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The Mormon Influence at Disney

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J. MICHAEL HUNTER

MORMONS AND POPULAR CULTURE

The Global Influence of an American Phenomenon

VOLUME ONE

Cinema, Television, Theater, Music, and Fashion

Mormons and Popular Culture

The Global Influence of an American Phenomenon

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J. Michael Hunter, Editor

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This two-volume work comprises a collection of essays related to *Mormons* and *popular culture*, terms with multiple, competing definitions. For the sake of this publication, Mormons are defined as individuals who, at some point in their lives, have been baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Popular culture herein relates to American entertainment or diversions with an emphasis on mass media entertainment and ideas within the mainstream of American culture.

Within this context, *Mormons* and *mainstream* may initially appear to be contradictory terms, as Mormons are widely perceived to be unconventional. Yet, talented and innovative Mormons have influenced mainstream perceptions in America and beyond with significant contributions to such technologies as stereophonic sound, television, video games, and computer-generated imagery. Mormon artists, filmmakers, directors, musicians, actors, fashion designers, journalists, and writers have influenced national and international perceptions through mass media. Mormons, like *Twilight* author Stephenie Meyer and radio host Glenn Beck, have introduced unique ideas into American mainstream culture, some of which have made a global impact. This work explores both the influence of individual Mormons on popular culture and the influence Mormonism has had on these individuals and their contributions. Mormons have, at times, presented uniquely Mormon cultural elements and perspectives to the public through the media of popular culture, and this thread of inquiry is followed in numerous essays in this publication. Likewise, American popular culture has influenced perceptions within the Mormon subculture. Mormons have emulated styles and techniques from the American mainstream in creating cultural works within the Mormon subculture—works by Mormons for Mormons.

Also, the interesting nature of Mormon "outside-ness" has brought it inside the homes of mainstream America as Mormons provide interesting subject matter for the media of popular culture—cartoons, illustrations, novels, theater, motion pictures, radio, television, music, and the internet. Since the 19th century, the portrayal of Mormons in American popular culture has ranged from pejorative to laudatory with everything in between. Mormons have been portrayed in competing and contradicting ways, and the shifting whims of a fickle entertainment culture have often influenced the Mormon image in the popular mind. This work explores that image and how it has changed over time.

This publication consists of 26 chapters with numerous sidebars and includes profiles of Mormon actors, writers, and athletes. Contributors to this set include scholars from universities across the country, as well as filmmakers, artists, journalists, and novelists. With limited space and a limitless field, the topics covered are necessarily selective, and selection depended on finding expert contributors with time to contribute. In some cases, interesting topics were unavoidably left for another time and another publication. Nonetheless, this publication provides students, scholars, and interested readers with an introduction and wide-ranging overview of Mormons and popular culture.

Support and assistance from many persons resulted in the production of this publication. A special thanks is extended to Daniel Harmon, a former editor at Praeger, who initiated the project and approached me about editing the publication. I also wish to thank James Sherman, Editorial Manager for American History and Pop Culture at ABC-CLIO, who managed the project. Appreciation is gratefully extended to Randy Astle and Gideon Burton, who provided suggestions for topics and contributors, and to Ardis Parshall, who offered much wise advice. I also wish to thank numerous individuals who assisted in the editorial process, including Amy Hoffman, Briana Beers, Caitlin Metzger, Caroline Elvey, and Christie Kapenda. Assisting me with photographs was Russ Taylor from the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and Bill Slaughter from the Church History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Pauline Musig also helped locate photographs. Finally, I would like to express appreciation to my family, who supported me during the countless hours I spent working on this project.

J. Michael Hunter

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The Mormon Influence at Disney

J. Michael Hunter

Animation, the use of artwork or model positions to create the illusion of movement, has been an integral part of American popular culture since the early years of the 20th century. Beginning with rough experimentation just after the turn of the century, animated cartoons soon became more sophisticated, immensely popular, and commercially successful. By the 1920s, New York, with its numerous animation studios, was considered the center of the animation industry. When Walt Disney started his small animation studio thousands of miles away in Los Angeles in 1923, few would have predicted the studio's survival, much less its success. Yet Disney's studio grew to dominate commercial production worldwide, often defining the style and production methods of the international animation industry. Mormons, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), have had significant involvement in the animation arm (referred to herein as simply the Disney Studio) of what is known today as The Walt Disney Company, the largest media and entertainment conglomerate in the world. Mormons have not only made noteworthy contributions, they have benefited from their close association with the Disney Studio.[1]

Born in Chicago in 1901, Walt Disney spent his early childhood years on a farm in Missouri. As a child he loved to draw and to lose himself in a world of make-believe. In Chicago for his high school years, Disney began taking night courses at the Chicago Art Institute and became the cartoonist for his school newspaper. After high school, he struck out on his own, teaching himself animation from books and opening a Kansas City-based animation studio when nineteen years old. His first work was for a local theater, where he quickly learned of audiences' longing for stories. Utilizing a New York distributor, Disney sent his creations beyond Kansas City, supplying audiences with the likes of "Puss and Boots" and "Little Red Riding Hood." However, Disney's fledgling

studio faltered when its distributor failed, leaving Disney and his small crew of animators without funds to cover the cost of what they had done.

In 1923, Disney packed up and headed for Los Angeles, where he planned to become a director of live-action films. While cartoon animation had remained in New York, live-action had moved to Hollywood. Once in California, Disney discovered that the studios had little interest in an unknown from Kansas City, but meanwhile back in New York, Margaret J. Winkler, the distributor of the popular Felix the Cat and most other major animation productions, became interested in a short that Disney had sent to New York before leaving Kansas City. This short, *Alice's Wonderland*, combined the antics of a real little girl with cartoon characters. Disney and his brother Roy borrowed $500 from an uncle and formed the Disney Brothers Studio in Los Angeles, where they would struggle along through the 1920s, producing the *Alice* comedies until 1927. In that year, with *Alice* having run its course, Disney developed a cartoon series starring his first original character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Oswald which was distributed by Winkler through Universal Pictures, but through some contractual maneuverings, others gained control of the rights to the Oswald character, and Disney had to come up with something else.

On a train ride back from New York to California in 1927, Disney created Mickey Mouse, who was further developed by animator Ub Iwerks when Disney returned to his studio with the new character. With talkies just coming out, Disney gave Mickey sound in his 1928 *Steamboat Willie*, and Felix the Cat suddenly found himself with some real competition. Mickey Mouse would go on to become one of the most recognized cartoon characters in the world.[2]

In 1929, Floyd Gottfredson, a 24-year-old Mormon from the small town of Siggurd, Utah, showed up at the Disney Studio on Hyperion Avenue in Los Angeles and handed his drawing samples to Disney's secretary. She took them to Disney, and five minutes later, Disney called Gottfredson into his office and asked what he was interested in. When Gottfredson explained that he was mainly interested in doing comic strips for newspapers, Disney said, "You don't want to get into newspaper business. It's a rat race. Animation is where it's going to be. I'd like to put you on here, if you are interested and want to train in animation." Disney was in the process of developing a Mickey Mouse comic strip for the King Features newspaper syndicate, and he suggested that Gottfredson might also act as a backup for Win Smith, the artist assigned to produce the strip, which was to come out under Walt Disney's name. Gottfredson jumped at the chance to get closer to his dream of being a comic strip artist. His only formal training had been through two correspondence art courses. He was hired at $18 a week, $47 less than what he had been making as a theater projectionist.[3]

Gottfredson started as an inbetweener, generating intermediate frames between two images to give the appearance that the first image evolved smoothly into the second image. He worked under Norm Ferguson and Dave Hand in working on the Silly Symphony shorts. The only animation he would ever do for Disney was for the *Cannibal Capers* Silly Symphony because Win Smith soon left the studio and Disney called Gottfredson into his office and asked him to take over the comic strip. Having only been there about four months, Gottfredson said, "I've become very interested in animation now, and I'd like to stay with it." Disney asked him to take the strip over for two weeks until he found a replacement. Gottfredson would produce the Mickey Mouse comic strip from 1930 until he retired from Disney in 1975, nearly 50 years later. When Ub Iwerks left Disney in 1929 to start his own studio, he offered Gottfredson $25 a week to come to work for him, but Roy Disney stepped in and fought to keep Gottfredson from leaving.[4]

While Gottfredson's foray into animation was short-lived, his work in the Comic Strip Department had a powerful influence on the success of animation at Disney. The Mickey comic strip is credited with being an enormous boon to Mickey's popularity in both merchandise and film, "perhaps as powerful an engine in disseminating his image as the cartoons themselves."[5] Under Gottfredson, Mickey evolved in the comic strip from little more than a mischief-maker to an emblem of right and good. Although Walt Disney had an influence in Mickey's development, Geoffrey Blum, a writer who specializes in animation art, wrote, "Gottfredson's Mormon upbringing and his unflaggingly positive outlook made him the perfect keeper for this icon. Never complaining, choking back his hurts . . . this is the ethic he brought to Mickey. Gottfredson's mouse combines the virtues of good citizen and good soldier." [6]

Animation historian Michael Barrier believes that the comic strip had an influence on the animated cartoon, stating, "The Mickey cartoons . . . bore a strong resemblance in their mixture of comedy, adventure, and sentiment, to the 'Mickey Mouse' comic strip that Floyd Gottfredson had drawn for newspaper syndication since 1930." Barrier discovered that what was found first in the comic strip appeared later in the animation. The slapstick, gleefully puckish animated Mickey evolved on film into the self-sacrificing, heroic Mickey of the comic strip, a strip whose general plot and story line were worked out by Gottfredson for nearly 50 years. Gottfredson himself downplayed his influence on the animated Mickey, stating, "It was the other way around. I was trying my best to catch the spirit of the animation." It is possible that Gottfredson was unaware of his work's influence on others at Disney, and perhaps he underestimated the importance of the Comic Strip Department, which grew under his leadership to include numerous writers and artists producing many

features, which often promoted the popularity of characters appearing in the films. Gottfredson once joked that the animators "didn't know we existed!" Yet, Disney's Story Department acknowledged that they adopted Donald Duck's nephews from the comic strip, adapting them for animation, and there's no doubt that Gottfredson's own adaptations from animation to the comic strip increased the popularity of the animated characters.[7]

Gottfredson was not the first native Utahn employed by Disney. Les Clark, born in Ogden, Utah, in 1907, worked a summer job at a lunch counter on Vermont Avenue near the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio where Walt and Roy Disney often ate lunch. In 1927 as Clark was preparing to graduate from high school, he got up the courage to show Walt some of his drawings and ask him for a job. Clark went to work for Disney four days after graduating from high school in 1927. By the time Gottfredson arrived on the scene, Clark had worked his way up from inbetweening on works like *Steamboat Willie* to completing his first animation, the Silly Symphony *The Skeleton Dance*.[8]

Clark's family had migrated from Utah to Idaho and then to Los Angeles in the 1920s when Clark was a young teenager. Clark's mother was Mormon, and she had Mormon ancestry going back to the Mormon pioneer days. Gottfredson and the Clarks were part of the first wave of an outward migration movement, where thousands of individuals left the Intermountain West in search of better economic and educational opportunities between 1900 and 1920. By the dawn of the 20th century, the Mormon concept of fleeing Babylon by gathering to one central location had changed to the idea of Mormons gathering as congregations throughout the world in order to build up Zion all over the earth. Mormons joined the national wave of migrations from rural areas to urban centers, and Los Angeles—with its rapid growth and close proximity to the Mormon-populated areas of the rural West—became a magnet for Mormon migrants.[9]

The Great Depression would push a second and larger wave of Mormon migrants toward urban areas beginning in the 1930s. Historians have found that many Mormon migrants of this period, like Jewish migrants, moved into the middle class via white-collar jobs rather than factory jobs. After making their way into universities and professional schools, Mormons who had left the rural West obtained professional positions in urban areas across the country. The entertainment industry attracted numerous Mormons to the Los Angeles area, and more would join the growing Disney Studio in the 1930s.[10]

Leigh Harline was one of the newly educated Mormons who joined Disney during this period. Born in Salt Lake City in 1907, Harline majored in music at the University of Utah and studied piano and organ with J. Spencer Cornwall, conductor of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. In 1928 at the age of 21, Harline

migrated to California where he worked composing music for radio stations in Los Angeles and San Francisco.[11]

Harline joined the Disney staff late in 1932, when he became part of Disney's team of composers made up of Bert Lewis and Frank Churchill. Lewis had been a theater organist and Churchill was a self-taught musician. Harline's first score in early 1933 was for the Silly Symphony *Father Noah's Ark*. Animation historian Michael Barrier states that Harline's education set his music apart from the other composers. Barrier wrote that "Harline's ability to work on two levels, picking up details of the action while maintaining longer musical lines, made for a richer score and a more cohesive film; Churchill's score for *Santa's Workshop*, is, by comparison, fragmented and repetitive."[12] Daniel Goldmark, a music professor at the University of Alabama, wrote, "If Churchill was Disney's major pop star of the 1930s, Harline was his concertmaster." Goldmark goes on to state that "Harline created sophisticated scores for some of the most narratively and musically ambitious Silly Symphonies shorts, and was most overtly influenced by both European wellsprings and classical music forms." Harline was recognized for his elaborate vocal writing in which plot lines were told entirely in sung dialogue.[13]

At the time that Harline was getting his feet wet at Disney, a struggling freelance Mormon artist named Judge Whitaker was trying to get a job there. Whitaker's Mormon family had migrated from Utah to Denver in 1918 and from Denver to California in 1928. Back in Denver, Whitaker had been South Denver High's student body president, yearbook staff artist, and captain of the football team. Although Whitaker migrated to California with his family and worked there in the display department at Western Auto Supply, he soon landed a job doing silk screen in Montgomery Ward's promotion department in Chicago. While working in Chicago, he enrolled in an art class at the American Academy of Art and later took night classes at the Chicago Art Institute. "I had a flare for cartooning," Whitaker said later. Struggling to support a new wife during the early years of the Great Depression, Whitaker worked briefly for the *St. Louis Times* and then as a freelance artist in the Midwest. After seeing an article about Walt Disney in *Liberty* magazine, Whitaker sent samples of his work to the Disney Studio. The studio's reply indicated that they were not currently hiring but would be glad to talk with him if he were ever in California. Having nothing to lose, Whitaker and his wife left the Midwest for California.

At the Disney Studio, Ben Sharpsteen interviewed Whitaker and offered him $16 a week as a trainee. Whitaker jumped at the chance, but within a few weeks he and other new employees were laid off—victims of the animation industry's instability during the Great Depression when cash flows were

unpredictable. Whitaker took a job in Huntington Park, California, cleaning up after the earthquake of March 1933. Two weeks later, he heard there were jobs available at the Charles Mintz Studio in Los Angeles, and after applying, he and his younger brother Scott both landed jobs there.[14]

Charles B. Mintz was Disney's arch rival. Mintz had married Margaret J. Winkler, the New York distributor of Disney's early *Alice* comedies. Taking charge of Winkler's operations, Mintz attempted to take control of Disney's operations as well. Disney resisted, but when the dust had settled, Mintz had lured away most of Disney's animators to his rival animation studio and had gained control of the rights to Disney's first original character—Oswald the Lucky Rabbit.[15] Unbeknownst to the Whitaker brothers, Walt Disney was laying plans to outdo Charles Mintz and all the other animation studios as well. Disney was planning to produce America's first full-length animated feature.

As early as 1932, Walt and Roy Disney were looking into the possibility of moving beyond cartoon shorts to full-length feature films. The costs of the shorts were rising relentlessly, but the returns from them were not rising in turn. Disney wanted to make the transition to feature films as soon as possible before any of his competitors beat him to it. With this in mind and the obligation to produce the Mickeys and the Symphonies, Disney felt the growing need to increase his staff in the early 1930s. More animators were needed to produce the ever-increasing sophistication expected by audiences of cartoons produced by Walt Disney. This anticipated sophistication was labor-intensive. Although the Disney Studio staff more than tripled from 1930 to 1932, the number of films produced changed hardly at all. As long as Disney could pay them, he continued to add animators to the Disney payrolls.[16]

Not long after Judge Whitaker started work for Mintz, the Disney Studio called him with an offer of $25 a week. When Judge went to give notice, Charles Mintz offered him $27.50 to stay. Judge stayed, but his brother Scott decided to try Disney now that they were hiring again. While Scott had gotten along well with the Mintz employees in what was a "predominately Jewish environment," he wasn't "too happy with the type of films they were doing or with their working conditions."

Although he was only eighteen and had no formal art training, Scott was hired by Disney. What he lacked in formal education, he made up for in natural talent, which included a knack for art, writing, and acting. Scott's daughter wrote that "Scott's terrifically fertile and imaginative mind plus his ability to mime, act, and draw cartoon caricatures made him a distinct favorite of everyone at the studio. It was here that he also made a valuable contribution portraying excellent sound effects of various instruments and voices used in cartoons." Scott started as an inbetweener, working his way up to assistant. He was soon joined at Disney by another Mormon transplant from Utah.[17]

Wetzel O. "Judge" Whitaker left Walt Disney's animation studio in 1953 to head up the Brigham Young University Film Studio. Whitaker's connection to Disney benefited BYU's new studio and the LDS Church. (Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.)

Eric Larson, born in 1905 to Danish Mormon immigrants in Cleveland, Utah, joined Disney in 1933 on the eve of Disney's venture into feature film production. As a boy in Utah, Larson avidly read comic magazines like *Punch* and *Judge*. He studied journalism at the University of Utah, where he edited the campus magazine in which he displayed his creative humor through his writing and drawing abilities. He also sketched cartoons for the *Deseret News*, the local Salt Lake City newspaper owned by the LDS Church.

After leaving Utah in search of work, Larson freelanced for various magazines and worked as an art director for a Los Angeles firm that designed yearbooks. His dream was to write and illustrate adventure stories. In 1933, Larson tried to pitch an adventure serial called "The Trail of the Viking" to KHJ Radio in Los Angeles. They liked his concept but suggested he ask Dick Creedon—a former KHJ writer who now worked for Disney—to help him improve the script. Creedon agreed to work with Larson on the script one night a week. He told Larson that Disney had plans to move into feature films and that Larson

should apply for work at Disney. Larson responded, "That is the most mechanical business I know of, and I don't think I want anything to do with it." Creedon assured Larson that animation would "challenge any creative ability [Larson] had." Larson decided he might as well give it a try while he worked with Creedon on the script.

Larson was hired, and after working five weeks as an inbetweener, Ham Luske asked him to be his assistant animator to help with the Silly Symphonies. With Larson, Luske changed the way assistants worked at Disney. Instead of doing his own key clean-up drawings, the drawings that defined how a scene looked, Luske turned all of the clean-up over to Larson. All of Luske's animation would be "clothed in lines actually drawn by Larson." This soon became the mode of operation for all animators at Disney. Larson fell in love with animation, calling it "the most exciting experience I had ever had."[18]

Work on Disney's first full-length animated film began in earnest one night late in 1934 when Disney took a group of animators to the sound stage, where he introduced the idea of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Beginning in 1934, approximately 750 artists were employed at one time or another to work on *Snow White*. By the time the film was released in December 1937, some two million sketches had been drawn with the final version containing 250,000 separate pictures.

Ham Luske was the first animator cast by Disney to work on *Snow White*. As the project's supervising animator, Luske had Eric Larson join the project. Larson, now a full animator, provided the animation for the character of Bashful and for the "Whistle While You Work" sequence. Larson, who had just married, said the animators were given a 50-cent chit for a café across the street from the studio. They would go over and have dinner at six and return and work until nine. Larson, who was hired in 1933 at $15 per week, was given a salary of $125 per week toward the end of production on *Snow White*. As an assistant, Scott Whitaker also worked on *Snow White*. Leigh Harline was asked to collaborate with Paul Smith on the scores, while the lyrics were to be provided by Frank Churchill and Larry Morey. Harline scored most of the scenes involving the wicked queen, including the magic mirror sequences, the scenes in the queen's laboratory, and the chase up the mountain by the dwarfs that resulted in the queen's death. Mormon actor Moroni Olsen provided the "sepulchral and sinister" voice for the queen's magic mirror by placing his head in one side of a square box that had old drumheads stretched taut over the other five sides.[19]

By May 1939, *Snow White* had made over $6.7 million in receipts, becoming the highest-grossing American film to that point. When the Oscars were awarded in February 1939, Walt Disney received a special Academy Award: one large Oscar statuette and seven smaller ones. The scores of Smith and

Harline received an Academy Award nomination for best score. A sense of jubilation swept the Disney Studio. It became the place that every aspiring animator wanted to work. Disney was setting the standard in the world of animation.[20]

In 1936, the Disney Studio offered Judge Whitaker $35 a week to work as an assistant for the animation on a new character named Donald Duck. Whitaker accepted and joined his brother Scott at Disney. Soon after, when Disney management gave a test project to assistants, Judge Whitaker's work was judged to be the best, and he was promoted to a full-fledged animator with a raise in salary. Whitaker mainly worked as a character animator on Donald Duck shorts, but he also had opportunities to work on feature films.[21]

Plans for other feature films—*Pinocchio* and *Bambi*—had been in the works since 1937. Disney planned to produce multiple feature films at the same time. *Fantasia* was being discussed as early as 1938. Eric Larson had significant involvement in all of these films. On *Pinocchio,* Larson was an animation director and the creator/animator of the character of the little kitten Figaro. John Grant, the author of an encyclopedia about Disney's characters, wrote that Figaro "is most certainly—with the exception of Jiminy Cricket—the most instantly appealing of all the characters in the movie." Walt Disney "fell in love with Figaro" and told one of the directors to "give Eric all the footage he wants." Larson's appealing creation starred in six shorts after the release of *Pinocchio.* As a supervising animator on *Bambi*, Larson had ten animators and a staff of approximately 30 people under him. Animation historian Michael Barrier stated that these numbers "suggest a director's reach more than an animator's." Also for Bambi, Larson created Friend Owl, which Grant called a "glorious comic character." Larson also served as a supervising animator on *Fantasia.*[22]

Pinocchio is considered Leigh Harline's personal Disney masterpiece. Harline wrote the five songs of the film as well as the dramatic scoring, employing at times a 50-piece orchestra and a chorus of 40 voices. Film critic Ross Care wrote that "the darker nature of the film itself required a musical approach that was different from *Snow White*, a necessity to which Harline responded with an orchestral score that moves from the warm Old World lyricism of the opening sequences to cues of an often disturbing series of adventures." Walt Disney himself was reportedly not especially fond of Harline's score. When Harline won the Academy Award for best song for "When You Wish Upon a Star" and another Academy Award for best score, Walt Disney said, "Maybe it wasn't so bad, after all." Harline's "When You Wish Upon a Star" went on to become Disney's signature theme song, identified with Walt Disney Productions, Disneyland, and the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World.[23]

It's hard to know exactly how many Mormons worked for the Disney Studio in the 1930s; the place was booming. The studio's 1920s smallness was lost

in the success of the 1930s. Eric Larson did not meet the busy Walt Disney until several months after he was hired. From 1934 to 1935, Disney employees grew from under 200 to over 300. The studio was getting five to six thousand applications a year from animator wannabes in 1936, although the studio considered itself lucky to get 10 qualified applicants out of that. In 1937, the Disney Studio's staff grew from 540 to 650. By 1939, the Hyperion studio had expanded into adjacent apartment houses and across Hollywood to buildings on Seward Street and Vine Street. With profits from *Snow White*, Walt had made a deposit on 51 acres of land in Burbank for a new studio. In 1940, the staff would move to a modern, campus-like setting with the Animation Building in the center. [24]

Considering the size of the Disney Studio, it is surprising that Walt Disney managed to interact personally with his employees. Yet his Mormon employees say he was aware of their families and their faith. "Walt Disney had a great admiration for the Church," Larson said. "He respected the self-reliance of the Mormon people. He knew his Mormon employees would give an honest day's work and would get the job done." Larson said that, next to his father, Walt was the most influential person in his life. Larson stated that his wife "had the same love and respect for the guy, and they got along fine." Mormon Leroy Beach worked as a driver at the Disney Studio and occasionally chauffeured Walt Disney. Beach said, "There was no pretense with [Walt]. We'd talk mostly about our kids. . . . I even drove Lillian Disney. What a wonderful woman she was! Like Walt, common as an old shoe. The Disney family never put on airs."[25]

After working six years at Disney, Scott Whitaker decided he wanted to serve as a Mormon missionary. He made an appointment to talk with Walt Disney about taking a leave of absence. Whitaker had worked as an assistant in animation and as a story artist. When he told Disney's secretary that he was going to be gone for two and a half years, she gasped, "Two and a half years! You must be going to Africa!" That's exactly where he was going—South Africa. Disney encouraged Whitaker to go, telling him he would probably come back a greater asset than before. He promised Whitaker that his position would be waiting for him when he returned.[26]

Disney biographers have noted that while Walt Disney himself was not strongly devoted to any single organized body of religion, he considered himself a religious man and "admired and respected every religion." Wanting to communicate to a global audience without offending anyone, Disney kept explicit references to religion out of his productions. When a Disney story needed some kind of intervention to resolve plot conflicts, magic was used rather than deity. Disney used magic as a universal device of wish fulfillment, which—based on the worldwide success of his films—was acceptable to Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus alike. A Mormon would eventually

be accused of bringing explicit Christianity into a Disney production for the first time.[27]

The 1940s brought change to the Disney Studio and to the world. *Time* magazine was going to run a cover story on the Disney Studio on December 8, 1941, but the story got bumped by another more newsworthy event—the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, which marked the United States' entry into World War II. By that time, Disney was already deep into government work with commercial training films produced by the Walt Disney Training Films Unit. The war brought more contracts and more income into the Disney Studio, along with some criticism that Disney was a war profiteer. Disney features were being made alongside war-savings advertisements like *All Together* (1942), a short that featured Larson's Figaro creation parading with other famous Disney characters. Both Larson and Judge Whitaker worked on *The Three Caballeros* (1945), a feature made by combining shorts and with the purpose of hammering home the notion of hemispheric unity of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy. Whitaker worked on the sequence with Pablo, a cold-blooded penguin. The film not only showed that Disney was helping the war effort, it also was good advertising for Disney in the South American market, which was of high value in a world that was mostly cut off from film distribution by a major war. [28]

Other things changed as well. Nearly 300 employees participated in a labor strike against the Disney Studio in May 1941, and Walt Disney was emotionally distraught over the circumstances. Disney began a series of management changes in the 1940s. In 1945, Disney resigned as president of Walt Disney Productions to become chairman of the board, while Roy Disney took his place as president. That same year, Disney created a new Animation Board, composed of top animators personally selected by Walt Disney to advise him and set policy for forthcoming animations. This powerful board made up of nine animators would become known as "The Nine Old Men." None of Disney's Nine Old Men had participated in the labor strike. Eric Larson and Les Clarke were selected to be members of this powerful board. Larson explained that as members of the board, "We hired, we fired. That's an awful thing to say, but we passed on the quality of people's work, and [Walt] listened. We could simply say this person is not cutting it, or this person is doing an excellent job and should be advanced." Speaking of the Animation Board, one Disney biographer wrote, "Eric Larson displayed great flexibility and sympathy as an artist, and his soothing demeanor and maturity made him a respected mediator among an opinionated group."[29]

Throughout the 1940s, Larson also worked as a directing animator on features like *Song of the South* (1946), *Melody Time* (1948), and *So Dear to My Heart* (1949). He also animated the baby animals in the Lullabye sequence in

Dumbo and Sasha the Bird in *Make Mine Music* (1946). Whitaker also stayed busy with the Donald Duck shorts and as a character animator on *Make Mine Music* (1946), *Fun and Fancy Free* (1947), and *Melody Time* (1948). After a year in South Africa, the war had forced Scott Whitaker out of Africa and into Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he finished his mission. Instead of going back to Disney, Scott worked as an animator for the US Navy's filmmaking efforts in Washington, D.C., during the war, and then went back to California where he took writing classes at the University of Southern California. In the late 1940s, Scott was a special effects animator at RKO and 20th Century Fox. Leigh Harline left Disney in 1941, freelancing at studios like RKO, Twentieth Century-Fox, and MGM. He went on to do the music for films like Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946).[30]

In 1946, Judge Whitaker gave a tour of the Disney Studio to three Mormon leaders from Salt Lake City—Harold B. Lee, Mark E. Petersen, and Matthew Cowley. They were all members of the LDS Church's governing Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Impressed with the use of film in the war effort, the leaders began to discuss the possibility of promoting the Mormon Welfare Program to members of the LDS Church through film. Whitaker volunteered his services, and with Eric Larson, Scott Whitaker, and some other Mormons with writing abilities, they created two films, *Church Welfare in Action* (1948) and *The Lord's Way* (1948) for the LDS Church.

For *The Lord's Way*, Whitaker and Larson wanted to use a segment from the Disney Silly Symphony *The Grasshopper and the Ants* (1934) to illustrate the value of industry. Larson went to Disney and explained the Mormon Welfare Program based on self-reliance. Disney responded, "That's exactly how I believe." Whitaker explained that Disney "respected our work ethic and our philosophy that the world did not owe anyone a living." Disney allowed the LDS Church to use the segment.[31]

The Disney Studio struggled after the war to return to making full-length animated features. Money was scarce as the 1950s dawned. *Cinderella* was the next big feature planned. Larson was the first to animate the heroine as a 16-year-old with braids and a pug nose. Another animator created a more exotic woman, and a third animator combined the two to create what became Cinderella. Larson worked as directing animator on *Cinderella*, while Whitaker was a character animator on the production.

During the 1950s, Larson directed animation of the haughty caterpillar sequence in *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), the spectacular flight from London to Neverland in *Peter Pan* (1953), and the singing canine showgirl sequence in *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) in which he worked closely with singer Peggy Lee. While Whitaker continued to animate the Donald Duck shorts, he also helped

animate the Lost Boys in *Peter Pan* and was a character animator for *Alice in Wonderland* (1951).[32]

In 1952 while visiting some natural hot springs in Utah, Whitaker and his brothers decided that they wanted to go into business and build a resort at that location. Whitaker decided to do what his brother, Scott, had done years before. He asked Walt Disney for a leave of absence. Leading up to the request, Whitaker described the beautiful location for the resort. He said, "And as I would tell [Walt] his eyes would just dance. He was just with me every step of the way." After Whitaker finished, Disney said, "Judge, all of my life I've wanted to do something like that, [but] here I am stuck with this." In 1952, the idea of a theme park was already percolating in Disney's mind, and his own resort, Disneyland, would open in 1955. Like his brother, Whitaker was given his leave of absence, and, like his brother, he would never return to the Disney Studio.

In 1953, LDS Church leaders tapped Whitaker to start the Brigham Young University Film Studio, and he would spend the rest of his career there. Whitaker, however, maintained a good working relationship with the Disney Studio, explaining that Disney department heads would call him up and offer the BYU Studio free used equipment when they were upgrading to newer models. Whitaker said, "They gave us thousands of dollars worth of stuff that way. . . . We had this kind of working relationship with them that they would help us. . . ." That help included hiring Disney employees on a temporary basis to help with BYU films.[33]

In the 1950s, the LDS Church began to build temples in areas outside the United States. In 1953, Church president David O. McKay asked Church employee Gordon B. Hinckley to formulate a way to present the temple presentations to an international audience in multiple languages. Hinckley worked at replacing the live actors with filmed versions of the temple instruction sessions. In April 1955, the LDS Church First Presidency wrote to the Disney Studio asking permission to use a three-minute segment from *Fantasia*, a part that "portrays the emergence of nebula out of the darkness of unorganized matter to the appearance of the round earth in the firmament."

The letter explained that the segment would be accompanied by a brief citation of scripture and other spoken lines "descriptive of how the Lord God brought the earth into being." The letter also explained that the First Presidency had been in contact with Judge Whitaker and Eric Larson concerning the matter and also expressed gratitude to Disney for allowing use of Disney footage for the earlier welfare films. Roy Disney granted permission for a five-year period, which—through the efforts of Eric Larson—was extended indefinitely in 1960. The segment would be used in LDS temples until 1990.[34]

During the 1950s, Walt Disney's attention was increasingly drawn away from animation and toward other ventures such as the *Disneyland* TV program that premiered in 1954, the daily *Mickey Mouse Club* TV program starting in 1955, and the Disneyland theme park that opened in 1955. *Sleeping Beauty* perhaps suffered the most from Disney's preoccupation. Although the writing of the script was under way in early 1951, the film would not be released until 1959, and at a cost of $6 million, it would be the most expensive animated film up to that time.

Walt Disney appointed Eric Larson to take over as supervising director of *Sleeping Beauty* in 1953. Disney micromanaged the entire project, and Larson wanted every detail to please Disney, so the production "moved very, very slowly." Don Bluth, a talented 18-year-old Mormon who had never had an art lesson, was hired as an assistant to John Lounsbery to work on the production in 1955. Speaking of the meticulous nature of the production, Bluth said, "The girl [Princess Aurora] was such a holy precious thing that we were only able to carve out one [clean-up drawing] a day. That means during a full month of almost 24 working days you'd get a second on the screen." The budget department called Larson to complain that he had spent $10,000 in clean-up on one scene. Ken Peterson, the production supervisor for *Sleeping Beauty*, said, "I felt sorry for [Larson] when they put him in as director. . . . It just slew him, really. He wasn't up to dealing with Walt on that level at all. He was almost speechless when Walt was there. He should never have been placed in that position. It was a bad bit of casting." Late in production, Disney removed Larson as the film's principal director. Animation historian Michael Barrier wrote, "Larson evidently paid the price for the expensive delays that Disney himself had caused." After *101 Dalmatians* in 1961, Larson never again received a directing assignment from Disney. He would go on to be a character animator for *The Sword and the Stone* (1963), *The Jungle Book* (1967), and *The Aristocats* (1970). He was an animator for *Mary Poppins* (1964), *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971), and *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977).[35]

In the 1960s animation became less of a focus at Walt Disney Productions. In the five years following the release of *Sleeping Beauty* in 1959, the studio produced only two animated features. The emphasis had shifted to family-oriented live action films. As many people accused Hollywood of lowering standards and producing risqué filth, the name "Disney" became synonymous with wholesome family entertainment. Mormon actors like Mike Lookinland and Johnny Whitaker felt comfortable appearing in Disney TV shows and live action features.[36]

After Walt Disney's death in 1966, rumors spread that the animation department would be phased out so the company could focus on more lucrative enterprises like theme parks and live action films. By the early 1970s it

appeared that the animation department was in decline. Many talented veteran animators had either died or retired. However, the continual success of the animated features convinced Disney executives that the animation department was a lucrative enterprise in desperate need of being revitalized by attracting and training new talent. Disney appointed Eric Larson as the head of the new talent search and training program. Larson visited art schools and colleges throughout the country and put the word out internationally that Disney was soliciting portfolios.

Twenty-five new artists were hired between 1970 and 1977. One animation historian noted that the "trainees became the childless Larson's surrogate family." Larson loved to teach and loved young people, and in return, Larson's trainees loved and respected him. Animator and Larson-trainee John Pomeroy said, "Eric was more comfortable with handing on the baton than any of the other Nine Old Men. While the remainder of the giants here still were furthering their careers, Eric saw a need to pass on this language and this knowledge." His trainees included artists like Tim Burton, Henry Selick, Brad Bird, Gary Goldman, Ron Clements, John Musker, Bill Kroyer, and Andy Gaskill, among many others. Two of his trainees included Mormons Don Bluth and Richard Rich. After catching the eye of Disney CEO Ron Miller, Bluth and Rich both rose quickly at Disney in the 1970s.[37]

Don Bluth, who had left Disney in 1956 to serve a mission for the LDS Church in Argentina and to complete his education at Brigham Young University, returned to Disney in 1971. He said, "Animation is one of the best tools we have to instruct people. There is a symbolic quality in classic animation that has a particular appeal to the Latter-day Saints." Within a few years, Bluth went from trainee to animator to directing animator to producer-director. In *Robin Hood* (1973), he animated the scenes where Robin Hood steals the gold from Prince John, where Robin Hood rescues a baby rabbit, and where Robin Hood walks romantically under a waterfall with Marian. *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too* (1974) was considered a good training film for new talent at Disney, and Bluth worked on the Rabbit character under the direction of his old 1950s mentor, John Lounsbery. The first real collaboration between the new trainees and the old timers at Disney was *The Rescuers* (1977). Don Bluth was the only one from the new talent pool to become a full animation director on the film. All other animation directors were old timers. The film became one of the most successful animated features ever produced by the Disney Studio. Critically praised, it became the highest grossing animated feature on first issue at that time. Bluth was next chosen to head up the production of the live action-animated mix *Pete's Dragon* (1977).[38]

Richard Rich, the other Mormon in the new talent pool, said he came to Disney because "I felt I could be a part of show business, and part of a dynamic

creative force, and yet not have to compromise my personal standards." Rich, who started in the mailroom in 1972, became an assistant director less than two years later. He credited his rise to his experience directing musical theater at Brigham Young University and Mormon road shows. He was assistant director for many of the films that involved the new talent, including *Winnie the Pooh and Tiger Too* (1974), *Pete's Dragon* (1977), *The Rescuers* (1977), and *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977).[39]

In the 1970s the Disney animation studio was fractured among three often opposing groups: the veteran animators; recent graduates of the Disney-funded California Institute of the Arts; and what John Canemaker, professor of animation studies at New York University, called the "Bluth boys," older trainees recently advanced into responsible positions in the company. Don Bluth had emerged as the leader of the latter group. Disney animator Burny Mattinson said, "I think Ron Miller felt that Bluth was going to be the second coming of Walt and really take over the whole thing. It was almost preordained, probably after *Rescuers,* that he was going to be the next guru." The Bluth group began to gain greater control with Bluth, often sending pointed memos to Miller complaining about the cost-cutting of recent films. Bluth said, "There was too much emphasis on the commercial end. They were gouging the aesthetic, and that is lethal."

Eric Larson was concerned about the fractured state of the studio. He was busy training some of the newest recruits at the time. Larson had his group of apprentices working on a 20-minute featurette titled *The Small One*, a Christmas story. Trainee Pete Young was learning to do storyboards and found the story in the studio library among optioned properties. Larson let him develop the story and planned to hand out animation assignments to the trainees. Miller had signed off on the project.

According to animator Burny Mattinson, who was working on the project, the team left on a Friday, and when they returned on Monday, all of their work was gone. Over the weekend, management had decided to give the project to Don Bluth to direct. Larson, who had assumed he was directing the film, was "hurt something fierce" according to Mattinson. "It was a horrible thing to do," Mattinson said, explaining that while Larson continued to teach new recruits, "things were never the same." Bluth later explained that he thought that Larson was not deeply involved and that the production was meant to give Bluth's animators something to do while they were between features.[40]

Small One (1978) is considered the most explicitly "Christian" animated film made by the Disney Studio. It is about the donkey that carried Mary to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus (Mormon actor Gordon Jump is the voice of Joseph). However, the name "Jesus" is never used in the film. "We didn't need to say the name—it's obvious," said Bluth, who ended up directing and producing

the film. However, the film has one of the few instances in which the word "God" is spoken or sung by one of Disney's animated characters. Two of the songs were written by Bluth himself—"Small One" and "The Merchant's Song." The third song, "A Friendly Face," was written by the assistant director, Mormon Richard Rich. Mormon composer Robert Brunner scored the music for the film. Brunner had worked for Disney since the late 1960s and had scored music for hundreds of movies. He had received an Emmy Award for "You're Really Terrific," a tune he wrote for *The New Mickey Mouse Club* (1977). Referring to the two songs he wrote for the film, Bluth said they are "close to what I believe. It's a theology to which I subscribe," indicating a rare instance where a Mormon animator at Disney was able to influence a film with his religious beliefs. John Culhane, a professor of animation at New York University, stated that *Small One* is "not a Disney story." He explained that "Disney is not about telling anybody who God is, and that God is a Christian or a Jew or Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist. He didn't tell that kind of story—it's exclusive."[41]

The Bluth group's discontent with the way things were going at Disney bubbled beneath the surface as they worked on *The Fox and the Hound* in 1979. Bluth said "no one would listen to us. The old guard did not want changes, and the new leadership was dictating according to profit and loss." Bluth did not like working for a "corporate structure." He said he missed the old days when animators felt they "were working for Uncle Walt, Dad Walt, the paternal figure Walt." In September 1979, Bluth resigned from Disney to form his own company, Don Bluth Studios. He took fourteen animators and assistants with him, causing a major shakeup in the animation department. According to Canemaker, "Ron Miller felt betrayed and outraged." The recruitment and training program under Larson suddenly became even more important.

Although Bluth and his crew did substantial work on *The Fox and the Hound*, he and those that went with him requested that their names be taken off of the production. Richard Rich did not leave Disney with Bluth, and he became a director for *The Fox and the Hound* (1981). Pearl Bailey sang "Goodbye May Seem Forever," the song Rich wrote for the film. Bluth's studio became a Disney competitor, producing *Banjo, The Woodpile Cat* (1979) and *The Secret of Nimh* (1982). Bluth joined with Steven Spielberg and produced *An American Tail* (1986) and *The Land Before Time* (1988). The former film broke the highest grossing animated feature on first issue set by *The Rescuers* in 1976.

Rich co-directed *The Black Cauldron* (1985), working with sound designer Michael L. McDonough, a Mormon and employee of the Brigham Young University Motion Picture Studio. McDonough had produced sound effects for *Star Wars* (1977) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). Soon after this, Rich left Disney to start his own company, Rich Animation Studios, later known as RichCrest Animation. Rich's studio would produce features like *The Swan*

Princess (1994), which included music by Mormon composer Lex de Azevedo. Mormon James Koford, an employee of Disney since the late 1960s, who as a film editor had worked with Rich on *The Rescuers* (1977), *The Fox and the Hound* (1981), and *The Black Cauldron* (1985), went to work for Rich as an editor on his films. Rich would later produce animated films directed toward Mormon audiences.[42]

In the 1980s, things were changing rapidly at Disney. Larson was one of the last of the Nine Old Men to leave Disney, retiring in September 1986 after serving as animation consultant on *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986). His career at Disney spanned 53 years. With the veterans and the Bluth group gone, the recent graduates of the Disney-funded California Institute of the Arts had a chance to wield some influence, and some were interested in computer-generated imagery (CGI). The Disney Studio had produced *Tron* in 1982, which would contain fifteen minutes of computer imagery, more than any feature film up to that time. Another CalArts graduate, John Lasseter, tried to push CGI at Disney in the early 1980s, but some of the remaining old guard responded by firing him. In 1983, Lasseter took his Disney experience as an animator and went to work for Ed Catmull, the head of the Computer Graphics Lab at Lucasfilm.

COMPUTER GENERATED IMAGERY

J. Michael Hunter

Computer animation pioneer Ed Catmull (1945–) grew up in Salt Lake City, the oldest of five children in a Mormon family. As a child, he admired Walt Disney and dreamed of becoming a Disney animator. However, while in high school, he concluded he couldn't draw but seized the idea that something he was good at—computers—would someday allow him to do animation. After interrupting his college years to serve a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Catmull earned his Ph.D. from the University of Utah's groundbreaking computer graphics department, a department whose graduates incubated ideas that led to flat-screen televisions, Game Boys, and multiplex screens, as well as many other innovations. Some of his classmates went on to found Adobe Systems, Inc., Silicon Graphics, Inc., and Netscape Communications Corporation.

Catmull nurtured his dream of computer animation as the head of the Computer Graphics Lab at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT). While there, he made annual visits to the Disney Studio, trying to get them interested in computer graphics and to convince them that his group could bring innovation to the Disney Studio. Disney was not interested. When he moved to Lucasfilms in 1979, Catmull brought with him several of his colleagues from NYIT. Together, they continued to hope for the day when a feature film would be produced using computer-generated imagery (CGI).

At Lucasfilms, Catmull developed digital image compositing technology, which was used to combine multiple images in a convincing way. Encountering financial problems, Lucas put his computer graphics group up for sale. Recently terminated Apple co-founder Steve Jobs snapped the group up for $5 million and founded Pixar in 1986. Catmull became the Chief Technical Officer at Pixar and the key developer of RenderMan, a rendering system used to turn three dimensional scenes into digital photorealistic images. In 1993, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented Catmull with his first Academy of Scientific and Technical Award for developing the PhotoRealistic RenderMan software.

After spending some years creating animated shorts and commercials, Pixar created the first feature film to be made entirely with CGI—*Toy Story* (1995). Directed by John Lasseter, who had worked on CGI with Catmull at Lucasfilms, and featuring the voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen, the film was distributed by Walt Disney Pictures and was a megahit the world over. In 1996 Catmull received an Academy of Scientific and Technical Award "for pioneering inventions in Digital Image Compositing."

Pixar and Disney continued to team up with one successful film after another—*A Bug's Life* (1998), *Toy Story 2* (1999), *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), *Finding Nemo* (2003), and *The Incredibles* (2004). In 2001, Catmull received an Oscar "for significant advancement to the field of motion picture rendering as exemplified in Pixar's RenderMan." In 2006, Disney paid $7.4 billion to acquire Pixar. Lasseter was made Chief Creative Officer for Disney and Pixar animation. Catmull was named president of the Walt Disney Animation Studio and Pixar Animation Studio. The combined studios went on to produce *Cars* (2006), *Ratatouille* (2007), *Wall-E* (2008), *Up* (2009), *Toy Story 3* (2010), and *Cars 2* (2011). In 2009, Catmull was awarded the Gordon E. Sawyer Award, an honor given to "an individual in the motion picture industry whose technological contributions have brought credit to the industry."

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Catmull, a soft-spoken former Mormon missionary, had grown up admiring Walt Disney and dreaming of becoming a Disney animator. However, while in high school, he concluded he couldn't draw but seized the idea that something he was good at—computers—would someday allow him to do

animation. Catmull was a graduate of the University of Utah's groundbreaking computer graphics department, a department whose graduates incubated ideas that led to flat-screen televisions, Game Boys, and multiplex screens, among many other innovations. Journalist David A. Price writes, "Now and then in history one finds a time and a place that seems to be charmed, where talent has assembled in a way that appears to defy all laws of probability." Price concludes that the University of Utah computer science department in the late 1960s and early 1970s was such a place.

Catmull nurtured his dream of computer animation as the head of the Computer Graphics Lab at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT). While there, he would make annual visits to the Disney Studio, trying to get them interested in computer graphics, trying to convince them that his group could bring innovation to the Disney Studio. Disney was not interested. When he moved to Lucasfilms in 1979, Catmull brought with him several of his colleagues from NYIT. Together, they continued to hope for the day when a feature film would be produced using CGI, even while they produced special effects for Lucas projects like the *Star Wars* films. George Lucas was not supportive of the animation endeavor, and when he hired Lasseter, Catmull gave Lasseter the title of "Interface Designer" to obscure his animation role.

With Lasseter's animation expertise and Catmull's technical genius, a partnership was formed that decades later would account for much of Disney's animation output. Catmull developed digital image compositing technology, which was used to combine multiple images in a convincing way. With financial problems, Lucas put his computer graphics group up for sale. Recently terminated Apple co-founder Steve Jobs snapped the group up for $5 million and founded Pixar in 1986. Catmull became the Chief Technical Officer at Pixar and the key developer of RenderMan, a rendering system used to turn three dimensional scenes into digital photorealistic images. After spending some years creating animated shorts and commercials, Pixar created the first feature film to be made entirely with CGI—*Toy Story* (1995). Directed by Lasseter and featuring the voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen, the film was distributed by Walt Disney Pictures and was a megahit the world over, placing Disney back on top. Pixar and Disney continued to team up with one successful film after another—*A Bug's Life* (1998), *Toy Story 2* (1999), *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), *Finding Nemo* (2003), and *The Incredibles* (2004).[43]

Meanwhile, the animation studio at Disney continued to produce its own successful animated features. During corporate restructuring in 1986, the animation studio became a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company under the name "Walt Disney Feature Animation." In 1989, Mormon Pam Coates from Utah started at Disney as the assistant production manager of backgrounds, animation check, and color models for *The Rescuers Down Under* (1990). In

the 1990s, the Disney Studio produced blockbusters like *The Little Mermaid* (1991), *Beauty and the Beast* (1992), *Aladdin* (1994), and *The Lion King* (1995). Coates was executive producer of Disney's animated short *Runaway Brain* (1995), which was nominated for an Academy Award. Coates went on to produce *Mulan* (1998), for which she won the Annie Award for "outstanding individual achievement for producing in an animated feature production." In 1999, Coates was promoted to Senior Vice President of Creative Development for Walt Disney Feature Animation in which she oversaw all creative elements for animated features and shorts produced by the studio's feature animation division.[44]

VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

J. Michael Hunter

Growing up as a Mormon in Ogden, Utah, Nolan Bushnell (1943–) worked at the nearby Lagoon Amusement Park while in high school and college. He was intrigued by the arcade games, where park visitors used skill and luck to achieve some goal or win a prize. He majored in electrical engineering at the University of Utah, where he played the *Spacewar* game on DEC mainframe computers. *Spacewar* had been created by academics in the field of computer science. While at the university, Bushnell was exposed to the university's heavy involvement in computer graphics research. In 1971, Bushnell and partner Ted Dabney formed Syzygy with the intention of producing a *Spacewar* clone known as *Computer Space*. It was not only the first commercially sold coin-operated video game; it was the first commercially sold video game of any kind. The technology behind *Computer Space,* which they patented, served as the core technology for all arcade video games until 1975 when microprocessors became the technology of choice. In 1972, Bushnell and Dabney incorporated under the name "Atari," a reference to a check-like position in the game *Go*, Bushnell's favorite game. They hired their first employee, engineer Allan Alcorn, who was given the assignment of making a coin-op version of the world's first home video game console, *Magnavox Odyssey*. Alcorn added scoring and sound improvements, creating *Pong*, a very popular arcade game of the time. In 1975, Atari released a home version of *Pong* and sales soared. Bushnell purchased Pizza Time Theatre from Warner Communications with the intention of making it a place where kids could go eat pizza and play video games. He hoped it would function as a distribution channel for Atari games. What became known as Chuck E. Cheese's Pizza-Time Theatres featured animatronic animals that played music. Bushnell had always wanted to work for Walt Disney, and this was his homage to the technology developed at Disney. Bushnell is considered one of the founding fathers of the video game industry, and was named one of *Newsweek*'s "50 Men Who Changed America." He has since been inducted into the Video Game Hall of Fame and the Consumer Electronics Association Hall of Fame.

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Mormon Mark Walton, a 1995 graduate of Utah State University's illustration program, worked as a writer and story artist for *Tarzan* (1999), *Home on the Range* (2004), *Chicken Little* (2005), *The Little Match Girl* (2006), and *Meet the Robinsons* (2007). Walton also performed the voices for characters in *Home on the Range* (2004), *Chicken Little* (2005), and a lead character, "Rhino," in *Bolt* (2009).[45]

In 2006, Disney paid $7.4 billion to acquire Pixar. Lasseter was made Chief Creative Officer for Disney and Pixar animation. Catmull was named president of the combined studios, putting a Mormon once again in a key leadership position in the animation arena at Disney. The Pixar/Disney success continued with *Cars* (2006), *Ratatouille* (2007), *Wall-E* (2008), *Up* (2009), and *Toy Story 3* (2010). The latter film was the highest-grossing animated film of all time, grossing over $1 billion worldwide. All of the feature films produced by Pixar are among the 50 highest grossing animated films of all-time as of 2010.[46]

It is hard to determine how many Mormons have worked for Disney in one capacity or another over the years. The short survey in this chapter only touched on some of the Mormons who played significant roles in Disney's animation efforts. There were Mormons in other capacities at Disney, individuals such as Howard Cardon, once manager of Disney compensations, Phil Catherall, once manager of International Marketing for Disney's home videos, and Pam Hanson, once director of program development for the Disney Channel. Brigham Young University graduate Jeff Simpson was an executive with Walt Disney Pictures and Television from 1988 to 1995. Mormon writer and director Mitch Davis worked for Disney/Touchstone Studios as a creative executive in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Mormon actors who have appeared in Disney productions are too numerous to name. They range from Michele Abrams who appeared in the Disney channel TV movie *My Life as a Babysitter* (1990) to Amy Adams who received a Golden Globe Award nominations for her starring role in Disney's *Enchanted* (2007). Mormon voice actors for animated features and TV shows are also very numerous. Ken Sansom is well known as

the voice of Rabbit in Disney's *The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* TV series (1988–91) and in numerous Winnie the Pooh movies. Mormon voice actor Cam Clarke was the voice of Simba in *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride* (1998) and Flounder in *The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea* (2000). Mormon singer Donny Osmond sang "I'll Make a Man Out of You" for Disney's *Mulan* (1998). Mormon Blair Treu has directed numerous films for the Disney channel. Mormon artists Oliver Chipping, Justin Kunz, Aaron Ludwig, Sam Nielson, and Scott Stoddard worked as concept artists, character developers, and animators at Disney Interactive Studio's Avalanche Software in Salt Lake City.

The list could go on and on as Mormons continue to be added to the Disney rolls. The creation of Brigham Young University's computer animation program in 2001 increased the likelihood of more Mormons ending up at Disney. For example, Jonathan Hoffman, a graduate of the program, now works as a texturing and shading artist at Pixar. Mormons—some mentioned here while others go unmentioned—have been significantly involved in Disney animation efforts and in creating the "Wonderful World of Disney" and, no doubt, will continue to do so in the future.[47]

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MORMONS AND POPULAR CULTURE

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