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*Worth Their Salt: Notable but Often Unnoted Women of Utah*  
**Colleen Whitley**

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COLLEEN WHITLEY, ed. *Worth Their Salt: Notable but Often Unnoted Women of Utah*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996. xi; 308 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography. Paperback, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Cherry B. Silver, researcher and writer in the field of English and American literature.

*Worth Their Salt*, edited by Colleen Whitley, is an “effort to take note of women who have too often gone unnoticed” (viii). This volume contains new as well as previously published biographical accounts of eighteen women living in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Utah “who had been overlooked, neglected, or misrepresented” (viii). In these sketches, biographers focus on Utah’s pluralistic social, economic, and religious communities. They bring to light stories of remarkable women—a few who attained wealth and prominence; some who founded schools, hospitals, newspapers, clubs; still others who worked quietly in their neighborhoods. Whitley recognizes that this collection of notable Utah women is not definitive and mentions omissions in her preface (x). Some of these missing personalities may be included in the second volume of short biographies she is assembling.

This collection tests the reader’s knowledge of Utah trivia. Perhaps only one-third of the women included in the collection earned cultural or political renown: Patty Bartlett Sessions, Mary Teasdel, Maud May Babcock, Alice Merrill Horne, Sarah Elizabeth Carmichael, Maude Adams, Ivy Baker Priest, Esther Rosenblatt Landa, and Helen Zeese Papanikolas. Some played a role in Salt Lake City’s developing social life: Eliza Kirtley Royle, Elizabeth Ann Claridge McCune, and Susanna Bransford Engalitcheff. And others seem to round out a roster of political correctness: Jane Manning James, a black pioneer; Mother M. Augusta, who helped found St. Mary’s Academy and Holy Cross Hospital; Chipeta, Apache wife of a Ute tribal leader; Mother Rachel Urban, a Park City madam; Georgia Lathouris Mageras, midwife and stalwart in the Greek community; and Kuniko Muramatsu Terasawa, a Japanese publisher.

Despite the natural drawbacks of a miscellany of this sort, I find a comfortable tone of competency throughout. The biographers are professional scholars or experienced private researchers, drawing on solid sources and offering skillful characterization.



Sources vary from newspaper articles and diaries to census documents and interviews, and from land records to personal reminiscences.

For a reader wanting to learn more, the twelve-page bibliography of primary and secondary sources invites further reading. The bibliography, however, does not cover the best-known primary and secondary collections edited over the last twenty-plus years: *Mormon Sisters* (1976), edited by Claudia L. Bushman; *Sister Saints* (1978), edited by Vicki Burgess-Olsen; *Women's Voices* (1980), edited by Kenneth and Audrey Godfrey and Jill Mulvey Derr; *A Book of Mormons* (1982), by Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker; *Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons* (1985), edited by Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker; and *Sisters in Spirit* (1987), edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson—all sources one would expect to find if the listing were to be comprehensive.<sup>1</sup> Maureen Ursenbach Beecher's series *Life Writings of Frontier Women* continues the gathering of women's histories with diaries of Mary Haskin Parker Richards (1996), edited by Maureen Carr Ward, and Patty Bartlett Sessions (1997) edited by Donna Toland Smart.<sup>2</sup> Major studies on Emmeline B. Wells, Eliza R. Snow, Utah club women, and others are also underway.

Whitley's collection is a little different from many books on Utah history and finds its own place. The essayists have a political perspective to share and something to tell us about Utah's diverse culture. They help us recognize that Utah's religious origins are Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Greek Orthodox, Native American, and Buddhist, as well as Mormon, and that the state's ethnic origins are just as diverse. Without acknowledging this diversity, we cannot fully understand Utah's history.

A dozen forces—such as mining and railroading, depression and war, upheavals overseas and desire for professional advancement—brought families to Utah. Utah had its gilded age. It had its mining and agricultural booms and busts. Its landscape included Native Americans. It kept busy its madams as well as its sisters of charity. It needed its community servants and politicians. It rallied around its cultural leaders. It was enriched by its scholars and writers, artists and actors. It grew with neighborhoods and families of many types. "Incredible" women performed on all of these stages.

While this adjective is intended by Wallace Stegner in *The Gathering of Zion*<sup>3</sup> as a tribute to Utah's Mormon women, Whitley helps it apply to Utah women of many backgrounds.

As readers dip into this volume, they will find their own favorite women. I admire the authors' taking time to look for patterns and spell out consequences. They creatively select revealing details. They explore the enigmas. They are witty and ironic. For example, become acquainted with Patty Sessions (1795–1892) as a remarkable midwife, diarist, orchardist, and entrepreneur. She married twice and both her husbands married plurally. Donna Smart writes:

Patty's attitude towards her husbands was respect, devotion, and acceptance of their faults. . . . Apparently neither of them helped much with the physical labor of pruning and caring for the orchards and gardens—or any of the other heavy work that needed to be done. Where were they when she had to hire men to help with the farming or with fixing up the property? She sometimes hinted at her exasperation, but did not belabor the subject. And she regularly met the needs or requests of her husbands in level-headed and supportive ways in times of ill health and in times of material shortages. (7)

Consider the semirespectable position of Mother Rachel Urban (1864–1933), a leading madam in Park City who ran an upscale house of prostitution. Biographer Cheryl Livingston reports:

Mother Urban always held a Christmas party for [the bachelor miners] and it was considered a respectable place where they could gather. It was also a place where they could go and have a letter written home, as many of them did not know how to write. . . . The mining companies' owners seemed to regard Rachel Urban as providing a valued and much needed service. (127)

Remember Maud May Babcock (1867–1954), who brought the programs of physical culture and elocution to the University of Utah. David G. Pace summarizes, “Four generations of college students and many others . . . had been brow-beaten and blessed by Maud May, a woman who was always sure she was right and pretty much convinced everyone else that she was” (157).

Learn about the calm heroics of Georgia Lathouris Mageras (1867–1950), the midwife serving in Magna's Greek Town. Helen Z. Papanikolas vividly describes her work:

Women clamored for Magerou. Small though she was, her voice carried through the neighborhoods, exhorting, shouting, “Scream!



Push! You've got a baby in there, not a pea in a pod!" Once the baby was born, Magerou gave her entire time to the newly delivered mother, the *lehóna*, and to the baby. . . . For the first time in her life, the woman knew what it was to be pampered. The autocratic young husbands were reduced to errand boys. (165)

Follow the political maneuvering of Alice Merrill Horne (1868-1948), who distinguished herself in the 1899 Utah legislature along with Martha Hughes Cannon by passing landmark bills on art, education, and health. Horne's granddaughter Harriet Horne Arrington describes Alice's later "campaign to clear Salt Lake City's air of smoke coming from coal and wood fires, smelters, railroads, and assorted backyard bonfires." Salt Lake newspapers

refused to publish reports of their activities. Determined to make them carry a story, she and two friends set up a coal cookstove on the corner of Main Street and South Temple, near the Brigham Young Monument, and proceeded to bake rolls and pies, attracting a considerable crowd and disrupting traffic. The women used smokeless coal—coal from which the oil and gas had been removed. Alice reported: "My friends and I wore white dresses and white gloves. We would pick up lumps of coal and I even wiped off the inside of a stove lid with a lace handkerchief with nary a smudge. Needless to say we got columns of publicity that next day." (186-87)

Admire immigrant Kuniko Muramatsu Terasawa (1896-1991), whose daughter Haruko T. Moriyasu remembers:

During her early years in Salt Lake City, Kuniko's major role was that of the Meiji ideals for women—"good wife, wise mother." . . . She took the position of being an "*ennoshita no chikaramochi*," literally, the foundation that supports the house, figuratively, the person who does the disagreeable work that is never recognized but necessary to do. (207)

When her husband died in 1939, Kuniko resolved to continue publishing the *Utah Nippo* newspaper. She managed the sheet, hand-set the Japanese type, and made the contacts, successfully surviving World War II censorship and adapting the paper to English-speaking readers until her death at age ninety-five.

While the individual essays offer intriguing insights into personality and culture, they are stand-alone pieces. I would suggest adding scholarly mortar work, fitting these personalities together within a context of social and cultural history: tell which personalities

are dancing in the same arena of politics or journalism or art and trace the lines of influence—the mentors and followers. Thomas G. Alexander offers an example of this contextual linking in his official state centennial history, *Utah: The Right Place* (Gibbs Smith, 1995). Several sections on Utah culture at the turn of the century (265–75) provide a setting for some of the same characters expansively memorialized in Whitley's collection. An interpretative essay by the editor of *Worth Their Salt* would profitably reveal the ties that are part of the felt excitement of her work. For example, she might compare the contributions of Elizabeth Ann Claridge McCune and Susanna Bransford Emery Holmes (Engalitcheff), who both lived in the Gardo House but made quite different uses of their wealth and influence.

This collection edited by Colleen Whitley rewards us for either browsing or delving. The book originated in excited conversation among researchers and ought to invite a profitable continuation of shared discoveries.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Claudia L. Bushman, ed., *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline, 1976; reprint, Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997); Vicky Burgess-Olson, ed., *Sister Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978); Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980; reprint, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991); Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, *A Book of Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982); Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985); Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>Maureen Carr Ward, ed., *Winter Quarters: The 1846–1848 Life Writings of Mary Haskin Parker Richards*, Life Writings of Frontier Women, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996); Donna Toland Smart, ed., *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Batty Bartlett Sessions*, Life Writings of Frontier Women, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup>Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 13.