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## Introducing *Mormon Americana*

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# Introducing *Mormon Americana*

David J. Whittaker

In 1987 a special session of the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association met at the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California. This session provided a forum for several archivists to survey and assess the manuscripts and rare-book collections in their respective repositories relating to Mormonism. Following these meetings, the four individuals who had presented papers agreed to submit them for publication in *BYU Studies*, and the editors of *BYU Studies* invited other librarians and archivists to submit similar essays on their Mormon collections. The offer was accepted, and the original four essays expanded to twenty-one, giving broad coverage to almost all the major repositories holding Mormon materials in the United States. In addition to such repositories as Yale, Harvard, Princeton, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Bancroft, and Huntington, all the major libraries in Utah are represented by essays that survey their Mormon holdings. There are also essays on folklore and photoarchive collections throughout the country.

Such a project gradually took on a life of its own. Having grown far beyond the original session, it expanded even beyond the size appropriate for a single issue of *BYU Studies*. Therefore, the decision was made to publish the whole collection of essays as the first volume in a monograph series to be issued by *BYU Studies*. Entitled *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Collections in the United States*, it will be available in 1993.

In this issue of *BYU Studies* appear two of the essays that will be included in *Mormon Americana*. Both essays were presented at the Huntington Library session. The first, by George Miles, examines the Mormon material at the Beinecke Library at Yale

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University; the second, by Peter Blodgett, surveys the Mormon collections at the Henry E. Huntington Library. As a demonstration of the value of the materials found in non-Utah repositories, this issue's Historians' Corner includes a Brigham Young letter located at the Beinecke Library. Two additional essays from *Mormon Americana* will appear in the next issue of *Studies*, prior to the release of the whole collection.

We feel confident that *Mormon Americana* will make an important contribution to Mormon studies and that people with varied interests will enjoy reading these informative articles. General readers will discover in these essays many interesting episodes in the history of Mormon historiography, including how, why, and under whose auspices the main archival collections of LDS materials have been assembled. Academic researchers will undoubtedly become aware of many additional sources of significant information and will learn how and where to gain access to these collections. We invite all who are interested to place an advance order for *Mormon Americana* with *BYU Studies*. (For further information, see *Study and Faith*, the newsletter inserted in this issue.)