain” and her children inherited
"the dark skin from her lineage." However, “not having the Priesthood was a separate issue from the dark skin, but the two issues appear to be closely related” (204).

Second, Huggins recaps the historical record showing that Joseph Smith “extended the Priesthood to a few of the freed slaves that he personally knew” and suggests that Smith wanted to prepare these blacks “to become leaders unto millions of others” (249). But Brigham Young, as Smith’s successor over the largest group of Latter-day Saints “discontinued [the] practice” of allowing blacks the priesthood. Huggins attempts to explain this contradiction in two ways. First, perhaps Smith was “inspired to give [future African American Mormons] a sign that they would not be excluded forever and that the time appointed for them would soon come” (250). Or second, “perhaps the Lord had not told Joseph Smith he could give the Priesthood to all the African Americans yet” and his extension of priesthood to blacks “without official permission” was “motivated by his [Smith’s] own overwhelming compassionate nature toward those whom he loved dearly” (251–52).

In contrast to Huggins’s approach is Marcus H. Martins’s *Blacks and the Mormon Priesthood* which takes a more circumspect and critical perspective. Of African Brazilian heritage, Martins was the first black man to serve an LDS mission following the 1978 revelation (black men ordained during Joseph’s lifetime had been missionaries) and the first black to become a full-time tenured professor at Brigham Young University. Martins characterizes the priesthood ban as “one of the most controversial and discussed topics in the history of the Church” (1), yet “Whether we like it or not, the priesthood ban is part of the history of the Church.” Martins groups it with the Mountain Meadows Massacre as one of those “unfortunate episodes” in Mormonism’s past (4). Furthermore, he also takes issue with those who “argue that . . . discussion of the priesthood ban and the old ideas related to it are irrelevant and inconsequential and . . . should be set aside for good”; on the contrary, discussion of this issue is “not only worthwhile but also necessary” (5).

Martins concedes: “We don’t know for sure when the priesthood ban originated or when it was first imposed” (10). He then outlines five major theories advanced during the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth to justify the ban. These include: (1) the Pearl of Great Price scenario which links the priesthood ban to events “involving the seed of Cain, the descendants of Canaan, Egyptus, and Pharaoh” (10–11); (2) the idea that Noah cursed Ham for looking upon his father’s “nakedness” that resulted in a “heredity of blessings and curses” imposed on Ham’s descendants (12–13, 25–27); (3) the “Premortality Hypothesis” that blacks were “less valiant or less faithful, in the premortal existence, or the stage of conscious intelligent
life before our birth on earth” (14); (4) the “Preparedness Hypothesis,” which argues that “blacks were not ready for the priesthood” prior to 1978 and/or that “whites weren’t ready to see blacks receive the priesthood” (19); and (5) the “Selective-Ordination Hypothesis” asserting that “throughout history the Lord at times imposed restrictions on who could hold the priesthood.” Examples are the limitation of priesthood in Moses’s time to “men in the tribe of Levi” while, even within that tribe, “the descendants of Aaron were set apart and assigned a priesthood of their own” (21). Martins does not espouse any of the five theories, simply stating: “We don’t know why there was a priesthood ban” (53).

Further undermining the veracity of the ban, Martins asserts that it was “never” essential Mormon doctrine or “a part of the everlasting gospel.” Rather, the “priesthood ban and its associated rationale constituted educated responses on the part of past Church leaders to the social environment of the late nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century” (31). He terms it “a mortal law” but “neither an eternal law nor an obstacle to salvation” (31).

As to why the ban remained in force for over a century, Martins states: “Because of his unfathomable purposes, the Lord appears to have remained mostly silent about the issue until June 1, 1978” (39). This was because the issue was not “considered an urgent matter throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth” (42). Not until the 1970s with the emergence of the Church as a worldwide institution did “the priesthood ban move up in the scale of priorities and become an issue that affected not only a large number of members but also the very identity of the Church” (43). Under-scoring the importance of the 1978 revelation itself, Martins asserts that it “was not only part of the restoration of all things, but was also absolutely essential to the preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his Millennial reign” (52).

Particularly revealing are Martins’s personal reflections about the ban’s effects on him, since he was baptized as a pre-teen in 1972, along with his family in Brazil. He frankly confesses, “As a teenager during my first years as a member of the Church I felt at times the terrible pain of being considered by some individuals as naturally unworthy, unreliable, or inferior” (44–45). But manifesting ambivalence, he added: “The priesthood ban . . . afforded me and other Latter-day Saints with Black African ancestry a still ongoing opportunity to display the depth of our commitment to the Lord and his kingdom in a specific way that our fellow Latter-day Saints of other races will never be allowed to experience” (54). And finally, in assessing the complexities of being both black and Mormon, Martins states: “In spiritual terms, I do not view myself as Black but [as] another child of God, born of Heavenly Parents, endowed with specific talents, and sent to this earth at the right time, in the right
lineage, to perform specific missions” (50). His father, Helvecio Martins, became the first member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, serving from 1990 to 1995, called to that position by President Spencer W. Kimball.

In overall terms, both Luckner Huggins’s A Son of Ham under the Covenant and Marcus H. Martins’s Blacks and the Mormon Priesthood provide enlightening insights concerning the dilemma of being both black and Mormon—compounded by the unfortunate legacy of black priesthood denial. Most directly affected by the ban was Martins, who joined the Church seven years before the ban, while Huggins became a Latter-day Saint long after the ban was lifted in 1978. Timing clearly influenced both authors’ perception about the reasons and, indeed, the legitimacy of the ban. Huggins viewed it with surprising certitude as a divinely justified consequence of his black ancestors’ behavior in the biblical past. Unfortunately, Huggins’s analysis also reflects elements of racial self-loathing “legitimized” by his embrace of essential aspects of Mormon racial folklore. Martins, by contrast, is much more circumspect—even critical of the now-defunct Church policy of denying blacks the priesthood.

But Huggins, to his credit, willingly acknowledges the historical truth that Joseph Smith, during his lifetime, authorized the ordination to priesthood offices of a handful of African Americans, while Martins does not comment on the important legacy of early Mormon black priesthood holders. Huggins pointedly asks: “Now why did the Prophets following Joseph Smith discontinue the practice [of allowing black males the priesthood] until they received a direct testimony from the Lord in 1978? Was it because they were racists, or was it because they did not want to claim an authority that is only God’s?” (249) Unfortunately, Huggins fails to pursue either question through an examination of the primary and secondary historical sources available, particularly those chronicling the critical eight years (1844–52) following Joseph Smith’s death, when the ban was actually implemented.

Huggins’s work would have been enriched by the pioneering works of Lester Bush and Armand L. Mauss, specifically their Neither White Nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1984) and Mauss’s All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003) both which Martins cites in his bibliography (83–84). Ironically, Martins also fails to fully use such sources in exploring the origins of the policy which he “downgrades” to an “unfortunate episode” based on mere “mortal law,” decreed by Brigham Young and perpetuated by his successors.

In conclusion, both Huggins and Martins must be credited for their willingness to confront the difficult, complex issue of black priesthood denial. It
is hoped that such open discussion will encourage other Latter-day Saints of black African heritage to not only acknowledge the ban and its legacy but also to carefully explore its origins—particularly the historic context from which it emerged. In turn, rigorous historical inquiry should, in turn, spark a concerted effort to “deconstruct” and indeed, repudiate the pernicious, still pervasive Mormon racial folklore used to justify this now-defunct “unfortunate episode” in Mormonism’s past.

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Reviewed by Zachary R. Jones

When I first began reading this book I was immediately puzzled by the title in relation to the book’s content and structure. The two failed to match. This illustrated history of the LDS Church is written for devout Latter-day Saints and is arranged as a top-down historical narrative revolving around the personal lives of LDS Church presidents. There is almost no discussion of what most scholars see as Mormon history. If this is, as the title suggests, an Illustrated History of the Church, it seems the Kellys have reduced the history of Mormonism to a narrative about the personal lives of a handful of men in ranking positions in the LDS Church. This “survey” of Mormon history largely follows this pattern; pictures of LDS leaders and temples are presented, followed by a simplified and faith-promoting biography of a LDS president, and then the narrative is reinforced with selective quotations by each LDS president from Church publications. Even for an audience of faithful Church members who are comfortable with the devotional tone and approach, if they are familiar with Mormon history, they will find little new material in this hefty 617-page volume. Professional history requires a broader, more complex, objective, and analytical examination of the past than is presented in this study.

This book was first produced as a boxed set of audio recordings sold through Covenant Communications but was later converted into print. The
Kellys’ thesis statement reads: “True Mormon history begins long before the history of the earth. It started in the Grand Council in heaven, where the Lord revealed his plan to create an earth for his spirit children. Many great and noble individuals were called to fill special missions on this earth. Central to this plan was Jehovah, our Savior, who would give His life for all humankind. Others, including Adam, Abraham, Noah, Enoch, Moses, and Peter were also there in that premortal council. One of these noble and great ones was given the responsibility in the last dispensation of the earth’s history, when darkness would cover the earth, and gospel truth would be lost” (1).

This 2008 version is the third revised printing of the first 2000 edition, which the *Journal of Mormon History* also reviewed.1 This printing contains minor additions such as a new section on current LDS President Thomas S. Monson and updated information on the late Gordon B. Hinckley. It is arranged chronologically in biographical sections focused on the lives of each LDS Church president. Approximately 44 percent, 275 pages of the total 617 pages, is devoted to Joseph Smith. Brigham Young receives the second most coverage, with 63 pages, and remaining Church leaders are allotted between 10 and 28 pages. The volume contains hundreds of historic photographs, paintings, color scans of primary source documents, and maps that all help narrate the history of the LDS Church according to the Kellys. The volume lacks footnotes but includes a small bibliography, which shows that nearly all the books used by the Kellys were published by LDS Church presses or were written to promote faith among devout Latter-day Saints.

For faithful members of the Church not overly familiar with Mormon history or not interested in an objective history, this book will likely prove exciting, educational, and faith promoting. The narrative is easy to follow and its inclusion of hundreds of rare and historic images makes it unique among LDS visual histories. Sadly, however, images and paintings play a secondary role and are not analyzed in any methodological form and are not often cited properly or dated. For example, most all visual portrayals of Joseph Smith in the volume are modern paintings (post-1970) often used in LDS Sunday School lessons, which functions to uphold the laudatory personality-cult perception of a handsome, charismatic, and gentle prophet of the Lord.

Regarding the writing style of the Kellys, in some ways they have adopted what Grant Wacker has termed an actor-oriented approach to historical narratives, in which the author allows the historical individual’s own words to

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Perhaps half of the entire book is comprised of quoted text, most of it from books published by the LDS Church. Significantly, I found the quoted text frequently more intellectually stimulating and informative than the Kellys’ narrative.

For trained historians or those expecting an objective, honest, and analytical history, this volume is saturated with flaws typically found in books composed by devout Christians extolling their faith. Some of the main problems include the lack of a historical methodology, since the book follows a rather pre-nineteenth-century framework in which the “unseen hand of God” drives history through Caucasian males in high authority. The study lacks intellectual depth and possesses no historical analysis. For example, there is no discussion of differing worldviews over time, nineteenth-century Mormon millennialism, frontier and religious culture in early Utah, and little to no examination of LDS women, topics which are often considered the norm in scholarly historical surveys. Controversial aspects of LDS history are purposely omitted (such as Mountain Meadows) or treated cavalierly.

For example, while polygamy is delicately touched upon in a number of places, it is indexed only twice, both references to passages that minimize polygamy’s overall role. The text, speaking of pre-1890 LDS perceptions of polygamy, is markedly oversimplified: “The Church, which was simply following a commandment of the Lord, felt that the practice of polygamy would cease when the Lord commanded that it should be stopped” (351). While an aspect of this statement may have resonated with some pre-1890 Mormons, most historians would see it as simply untrue. Conflict resulted over the public termination of polygamy, which led to the formation of schismatic groups and a host of other theological, social, and cultural conflicts in the Church. This rather typical approach to complex topic suggests that the Kellys are attempting to rewrite history to psychologically suit the current morals and culture of devout modern Mormons. This attitude is also partly demonstrative of how—throughout the book—the authors have imposed modern cultural worldviews upon the past, making it appear as if Mormons of the mid-nineteenth century are the cultural and social equivalents of those in the twenty-first century.

As an additional problem, the study fails to accurately place Mormonism in an American historical context. No attempt is made to discuss how Mormons reacted to the complex realities of everyday life, nor the political, ideological, and social currents affecting religious cultures of the period. As Mi-

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Michael Marquardt noted in his earlier review, the only forces that generally affected LDS history in this study consisted of over-dramatized portrayals of unruly mobs, opposition to “the work of the Lord,” and unjust arrests of Joseph Smith. I would add that, based on my examination of the Kelly narrative, the only forces portrayed as affecting LDS history consist of the devil’s efforts to halt the work of God. Much of the ideology behind the narrative is framed as a simplistic religious worldview of the struggle between good and evil: e.g., God vs. Satan. Histories confined within overriding and boxed religious worldviews result in little more than unrealistic portrayals of the past, and this book is surely one such example.

In sum, although this book may find acceptance among the broad LDS populace, I would not recommend it to a reader interested in an honest history of the Mormon past.

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Reviewed by Claudia L. Bushman

This mature, even elegant, biography is an important book about an important man. Thomas Kane, arguably the most significant non-Mormon in Mormon history, successfully intervened between the government and the Mormons on several occasions. While the complex Kane moved beyond many of his early enthusiasms, he remained faithful to the Mormon cause for four decades. Perhaps even more important, Kane personally and successfully altered the record of the Saints, writing his ideas and interpretations into the reports of actions and into the minds of his contemporaries.

Matthew Grow has taken on a difficult subject and is skillful in placing Kane in his milieu. Grow writes, for instance, “His actions are a case study in the convergence of politics, reform, and print culture” (xvii). Grow recounts Kane’s story and places him in the larger frame of reform and cultural history.

Kane, born to wealth and gentlemanly pursuits in Philadelphia, was brave and adventurous, but physically small and unprepossessing, overshadowed by his father and his famous brother Elisha, explorer of the Arctic. Exposure to European culture, on a trip abroad to improve his health, expanded his
horizons. His indulgent father spared no expense to broaden his education. Back home, sincere and well-informed, young Thomas cultivated a vision of himself as a courageous and manly rebel. Grow stitches together descriptions and quotations from letters and writings to situate Kane as a romantic reformer and heroic gentleman, not in the Whig Party where most reformers were found, but in the reform wing of the Democratic Party. Grow puts the Kane/LDS saga into this cultural history context—describing the larger world of the reformers, of the power and manipulation of print materials, and of anti-slavery politics.

Grow delineates Kane’s strange but sincere desire to build his own personal future by supporting the unpopular Mormons, a right-minded and persecuted sect forming “a class of simple, industrious, kind spirited, and enterprising people” (63). Kane saw himself doing well by doing good, clearly building himself up in the eyes of both the U.S. government and the Church by his negotiations. When his personal ambitions did not pan out, he continued his devotion to the Saints. Kane refused to profit from his service to the Mormons as a matter of personal honor.

Kane carried on and enhanced the image, created by Joseph Smith, of the suffering Latter-day Saints. In a celebrated speech before the Pennsylvania Historical Society in 1850, he promoted a view of Mormons victimized by oppressors. The printed speech improved and influenced contemporary Mormon commentary. He gave the talk when he was in such poor health that he could not even “move in bed” (82) for days afterward. The document can claim to be his most significant written defense of the Mormons. In accomplished purple prose, he paints a noble LDS population as victims at the expense of the demonized and churlish Illinoisans.

Grow works with the documents and beliefs of the time to write broader accounts of LDS history. Some of this detailed interplay between Kane, the Mormons, the press, and the government is so quickly visited as to be difficult to follow; however, the book gets it all down in one place for future consideration. Grow does not shy away from the complexity or the changing nature of the situation. For instance, “Kane used the rhetoric of suffering to make a truce between the Saints and the nation conceivable but discovered that this would work only if the Mormons played the role of noble victims. . . . The Saints’ participation in the creation of this narrative of victimhood amplified their sense of persecution, which became even more central to Mormon identity and memory, and encouraged the Saints to further separate themselves from the American mainstream. Thus, while Kane’s emphasis on suffering proved successful in temporarily improving the Mormon image, it ironically reinforced the Mormon drive for separation that in turn helped fuel the Mormon controversy for the rest of the century” (91–92).

Kane’s carefully crafted identity of the Mormons as noble, suffering vic-
tims and his effort to broker a rapprochement between the Saints and the nation failed when he learned of their polygamy from Jedediah M. Grant in December 1851. The Mormons hoped he had already deduced the existence of polygamy, but he had believed their denials. Although “wounded that he had been involved in the Saints’ deception,” as he had defended their innocence of polygamy to others, he urged the Mormons to acknowledge their practice, as they did in August 1852, so they “could frame the issue on their own terms” (89).

Kane also fought in the anti-slavery ranks. Although fiercely opposed to slavery, he deplored the loss of the pleasant planter life in the West Indies and particularly the mixing of the races. As solutions, he saw only fusion, extermination, or transportation, ruled out the first two, and favored compensated emancipation, the colonization of freed slaves, and the restriction of the blacks from western territories. He was a “separate, but equal” man when that option seemed possible.

Anti-slavery, and particularly the Fugitive Slave Law, divided the Kane family, for while Judge John Kane strictly upheld the law requiring northerners to help return escaped southern slaves, Thomas (who was also the judge’s law clerk) acted against it. His father held Thomas in contempt of court and sentenced him to prison, a decision overturned on appeal (115).

In 1853 Thomas, then thirty-one, married his sixteen-year-old second cousin, Elizabeth Dennistoun Wood. Despite the discrepancy in age, they achieved an equal marriage, reformers together. While they had a romantic love match, he was also her mentor and father figure. They raised four children. Although they differed on religion—she was a Presbyterian and he a Freethinker and only sometime Christian—they worked together and were mutually supportive.

Kane is best known in Mormon circles for his intervention in the Utah War, the conflict between the national government and the Utah Mormons that could have been a major Mormon massacre or a huge humiliation to the U.S. Army, but wasn’t. While it now looks like a blip on the screen preceding the Civil War, the U.S. government did send out a force to subdue the recalcitrant Mormons. President James Buchanan did depose Brigham Young as governor of the territory. And the Mormons, in dead earnest that they would no longer be driven from their homes and land, did call home their distant settlers, send their women and children south, and prepare to torch Salt Lake City rather than yield it to the invading army. Into this volatile situation rode that romantic reformer Thomas Kane, at his own expense, without a weapon, negotiating, manipulating, lobbying, corresponding, writing the telling documents that shifted public opinion, and generally performing a role created by him, on a stage of his own making, that reconciled the Mormons to necessary change, allowed the armies and new governor some dig-
nity, and rendered the encounter bloodless. And all the time, the frail Kane, more heart and soul than body, was sick unto death. No wonder the astute Brigham Young prized his friendship and assistance.

Grow is at his best here laying out all the details of a potential disaster. While this was a conflict with a cast of thousands, the major action was between large figures, President Buchanan, General Albert Sidney Johnston, the rebel king Brigham Young, and the go-between Thomas Kane, with a dramatic supporting role by new Utah governor Alfred Cumming. Adding to the theatricality of the event, Thomas Kane even challenged Johnston to a duel. Grow credits Kane with brokering the peace between the factions and moving the Mormon problem from the battlefield to the courtroom. "Never again would the Saints and the nation come to the brink of a shooting war" (205).

Fresh from the Mormon conflict, Kane moved into the Civil War. He volunteered at age thirty-nine for military service, raised the Bucktail Regiment, and was wounded in three battles, taken prisoner, and promoted to brigadier general. Grow details his infighting with other Union leaders and documents his concern that officers behave with honor even more than his skirmishes with the enemy troops. While much of this behavior seems quixotic and antiquated, Grow treats the cultural expectations with respect. Kane, who made his way in and out of Christianity on several occasions (though apparently never into Mormonism as has been rumored) eventually reconciled his Christian beliefs with the more violent culture of honor, embracing what his wife called "knightly Christian honour" (235).

After the Civil War, Kane continued his reform interests. Grow places him in a group willing to use government power to achieve social improvement, representing a "broader transition between antebellum and Progressive reform" (237). Still suffering the continued disability of his war wounds, he developed land to establish a community in western Pennsylvania and continued to seek a position worthy of his self-image. When he was considered for the governorship of Utah, Elizabeth lamented, "Thom is not made to be happy but to dwell on cold and naked cliffs. He would make a Xavier or Loyola or a Pascal, and I am utterly commonplace. I don’t feel, when I come to realities the least particle of a call to go to Utah or anywhere else" (245). In the 1870s, still located in western Pennsylvania, the Kanes finally came into some money with the discovery of oil and natural gas. Kane and his son Elisha also went into the railroad business and produced another dramatic achievement: the highest railroad bridge in the world over the wide and deep Kinzua Creek gorge, considered by some as the "Eighth Wonder of the World" (254).

For a final dramatic Mormon chapter in this saga, Thomas Kane, with Elizabeth, revisited Utah where he once again advised and defended the Saints. Brigham Young invited the Kanes to visit, and Thomas Kane was will-
ing to come to work on a biography of Brigham Young. He also hoped, as 
usual, for better health. Nothing came of the biography; but Kane, Eliza-
beth, two young sons, and a black servant arrived in Salt Lake City on No-
vember 26, 1872, to spend the winter in southern Utah with Young and his 
party. The “royal progress” they made over the 300 miles to St. George took 
twelve days, first to Lehi by rail and then southward by carriage.

During this time, Elizabeth kept a record of their journey with a close ac-
count of the people they visited. Her careful notes on the journey and of 
their stay in St. George have since been published as Elizabeth Wood Kane, 
*Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey from Utah to Arizona* 
(Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund and University of Utah Library, 1974) 
and *A Gentle Account of Life in Utah’s Dixie, 1872–73: Elizabeth Kane’s St. 
George Journal* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund and University of Utah Li-
brary, 1995). These accounts continue to be mines of information on polyga-
mous women and families in Utah. In 1874, Thomas printed a small press 
rue of her *Twelve Mormon Homes* in the hope that its sympathetic voice would 
help mitigate hostile legislation.

Kane’s health improved markedly in the mild St. George climate; and 
when he suffered relapses, the Mormons watched over him carefully. Eliza-
beth, greatly offended by the Mormons’ polygamy, found herself moved by 
their attention to and affection for her husband. Her insider’s view and her 
growing sympathy for the Saints ran parallel to her dislike and distrust of 
Brigham Young. She expected that the Mormon women and children would 
Once again be driven from their homes.

Kane assisted Brigham Young by writing a careful will for him, distribut-
ing his wealth to his heirs and signing away some things that belonged to 
the Church. He helped the Saints with plans to establish Mormon settle-
ments in Mexico. Other reforms instituted by Mormons—sending women 
est to medical schools, and establishing communal orders—also owe some 
thanks to Kane’s influence. When Brigham Young died in 1877, he and 
Kane, twenty-one years his junior, had been friends for thirty-one years, 
and Kane was his most trusted outside advisor. Grow describes the pair as 
“the pragmatic prophet and the quixotic reformer, the millenarian who 
spoke in tongues with the skeptic of organized religion, the Yankee from 
humble origins and the aristocratic Pennsylvanian” (278). Grow saw them 
bound by vast dreams, by colonizing efforts, and by visions of themselves 
as large actors in history. The roles of each were enhanced by the activities 
of the other.

Grow expatiates significantly on many topics, among them infant schools, 
urban poverty, women’s rights, medical education, and the honor culture. 
Grow has a lot to say and says it in a quick and concentrated way. He may say it 
too quickly. The reader, who must work hard to keep up, cannot imagine a
more complete or farther reaching account of Thomas Kane than Matthew Grow has produced. This biography is likely to remain the definitive work. Grow has absorbed and analyzed great amounts of data, much aided by the collection of Kane Papers in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University’s Harold B. Lee Library. Kane’s well-polished narrative of the “suffering Saints,” his mediation of the Utah War, his political advice and lobbying—all helped the Mormons to practice their religion, delaying the problems the Saints would face later on.

Grow’s determination to tell and explain the whole story of very complex events results in many dense, choppy, tight paragraphs filled with sharp sentences, short quotations, and brisk conclusions. Only in his final paragraphs does he allow himself any lyricism. These paragraphs are a fitting conclusion for the book and for the honored Thomas Kane whose memory with the Saints remains green. In his epilogue, Matthew Grow gives us these well-formed paragraphs:

Though remembered primarily by the Mormon community, Kane’s life has broader significance. What, then, is the meaning of his life? Kane represents a distinct type of nineteenth-century man: the romantic reformer and the heroic gentleman. Influenced by the transatlantic literature on romanticism, Kane emulated qualities central to the tradition of the romantic hero. He preferred decisive action over contemplation; iconoclasm over conformity; individual judgment over social norms; and personal courage over upper-class comforts. His travels to the Mormon camps in 1846, intervention in the Utah War, and actions during the Civil War all demonstrate Kane’s affinity for the image of the romantic hero. In a culture deeply influenced by romanticism and obsessed with heroes, he sought to live up to the mandates of both the romantic vision of the hero and the culture of honor. Doing so allowed him to leave his imprint on the course of nineteenth-century history, most notably through his brokering of a truce in the Utah War and during the Civil War. . . .

In his reform career, Kane addressed and helped shape the debate on enduring questions involving the relationship between reform, society, and the individual: How should a society balance liberty and order? What are the duties of an individual and a society toward the downtrodden, the suffering, the marginal, the outcast? When is civil disobedience to protest social injustices justified: How can the crushing cycle of urban poverty be broken? How can gender equality be attained? When can an individual and a society legitimately engage in war? What are the limits of religious expression in a democratic society? Kane thus identified and wrestled with fundamental questions and debates that were at the center of the American reform tradition, and that remain there today. (285–86)

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In an apparent borrowing from the title of Ann Butler and Ona Siporin’s 1996 book on “ordinary” frontier women, the editors of this edition of James Henry Martineau’s journals have used the same clever paradoxical play on words for the title of their work to encompass Martineau’s extraordinary life as a third-echelon Latter-day Saint settler, surveyor, engineer, chronicler, and patriarch.

But to those who know the man and his work, Martineau was anything but “common.” Born on March 13, 1828, to a physician turned engineer, James Henry Martineau—after a liberal arts education at the Munro Academy in Elbridge, New York, and a stint in the Mexican-American War—spent the rest of his adult life as a surveyor, civil engineer, clerk, and pathfinder in Zion. He was a willing servant in building God’s kingdom. In 1850, during what was meant to be a winter stopover in Salt Lake City on his way to the California gold fields, Martineau became a Mormon and was sent with George A. Smith to settle Parowan. He spent a long eventful life in nearly all the major Mormon settlement areas: southern Utah; Cache Valley, Utah; Mesa and Gila Valley, Arizona; Tucson, Arizona; and Colonia Juárez, Mexico. As a colonel in the Utah Territorial Militia (in which he was also a military adjutant and topographical engineer), he conducted military drills, explored wilderness areas in southern and northern Utah, submitted reports, and drew maps to document his travels. Geographically, his life’s work covered the entire Mormon Corridor and spanned nearly seven decades.

Indeed, for nearly seventy years, Martineau filled his journals with daily entries, describing more than twenty-two years of laying out townsites and farm land in Cache Valley, detailing his exploration of virgin lands in southern Utah, documenting his participation in canal building and water projects in Arizona, and recounting his near-death experiences while he sur-

veyed rough mountainous areas in the Cache-Wasatch Range, the High Uintas, and the Sierra Madres in Mexico. His account of surveying for the Union Pacific Railroad across the Salt Lake promontory and Humboldt Desert in 1868 is one of the very few complete records of its kind.

Although they were known to exist, the whereabouts of Martineau’s journals were something of a mystery for several decades. In the fall of 1999, Everett Cooley, the University of Utah’s legendary archivist, told me of his efforts, along with the family’s, to obtain access to the journals, long rumored to be held in the vault of a Martineau descendent in California. Persistent inquiries and discreet pressure to find the journals and release them proved unsuccessful. Finally, in September 2004, a photocopy of the journals, made by Anne Martineau Moulton during the 1970s, was donated to the Huntington Library by Alice Anne Martineau, James Henry’s great-great-granddaughter.

Having the support of the James Henry Martineau Family Organization, editors Donald G. Godfrey and Rebecca Martineau-McCarty were well positioned to edit the journals for publication. Godfrey, the award-winning co-editor of the Charles Ora Card diaries brought experience to the editorial project. McCarty, a Martineau descendant, brought a familial connection and authority that might not have been possible from anyone else. It couldn’t have been difficult for BYU’s Religious Studies Center to recognize the historical value of these journals and make the decision to add them to its list of publications.

The book’s hardcover binding is as unfortunately slick and specious in appearance as previous RSC titles, but the page spread and layout of Uncommon Common Pioneer is well designed. To fit a two-volume, 1,230-page holograph manuscript into a one-volume book, the designers typeset the transcription and footnotes in a two-column page layout. Entry dates were standardized and placed in the text at the beginning of each entry, in contrast to Martineau’s alignment of dates in the margin. The result is visually pleasing and easy to read.

The front matter includes a biographical note, a list of Martineau’s two child-bearing wives (of a total of four) and their respective children, a timeline, and four maps illustrating the geographical span of his movements and work as a surveyor. The James Henry Martineau Family Organization provided more than two dozen family photographs; they show his places of residence and the likenesses of his sons, daughters, and grandchildren. The text itself is thoughtfully divided into ten parts which comprise ten logical

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2 Alice Anne Martineau, Explanatory Letter, September 21, 2004, James Henry Martineau Journals, MSS FAC 1499, Box 1, fd. 1, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
time periods of Martineau’s life.

Regrettably, the journals are sparsely annotated and offer little information except for brief identifications of people, places, and terms. The biographical sketch is generally good in summarizing Martineau’s accomplishments as a surveyor and family man, but the editors stop short of providing any kind of critical examination of his life as a writer, astute observer, and chronicler of people and events. The introduction outlines the history of the places in which Martineau lived and what Godfrey calls “legacies” reflected in the journals. Martineau’s accomplishments and movements in the Mormon geographical region are aptly identified but are not analyzed with much specificity in the introductory material or in the annotations.

This sparseness in annotation perhaps illustrates the inadequacies of historical editing from an armchair or desktop. As will be seen in the book’s preface and bibliography, the editors relied heavily on published and online sources. If the editors had investigated additional primary sources, they might have drawn upon the scores of Martineau letters preserved in the LDS Church History Library. The James Henry Martineau Collection contains letters to and from his children while another Martineau collection has personal correspondence between him and his family, wives, and Church leaders. A third collection which preserves one of his sons’ records (the Joel Hills Martineau Papers) not only provides information on the Martineau family but is especially useful in documenting the Mormon colonies in northern Mexico. Additional sources such as the William H. Dame and George A. Smith collections would have provided further insight into Martineau’s activities in Iron County but are not listed in the bibliography and presumably were never consulted.

Another valuable source, the George L. Roskruge papers, is at the University of Arizona Library, as Godfrey and McCarty note (378 note 126), but the most substantial collection of Roskruge documents and photographs is at the Arizona Historical Society. Roskruge’s papers are, in fact, a wealth of research materials documenting surveying and civil engineering in southern Arizona, including major canal projects in which Martineau participated. If the editors consulted these manuscript collections, it is not evident from their notes.

While the introductory material and annotation are less than revealing about Martineau’s character and work as a diarist, the transcription is very good. As far as I have been able to determine, each entry has been meticulously reproduced, along with Martineau’s marginal notes and intermittently placed drawings. Martineau frequently included patriarchal blessings and letters to/from family and friends; these inclusions are transcribed as well. McCarty and other family members appear to have faithfully transcribed or reproduced the journals and all interleaved insertions, including photographs, newspaper clippings, and letters.

Readers will find very few errors in the transcription, but the emenda-
tions should have been more fully explained in the explanatory note on editorial method. For example, the page breaks shown by a bracketed page number do not coincide with page breaks in the manuscript. Perhaps for ease in reading, the editors have placed the page breaks after the completion of a paragraph, or where Martineau’s written thought ends and another thought or entry begins. This decision may also have something to do with the placement of Martineau’s subtitles. Almost without exception, Martineau placed a subtitle (sometimes rolling) at the head of every page; logically, the editors have entered these subtitles at their first appearance. The editors have placed bracketed page numbers before each subtitle, sending any widowed portions of text to the preceding subtitled section or journal entry. With no other explanation, the editors simply note that “page numbers printed in the original copybooks were retained in square brackets [page no.] within a few lines of the original” (p. viii).

The editors have evidently cited dates posted for clippings in the Journal History of the Church; however, these dates do not always coincide with the actual publication date. For example, the editors cite an article, published in the Deseret News, that describes a meeting held at Cove, Utah, to frame a constitution for a state government. They give the citation as “Journal History, filed under January 18, 1856, 1–3” (50 note 137). The source article in the Deseret News was actually published in two parts on March 12 and 19, 1856. As another example, the editors cite a July 30, 1859, Deseret News article as a secondary source on Martineau’s report of an earthquake felt at Virgin City (102 note 89). In fact, no issue of that date exists. Note 90 identifies the article’s volume and page number but includes a series of dates and sources so garbled that it is not clear on which date the article appeared. Most of these problematic newspaper references are given the date under which the article appears in the Journal History; but the Journal History routinely gives the date when an event occurred, not when it was published. Even more confusingly, on June 5, 1897, Martineau penned: “Wrote a biographical sketch of Solomon Chamberlain, one of the earliest members of the Church, at the request of his daughter, Mrs Sariah L. Redd and sent it to the Deseret News.” In the accompanying note (456 note 5), the editors cite a June 15, 1897, Deseret News article titled “Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua”; the correct article appeared in the Deseret Evening News on June 15, 1897, titled “Solomon Chamberlain.”

Informational notes on landmarks and place names are not always accurate either. For example, the crossing at Hampton’s Ford on the Bear River is referred to as the “Berry River Ferry” (182 note 199). The Arizona railroad town, Blaisdell, is described as “a farm area just west of Yuma” when, in fact, it is located about 11 miles east of Yuma (373 note 115).

The editors’ inattention to some of the most important figures and events mentioned by Martineau is puzzling. Except for a brief footnote (369 note
108), Martineau’s plural wives—Jessie Helen Russell Anderson Grieve Martineau and Mary Eliza Jones Martineau—are hardly acknowledged. Curiously, although they are included in the time line, they do not appear with the list of wives with children (Susan Ellen Johnson and Susan Julia Sherman, xxxi–xxxvi). Jones is indexed under her mother’s maiden name (Brown); Grieve is indexed under her mother’s middle name (Russell). These errors may have been an honest indexing oversight, but it raises questions about the editors’ biases and the possibility that these second and third polygamous wives—who were clearly significant to Martineau—were ignored and diminished by the editors because they did not live under his roof or bear his children. It seems grossly improbable that they simply didn’t make the connection. For example, on March 1 and 3, 1887, Martineau wrote of visiting with “Jessie Grieve—a pleasant companion.” On March 3, when he had been assured of the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Bill, he recorded his determination to “fulfill the law of God as soon as He will open my way to do so,” and revealingly added in the same entry: “A momentous question propounded [to] Jessie.” Obviously, he had proposed marriage. In the accompanying note, the editors mystifyingly state: “There are a number of Jessie Grieves, but at this writing none matched the context of this entry” (330 note 75). On April 18, 1887, Martineau described being sealed “very secretly” to Jessie Helen Anderson Grieve in the Endowment House, but the editors bewilderingly comment: “Martineau, here and in the next several pages of his journal, is performing temple ordinances for his deceased family” (332 note 80).

Another sparsely annotated episode—one deserving of more editorial comment—occurred on October 29, 1855, when Martineau described the bruised and beaten corpse of a young mentally challenged boy, Isaac Whitehouse, who had evidently been the victim of abuse by his guardians: his deceased mother’s sister and her violence-prone husband. The editors comment: “No information could be located about this family or the child Izaac [sic] Whitehouse” (45 note 126). Although there are no newspaper reports or other published accounts of this sad case of abuse and murder, Isaac Whitehouse’s unmarked grave is logged in sexton’s records in the Parowan cemetery, and letters by Church leaders in Parowan describe the investigation and trial of boy’s killers (LDS Church History Library). Brigham Young’s official pardon of the boy’s murderer is at the Utah State Archives.

The editors document Martineau’s participation in the White Mountain Expedition of 1858 but do not cite the indispensable work of Juanita Brooks and Clifford Stott.3 While serving as clerk of the House of Representatives, Martineau recorded Brigham Young’s important sermon to the Territorial...
Assembly on December 30, 1856. This previously unpublished sermon contains some of the most illuminating Reformation rhetoric ever recorded, but the editors do not link it to that all-important event. Emma Martineau, James’s daughter-in-law, testified in one of the nation’s most sensational wagon robbery cases, but the authors do not document this “Wham robbery” (361). What documentary editors choose to annotate can give insight, suggest a focus, or provide sources for further study; but as these examples show, the editors fail to do their subject justice.

Even more troubling are instances of misinformation. *Pizarro* was not “a popular play written by Thomas A. Lyne” (36 note 100). Although the character was one of Lyne’s most acclaimed roles, the play was Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s English adaptation of *Die Spanier in Peru*, written by German playwright August von Kotzebue and popularized on the London and New York stages by John Philip Kemble, Edwin Forrest, and others. On August 2, 1911, Martineau wrote that he had his photo taken “for insertion in ‘Pioneer Book of Utah.’” He is clearly referring to Frank Esshom’s *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*, but the editors confusingly note: “These records are at the Church Historian’s Office” (600 note 38).

On January 10, 1856, Martineau refers to “Br. Calvin Smith,” a clear reference to Parowan Stake president John Calvin Lazelle Smith. The annotation reads: “This could be Charles P. Smith, who was a resident of Cedar City and among the early settlers” (48, note 133). When Martineau names John Young as the patriarch who gave him a blessing on April 11, 1862, the editors mistakenly identify him as “John Willard Young,” a son of Brigham Young who was “known in Cache Valley for his role in the development of the Utah Northern Railroad” (128 note 77). In another example, Union Pacific Railroad superintending engineer Jacob Blickensderfer Jr. is identified as “Robert Blickenderfer” (149 note 125). UPRR Division engineer Joseph Opdyke Hudnutt was the chief of one of four surveying parties running lines from Echo Canyon westward across the Salt Lake promontory to the Humboldt Range; the editors call him “apparently a railroad inspector” (154 note 137). They mistakenly identify an undated holograph letter as “Susan Ellen from Son John.” The author is actually John W. Martineau (James Henry’s father),

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4 On May 11, 1889, a group of masked men ambushed a paymaster wagon driven by Major Joseph Washington Wham and his escort between Fort Grant and Fort Thomas, Arizona. Seven local Mormons were charged and tried for the crime. See Larry D. Ball, *Ambush at Bloody Run: The Wham Paymaster Robbery of 1889; A Story of Politics, Religion, Race, and Banditry in Arizona Territory* (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 2000).
writing to his own mother, Eleanor Haughwout Martineau. Compounding the confusion, they add that it appears to accompany a November 7, 1831, letter “from John to Martineau” (732–33).

When considering the value of a historically edited document, it is important to evaluate the extent to which the editors inform the work. Readers should look for the editor’s answers to the following questions: What about the author’s observations make the document worth publishing? Do other sources exist that illuminate the people and events represented in the document? Are there written clues about the author which can be identified and brought out in a footnote? This same critical approach can be applied to Uncommon Common Pioneer. While the editors have provided helpful genealogical information on Martineau’s family, they have fallen short of providing the kind of annotation that gives the reader useful background commentary and context to the man who wrote them. Their explanatory notes, which are useful in some cases, are not scholarly or authoritative in others.

Despite its evident shortcomings in scholarship, Uncommon Common Pioneer is an important contribution to published Mormon diaries. James Henry Martineau was indeed a remarkably talented, hard-working man who kept an immensely readable and informative set of journals. The journals are an indispensable source in documenting the kind of highly skilled labor that was employed during settlement but which often remains unacknowledged when in discussions of developing the West. Martineau’s daily observations give us an intimate understanding of the many challenges faced by these uncommon men who traversed the desert, scaled rugged mountain peaks, and forded swiftly moving streams to measure and map the landscape.

Any serious student of frontier exploration and settlement should become familiar with Martineau’s journals. But beyond those basics, Martineau left a tremendously thoughtful and illuminating documentary record of the mind and will of a faithful LDS professional man, husband, and father, whose imprint is still visible on the Mormon landscape and whose descendants are still contributing to its society.

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In 1862, the Morrill Act was passed, establishing a series of agricultural colleges which set out to prepare the next generation of farmers for the rigors of Western agriculture. *Bright Epoch* explores the role of women and coeducation at four land-grant colleges (Iowa Agricultural College, Oregon Agricultural College, University of Nebraska, and Utah Agricultural College, now Utah State University) that sprang up in its wake. Through these institutions, the author demonstrates that women students negotiated certain aspects of their own gendered inclusion and asserts that coeducation in the West was an overwhelmingly positive aspect of women’s experience in the late 1800s.


Andrea Radke-Moss, an assistant professor of history at BYU-Idaho, views her book primarily as “the story of contested gender spaces” (10) and focuses on how gender roles are explored in physical and verbal spheres. Radke-Moss discusses the material nature of women’s separation by examining architecture, separate facility hours, boarding houses, chaperones, and athletic clothing. When it comes to the discourse of gendered separation, Radke-Moss comments: “The most powerful tool of separation for land-grant men and women was the use of verbal and written language in stories, poems, and editorials. Word meanings reinforced the different moral, intellectual, and social expectations for men and women” (61).

She applies this verbal approach to more specific circumstances, including the proliferation of the suffix “-ess” as in “authoress” and “victress” (66), the descriptions of women’s coursework in college catalogs, and the local newspapers’ reports of women’s sporting events.

Although a full quarter of her study comes from Utah Agricultural College (UAC), a school primarily attended by Mormons, little mention is made of LDS members in particular. A brief mention of polygamy informs the debates held by other universities’ literary societies, while the only other substantial mention of Mormons comes during
a discussion of suffrage, tempering the seemingly progressive attitude of Utah (which gave women the right to vote before 1900) with the statement that it “had more to do with Mormon power structures and fears of federal government intrusion,” (275) and that suffrage in Utah was granted “to enfranchise women for the preservation of an isolated and theocratic order” (274).

Radke-Moss’s even-handed treatment of Mormonism is indicative of her approach to feminist issues in general. She states from the first that land-grant colleges were not enforcing women’s roles and assumes that coeducation was desirable and progressive: “Unlike other historical studies of women and coeducation . . . this study is not looking for gender discrimination around every campus corner” (12). She emphasizes the positive, stating that “women students . . . experienced a more equal education with men than has been recognized” (172).

*Bright Epoch* is an objective look at the neglected question of coeducation in the West, structured around the physical and verbal ways in which gender roles were played out. Radke-Moss’s even-handed approach not only addresses the material elements of women’s coeducational experience, but also broaches the philosophical trends that made them so.