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## Preface

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## Preface

**T**he year 1994 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Genealogical Society of Utah, the predecessor of the present Family History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Since the inception of the Genealogical Society in 1894, the Church has developed the most extensive genealogical research facility and record-gathering program in the world. We hope this volume of history is a fitting contribution to the centennial celebration.

This work was originally prepared at the request of the Genealogical Society. It was to be a reference work for the Society, but it was written also for the benefit of anyone interested in the story of how the genealogical and family history program of the Church developed. Many readers will be Latter-day Saints, but we believe there will also be interest on the part of others. We have therefore provided some details relating to Mormon history and doctrine in order to help place the development of genealogical interest in its broader historical and religious contexts.

Work on this book began in the mid-1970s, when the History Division of the Historical Department of the Church was asked by Elder Theodore M. Burton, vice president and general manager of the Genealogical Society, to prepare a complete history of the Society. Leonard J. Arrington, Church historian, happily accepted the challenge on behalf of the Historical Department. He gave the assignment to Bruce D. Blumell, then a research associate in the History

Division. It was not long, however, before Blumell resigned his position in order to go to law school. James B. Allen, assistant Church historian, was then asked to take the assignment. Because of other pressing assignments, Allen obtained the assistance of Jessie L. Embry, an employee of the Historical Department, 1976-77. Allen and Embry cooperated on the research, conducted oral histories, and consulted on chapter content and outlines. Embry then prepared the initial chapter outlines, after which Allen drafted the chapters.

In 1979 Allen, who had been dividing his time between Brigham Young University and the Historical Department, returned to BYU full time. Embry also accepted a position at BYU. Their university responsibilities absorbed their attention and the history of the Genealogical Society was placed on the "back burner." In the mid-1980s, after considerable friendly prodding by George D. Durrant and other members of the Genealogical Department of the Church, a draft of the history was finally completed. It was then deposited with the Genealogical Department.

Neither Allen nor Embry was satisfied with the manuscript, however. They asked for and received suggestions from a number of people whom they had asked to read various sections. In 1993 they finished revising the manuscript, still complete only to 1975. With the approach of the centennial year, the Genealogical Department, now the Family History Department, decided to publish a centennial history. When it became clear that Allen and Embry would be unable to accomplish this, Kahlile Mehr, a full-time staff member of the Family History Department was assigned to the project and given time to work on it. Because of his expertise, he was able to add some important new material to the original chapter on microfilming, as well as write two completely new chapters and bring the history up-to-date. In addition, he did the initial work of condensing the entire work to make it of publishable size.

The three of us wish to thank the various people who have worked with us on this project, and those who have both prodded and supported us. We are particularly appreciative of the painstaking work of Nancy Lund of *BYU Studies*, who edited the finished manuscript. We also appreciate the work and suggestions

of John W. Welch, editor of *BYU Studies*, as well as Doris Dant and their staff of student interns. We are also grateful to Jennifer Hurlbut for her work on the index and to Daniel B. McKinlay, who provided the extensive bibliography. The photographs were gathered by Kahlile Mehr. Unless otherwise indicated, they are provided courtesy of the Family History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As always, we take sole responsibility for accuracy and the views expressed in this volume. We have enjoyed working on the project, and we hope the readers will find it of interest and value.

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