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The Historians Corner

Edited by James B. Allen

AN INVITATION: We appreciate the kind responses we have received over the years to "The Historians Corner," and we also appreciate the many items that have been submitted for consideration. While we still have a small backlog, it is not inexhaustible, and we again invite the submission of items appropriate for this section of *BYU Studies*.

What is appropriate? First, we are especially interested in any significant unpublished document that gives us new insight or expands our knowledge of important aspects of Mormon history: a letter, a significant diary entry, an important address, or some other such item. We expect you to write a short introduction that will place the document in perspective. Second, you may have special insight into some phase of Church history that would make a significant essay, yet it is not quite enough for a full-length article. We have published many such short pieces and would invite the submission of others.

This issue of "The Historians Corner" contains examples of both kinds of material, all significant in some way to the Nauvoo period. First is a previously unpublished transcription of a most interesting 1840 sermon by Joseph Smith. Dean C. Jessee has carefully identified it as probably the most authentic account extant of that particular address. Its significance lies partly in the insight it provides into some of the Prophet's concerns and hopes as he led out in planning and building the city of Nauvoo. Next is an important essay by Ronald K. Esplin, a Ph.D. candidate at BYU who is writing a dissertation on Brigham Young during the transition period from the death of Joseph Smith to the founding of Utah. His research provides the basis for challenging the claim of some scholars that it was Brigham Young who began the policy of withholding the priesthood from Blacks. While *BYU Studies* has no plans to pursue this matter further, it was felt that at least this much should be said here in order to provide supporting evidence for the traditional Mormon view that Brigham Young was only continuing a policy he had received from his predecessor. Esplin recognizes the problem of specific documentation, but his judicious appeal to strong circumstantial evidence provides a responsible alternative to other interpretations. Finally, Lyndon W. Cook

has edited and extensively documented an interesting letter that demonstrates the involvement of Joseph Smith's friends in efforts to assist him in his difficulties with the law.