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Leopold Bierwirth's Impressions of Brigham Young and the Mormons, 1872

Donald Q. Cannon

Tourists frequently passed through Salt Lake City after the trans-continental railroad was completed in 1869. Many visitors recorded their impressions of the city and its inhabitants. One visitor, Leopold Bierwirth, a New York City merchant, kept a diary during his 1872 railroad journey from New York to San Francisco. The diary is similar to other travel narratives but contains much more detail and insight than most others.¹ Bierwirth's observations are particularly valuable because they were written during his visit rather than later. The portion of Bierwirth's diary reporting his visit to Salt Lake City, including his impressions of Brigham Young, is reproduced below.

Short Biography of Leopold Bierwirth

Leopold Bierwirth was born near Bremen, Germany, in 1801. Starting as a representative for a prominent German shipping house in Charleston, South Carolina, at the age of twenty-seven, Bierwirth spent his entire career as an international merchant. In 1832 he moved to New York City and involved himself in export trade with Europe, joining the firm Faber and Merle, which soon became Faber and Bierwirth. He later entered into a partnership known as Bierwirth and Rocholl, in which he remained until his death. His multiple business interests led him to serve for twelve years as president of the Orient Mutual Insurance Company. At the time of this journey, his business interests were primarily directed toward cotton.²

Aside from his business pursuits, Bierwirth was greatly interested in immigration and humanitarian aid. Having noticed the extent to which foreign immigrants were mistreated, he, with a few friends, appealed to the U.S. government to organize a committee for countering the problems

1. For a discussion of other travelers' accounts of Salt Lake City during the nineteenth century, see Thomas K. Hafen, "City of Saints, City of Sinners: The Development of Salt Lake City as a Tourist Attraction, 1869–1900," *Western Historical Quarterly* 28 (autumn 1997): 343–77.

2. "Leopold Bierwirth," *New York Times*, October 31, 1874, 12; "Distinguished Party," *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, October 1, 1872.

immigrants faced. The committee was approved, and Bierwirth became one of the founding members of the Commission of Emigration and sat on the commission for its first three years. He also served for many years as a member of the New York Chamber of Commerce and as the consul for Württemberg, Germany.³

If the records are accurate in showing that he married Emily Goudain on November 6, 1841, in the Trinity Church of New York City and that by 1850 his oldest child, Leopold G., was 12, then Bierwirth was either married previously or had a child out of wedlock. His other two children in 1850 were Ida, age 9, and Emily, 3. Census records for that year include two additional individuals in the Bierwirth household: Cora Goudain (probably Mrs. Bierwirth's sister), 40; and Charlotte Grosenhold, 19, from Germany (possibly a maid). Bierwirth's wife and her sister were both natives of New York.⁴

Already seventy-one years old when he undertook the arduous journey across the country, Bierwirth died at his Brooklyn residence less than two years after he returned home. His obituary in the October 31, 1874, issue of the *New York Times* calls him an "old and highly respected merchant."⁵

The Trip to Utah

Immediately after the completion of the railroad in 1869, riding the rails across the United States became a popular fad in New York and other eastern cities. Some travelers wanted to see California, Colorado, and Wyoming, but many were primarily interested in visiting the Mormons. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, having escaped persecutions in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois in the 1830s and 40s, had established impressive settlements throughout the Intermountain West, including their headquarters in Salt Lake City. With the Civil War over and slavery in the southern states crushed, much political attention focused on the remaining "pillar of barbarism": the Mormons' "peculiar" practice of plural marriage, or polygamy. Incited in large measure by anti-Mormons in Utah who were jealous of the political and commercial power of the Church, newspapers throughout the country expressed various opinions of the practice. Congress had already begun to enact antipolygamy legislation.

3. "Leopold Bierwirth," October 31, 1874, 12; Friedrich Kapp, *Immigration and the Commissioners of Emigration* (New York: Arno, 1969), 86.

4. U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Schedules for Third Ward, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York, 1850; marriage record for Leopold Bierwirth extracted from Trinity Church Parish records, New York, New York, as listed in International Genealogical Index 4.01.

5. "Leopold Bierwirth," October 31, 1874, 12.

Hence, many had a great desire to visit Utah and see for themselves the institutions and material progress of the Mormons.

One of the earliest dignitaries to make such a visit was former Secretary of State William H. Seward (1801–72), who visited Salt Lake City August 19–23, 1870, while on the first leg of a tour around the world. His impressions were dictated during the trip and were published posthumously in 1873 as *William H. Seward's Travels around the World*. The book, which “records his political, social, moral, and philosophical observations and reflections, in his own words,” gives a fair-minded summation of the general sentiments of the day. Seward’s account serves as a backdrop to Bierwirth’s observations, for Bierwirth carried to Salt Lake City letters of introduction from Seward, apparently a trusted associate. Bierwirth likely consulted with Seward sometime during 1871 or 1872 concerning his journey to the West and may have even read Seward’s manuscript prior to undertaking his own journey.⁶

Bierwirth had two close friends as traveling companions: Herr von Schleiden, then a member of the German parliament, who had served for thirteen years as the minister plenipotentiary to Washington from the Hanseatic cities, and later was sent to the Court of St. James; and Herr Johannes Rosing, L.L.D., consul general of the German Empire at New York.⁷

The Diary

The Salt Lake City entries of Bierwirth’s diary came to light in April 1999.⁸ The diary is located in the New-York Historical Society, New York City, which also holds letters Bierwirth sent to various correspondents. The diary measures 6¼" x 7" x ¾" and displays penmanship that is steady for Bierwirth’s age. It covers the entire trip from New York to San Francisco.

As the group traveled by train across the Kansan plains, Bierwirth recorded his first encounter with Indians. He made special mention of the clean, “exhilarating” air, a welcome change from the industrial smog of New York. Shortly after a stop at Salina, Kansas, he saw his first buffalo. Bierwirth also described a stop in Denver and the beauty of Colorado. After a short side trip to Colorado Springs, the group continued on to Cheyenne, which Bierwirth described as being located “in a dreary plain.” He noted the magnificence of Echo and Weber Canyons. Leaving from

6. [William H. Seward], *William H. Seward's Travels around the World*, ed. Olive Risley Seward (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 4; “Distinguished Party,” October 1, 1872.

7. “An Excursion,” *Deseret Evening News*, October 1, 1872.

8. The author of this introduction followed a lead suggested by his son Kelly Cannon, a librarian at Muhlenberg College.

Ogden by rail, Bierwirth and his party arrived in Salt Lake City on September 28, 1872, remaining there for three days.

Written in the past tense apparently shortly after events transpired, Bierwirth's Salt Lake City entries are published below. Original spelling, punctuation, and grammar has been preserved. Bierwirth's own above-line insertions are marked with < >. Strike outs are noted in ~~this way~~. My own editorial additions are marked with []. Material that has been scratched out and thus rendered illegible is marked this way: [—]. Question marks indicate words that can be read different ways.

Leopold Bierwirth's Diary, September 28, 29, 30, and October 1, 1872

By 8 o'clock A.M.⁹ [Saturday, September 28, 1872] we were at the "Townsend House" [fig.1] in the great Mormon Capital. It was Saturday. We had been told that, when Brigham Young knows "distinguished foreigners" to be in the city on a Sunday, he generally seized the opportunity to preach; and as we were naturally anxious to hear him, we immediately after our arrival sent him our cards with a letter of introduction from Mr. [William H.] Seward.—The answer brought back to us was that President



Church Archives

FIG. 1. The Townsend House. Located on the corner of West Temple and First South Streets, the Townsend House was Salt Lake City's leading hotel in the early 1870s. Built by Peter Townsend in 1867–68, it featured a kitchen, dining room, and cellar refrigerator room. Many prominent visitors in addition to the Leopold Bierwirth party stayed in the Townsend House. William H. Seward described the Townsend House in these terms: "Wearied and worn with mountain-travel, a hostelry even less neat and cheerful than the Townsend House, managed by an Englishwoman, the second of four wives, would have been acceptable to us." *Travels around the World*, 17. The structure was torn down in 1923. See "Pioneer Hotels in the West," in *Heart Throbs of the West*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 12 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1939–51), 5:330–31.

9. This time is likely meant to be 8:00 P.M. A local newspaper substantiates this point by saying that the party arrived at the Townsend House in the "evening." "Distinguished Party," October 1, 1872.

Young had gone to the theatre¹⁰ and would not receive our cards until the following morning (Sunday).—When the next day [Sunday, September 29, 1872] the time arrived, we went to the Tabernacle¹¹ and entering the building a Gentleman stepped up to us and courteously but silently led us to (grand) seats, not far from where in our churches the pulpit or reading desk is placed. Soon the tones of an excellent organ,¹² well played, filled the vast building and then a choir of about 50 singers,¹³ seated on a platform in front of the organ arose and with a degree of perfection I have never heard excelled in any of our churches, sang one of Mozart's grand cantata[s]. This was followed by a few words from one of the "apostles" introducing a young man,¹⁴ who had just returned from a missionary tour in Europe. He gave an account of his work, first in Swedish and then in English, endeavoring to show that his mission had reasonably been successful. His remarks were remarkable only for the evidence of his sincere belief in ~~the truths of~~ Mormonism. After this the "apostle" gave out a hymn, commencing in the words:

How beautiful are their feet
who stand on Zions hill;¹⁵

10. Showing on Saturday evening was a popular American play called *The Octoroon; or, Life in Louisiana*, written by Dion Boucicault. According to theater critic Arthur Hobson Quinn, "*The Octoroon* represented so truly the actual conditions in Louisiana that it won the sympathy of Northerners and Southerners alike." Arthur Hobson Quinn, ed., *Representative American Plays: From 1767 to the Present Day*, 7th ed., rev. (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1953), 371–72. That such a play should be playing in Salt Lake at the time shows the rapid cultural advancement of the wilderness city. See "Theatre," *Deseret Evening News*, September 30, 1872.

11. The Tabernacle was completed five years earlier. Paul L. Anderson, "Tabernacle, Salt Lake City," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1992), 4:1433–34.

12. This organ was the original installed by Joseph Ridges in 1867. It had 700 pipes, rather than the current 11,000 of its expanded descendant. Orpha Ochse, *The History of the Organ in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 188–90, 309–11.

13. In 1869, George Careless was appointed the director of a small choir that had been singing for most of the Utah conferences to that date. The Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir had about 85 members. K. Newell Dayley, "Mormon Tabernacle Choir," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:950–52.

14. The identity of this "young man" is unclear. Anders C. Grue was the first speaker in the morning session, but whether he is the speaker to which Bierwirth refers is unknown. "Services in the Tabernacle," *Deseret Evening News*, September 30, 1872. Other possibilities are Elders P. O. Thomassen and Arne Christiansen, the two returned missionaries the *Deseret News* lists as returning that week from missions to Scandinavia. "Returned Missionary," *Deseret Evening News*, September 30 and October 2, 1872.

15. The author of this hymn is listed as [Isaac] Watts. The hymn actually begins, "How beauteous are their feet." *Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 14th ed. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1871), 118, 419.

and while the organ preluded, the Gentleman who had shewn us to our seats, brought me a hymn book, enabling me to follow the choir. The hymn was sung with exquisite taste, none of the voices attempting to predominate at the expense of harmony, though some of them, as we had noticed while listening to the cantata, were really splendid.—

The hymn was followed by a discours of nearly an hours duration from one of the Bishops in defence of polygamy.¹⁶ His language and manner did not show a high degree of culture, but the speaker made up for it in violence, not to say ferocity of denunciation, expressing his convictions in thunders like these: “There are not men enough this side of hell to put us down!” No one pronounced a prayer or blessing; the service closed with singing by the choir of the hymn: “Ere long the veil will rend in twain, the King descend with all his train . . . ”¹⁷

After leaving the tabernacle, we strolled along the beautiful street in which is Brigham Youngs residence.¹⁸ It is a low building in midst [of] a square covering probably 10 ~~to 15~~ acres, surrounded by a stone wall 10 to 12 feet high. With the gates closed, the place seemed strong enough to withstand an attack of Indians, or of a mob of Gentiles; but I do not think it could resist a minutes firing of General Morrow's artillery.—A short distance from one of the gates, some one rapidly followed and overtaking us, politely inquired, if we were the Gentlemen who had sent our cards to President Young. Being answered in the affirmative, he gave us the President's compliments with the request “to step in.” Following the invitation we entered a rather large <square> room, the walls of which were covered with the portraits of all the great Saints, from Joe Smith to the present time, and

16. A note here inserted by Bierwirth and written out at the bottom of the page reads: “The government of the Mormon Church in Utah comprises 3 Presidents, 12 apostles and 70 Bishops.”

Jesse C. Little was the second speaker in the morning session. At this time he was the second counselor to the Presiding Bishop, Edward Hunter. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901–36), 1:242–43.

17. This hymn was written by Parley P. Pratt. *Sacred Hymns*, 17, 417.

18. This street, then known as Brigham Street, is now South Temple Street. President Young's official residence was the Beehive House. Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1985), 169. For more information about President Young's homes, see Dean C. Jessee, “‘A Man of God and a Good Kind Father’: Brigham Young at Home,” in this issue of *BYU Studies*. Seward described the interior of the Beehive House: “The furniture and appointments of the ‘Bee-hive,’ like those of the other houses, are frugal but comfortable, and order and cleanliness prevail in them all.” Seward, *Travels around the World*, 21–22.

near a table in the center were seated, ready to receive us, the three Presidents of the Mormon Church of Utah: [Brigham] Young, [First Counselor George A.] Smith and [Second Counselor Daniel H.] Wells. We introduced ourselves and then President Young presented us to his colleagues. Instead of entering into general conversation, each one of the high dignitaries engaged one of us, and when after our instructive chat of 15 to 20 minutes we rose to depart, we were offered a glass of ice water, which my companions at once and I with some hesitation accepted. My collaborator [?] in the sanctum was President Smith, [—] a man apparently beyond the meridian of life, free and easy in his manners, and his great bulk and a countenance the reverse of pale and pensive, did not weaken, on the contrary strengthened the impression hi[s] conversation made on me, that he must be very good-natured.¹⁹ When the water was offered to me, I asked him, whether I might take it with impunity?²⁰ “Look at me! I drink nothing but water,” was his reply. We all drank the water and then President Young dismissed us with his blessing.

In the afternoon we again went to the tabernacle, expecting to hear Brigham Young; but he did not preach.²¹ The attendance was much larger than in the morning; [—] all the seats in the enormous edifice seemed occupied, and if the statement be true, that as many as 10,000 people can be and frequently have been crammed into the building, then the estimate of the number present that afternoon, 7000 to 8000, was no exaggeration, and indeed when after service we saw the crowd come out and considered the time it took to clear the court and the adjacent streets, we were quite willing to admit the estimate as correct.²² The Mormons unquestionably are a church-going people.

19. George A. Smith (1817–75) was renowned for his excellent memory and his somewhat comic antics, such as giving extraordinarily brief prayers and sermons and wiping sweat from his face with his wig while speaking in general conference. Approximately two weeks after this encounter with Bierwirth, President Smith left on an eight-month mission to the Holy Land, which he rededicated for the gathering of the Jews. Merlo J. Pusey, *Builders of the Kingdom: George A. Smith, John Henry Smith, George Albert Smith*, Studies in Western History and Culture (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1981).

20. Bierwirth was not impressed by the spartan refreshments and may have also had concerns about the safety of drinking the water.

21. Bierwirth’s expectations may have been piqued by William H. Seward’s account of a Brigham Young sermon: “After a kind allusion to Mr. Seward’s presence, the sermon ran to incoherent and pointless exhortation.” Seward, *Travels around the World*, 20.

22. The downstairs of the Tabernacle was originally built to seat 6,000; the gallery seated an additional 3,000. Anderson, “Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,” 4:1433–34.

The service was similar to the one we had been present at in the morning: the music of organ and choir was excellent; we had again a discourse on doctrinal points,²³ during the delivery of which the Lords supper was served, not in a manner however, I am sorry to say, to make the rite impressive. There were 12 plates and 12 cups and 12 deacons or Bishops first distributed the bread and then the wine <or rather the water,> and they had to come repeatedly for fresh supplies to serve all. The act resembled more the performance of a job, than the administering [*sic*] of a holy ordinance.²⁴

In the evening we received a note from President Young, placing his carriage at our disposal during our stay in the city; and a little later President Wells,²⁵ with two of the more prominent [*sic*] citizens of the place, all connected with the church, paid their respects and wished to know, how they could serve us. It again so happened that we did not engage in general conversation, but each one of us was taken hold of by one of our visitors. The Gentleman, who devoted his special attention to me [—]. I afterwards found out, -was the husband of two of Pres^t. Young's daughters.²⁶ He was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, but also a strong believer in Mormonism. He related a great many interesting incidents ~~relating to~~ <connected with> the early history of the church, spoke of the many hard struggles of the colony in the first dozen years in Utah; how for 6 months they had to suspend work on their dwellings, because they had no nails + c. [etc.] But their severest trial was in later years. They had, by means of irrigation, made their ~~fields remarkable~~ <soil reasonably> productive, the fields began to look beautifully, gladdening the hearts of all, when the grasshoppers and locusts appeared and soon threatened total destruction. Seeing that the insects moved in one direction and would soon arrive at one of the ditches made for the purpose of irrigation, the people placed straw along

23. George Q. Cannon (1827–1901), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, delivered this sermon. "Services in the Tabernacle," September 30, 1872.

24. Seward's observation was less critical: "The ceremony, though attended with less solemnity, is conducted in the same manner as in the more popular Protestant denominations, with the difference that water is used in place of wine, a special prayer being offered that the substitution may be approved." Seward, *Travels around the World*, 18–19.

25. Daniel H. Wells (1814–91) also served as mayor of Salt Lake City (1866–76). Lawrence R. Flake, *Prophets and Apostles of the Last Dispensation* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 255–58.

26. Although both George Thatcher and Hiram B. Clawson married two of Brigham Young's daughters, the gentleman mentioned here is probably the latter. Clawson (1826–1912) managed President Young's private business affairs for many years and so would have been constantly near him. Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1892–1904), 4:201–3.

the trench expecting the grasshoppers would get entangled therein. And indeed such was the case! The straw was then set on fire and millions of the insects were burned.—But the joy of the people at the happy deliverance was short-lived; soon fresh swarms of locusts appeared and nothing now remained for the sorely tried Mormons but their trust in Providence—and that saved them. They prayed and lo! the next day <suddenly> the sky was darkened by many thousands of white gulls coming from the lakes and, pouncing upon the locusts, made short work of them. <In the words of my informant:> “They gobbled them as fast as the hen picks up the grains of corn <and immediately threw them up again.>” and the following morning the gulls had disappeared leaving behind the inanimate remains of millions of locusts, which caused no serious inconvenience, but might be used as a fertilizer.²⁷ —Perhaps my features expressed incredulity—I felt that I could not altogether control them. “May be, you will call this a big story?” added my informant. “It sounds extravagant,” I said[,] but do you speak of your own knowledge? “I do,” he replied, “I have seen with my own eyes, have witnessed myself all I have told you.” —This, of course, silenced me; I no longer expressed any doubts as to the truth of the Gentlemans statement.

At 10 o'clock the next morning [Monday, September 30, 1872] President Young's carriage was at the door, with my good-natured, not to say jolly friend, President Smith in it, who took us all to see all that he thought worth seeing. There was the new temple, now in course of construction, and if ever finished, will be one of the most magnificent edifices in the United States. The theatre²⁸ and the courthouse are structures that would be creditable to any city; the water works and many other public works + improvements give highly satisfactory evidence of the public spirit, the good sense, the energy of the people and of a wise and faithful administration of

27. The crickets swarmed into the Salt Lake Valley as early as May 22, 1848. The seagulls flew to the rescue beginning June 9, 1848. See Davis Bitton and Linda P. Wilcox, “Pestiferous Ironclads: The Grasshopper Problem in Pioneer Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (fall 1978): 336–55; and William Hartley, “Mormons, Crickets, and Gulls: A New Look at an Old Story,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38 (summer 1970): 224–39.

28. Architect William H. Folsom designed the Salt Lake Theater to be a close duplicate of the Drury Lane Theatre in London. Completed in 1862, the theater had a capacity of 1,500. Ila Fisher Maughan, *Pioneer Theatre in the Desert* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 93. In 1865, Samuel Bowles, editor of *Springfield Republican*, visited Salt Lake City in company with U.S. Vice-President Schuyler Colfax and had this to say about the theater:

The building is itself a rare triumph of art and enterprise. No eastern city of one hundred thousand inhabitants,—remember Salt Lake City has less than

the affairs of the community.—An uncommonly pleasant drive was that to Camp Douglas,²⁹ a couple of miles away from the city. It is beautifully situated on a slope of the Wasatch mountains, high enough to afford a good view of Salt Lake City and the surrounding country. Nothing can be more charming; the city with its wide streets lined with shade trees giving it ~~an~~ ~~air~~ at this distance an air of quiet repose; the fields for many miles around carefully cultivated, rivulets and trenches filled with sparkling water crossing them in all directions, and, beyond the whole, the imposing mountain range, many of the higher peaks covered with glittering snow—surely, the panorama is lovely!

President Smith introduced us to the commandant of the Camp, General Morrow, in whom we found an exceedingly pleasant Gentleman;³⁰ indeed with his commanding figure, noble countenance, most courteous and at the same time dignified bearing, he realized the beau ideal of an American officer. His great collection of Indian weapons, dresses, utensils + c [etc.] was as curious and interesting, as his remarks on Indian character and warfare and his account of personal adventures among the savages

twenty thousand,—possesses so fine a theatrical structure. It ranks, alike in capacity and elegance of structure and finish, along with the opera-houses and academies of music of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Cincinnati. (Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States, with Speaker Colfax* [Springfield, Mass.: Samuel Bowles, 1865], 103)

29. Established October 26, 1862, Fort Douglas had several buildings including a pair of two-story red sandstone barracks capable of holding 480 men. The fort served as headquarters for the Thirteenth Regiment. In 1871, deeming that a Mormon uprising was imminent, the U.S. president ordered the headquarters to be removed to Fort Fred Steele in Wyoming. In 1873, as no uprising had occurred, the base was shifted back to Fort Douglas under a new colonel. Hence, when Bierwirth's party came to the camp in 1872, they were greeted by General Henry A. Morrow (a lieutenant colonel) rather than General Philip De Trobriand (the colonel of the Thirteenth Legion), who had met with Seward two years earlier. U. G. McAlexander, *History of the Thirteenth Regiment, United States Infantry* (Salt Lake City: Regimental Press, Thirteenth Infantry, 1905), 73; Lyman Clarence Pedersen Jr., "History of Fort Douglas, Utah" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1967), 47–220.

30. A letter General Morrow wrote in 1874 says this of his relationship with the Mormons: "I assure you I left Salt Lake with great good feelings towards its industrious and frugal population. I shall always remember the many acts of courtesy and kindness I received, and I will never cease to wish prosperity and happiness to a city which attracted me so much by the beauty of its people." As quoted in "U.S. Troops in Utah," in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, comp. Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 18:27.

were entertaining and instructive, while the charm of his communications was greatly enhanced by the <total> absence of boasting or self-laudation.

Returning to the city our amiable guide related many interesting episodes in the history of the people. He had a ready and frank answer to all our questions, some of which we might have hesitated to ask of a less good-natured Gentleman. He spoke freely of the criminal suits now pending against Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders, whom he declared, and no doubt honestly believes, entirely innocent of all the accusations against them. He denounced an apostate, or rather a fellow who was expelled from the church, as the cause of all the trouble, relating many of the villain's atrocious [*sic*] acts; and on my expressing surprise that justice had not yet got hold of him, our humorous friend replied: "The fellow always manages to get some one else's neck between his own and the rope."³¹

When drawing near the city, President Smith informed us that for the afternoon an excursion had been arranged on a newly opened RRd to Lehi;³² about 40 miles distant;—that the trip would give us the opportunity to see Utah Lake and the River Jordan and that a special train had been provided for the trip. —Soon after 1 o'clock P.M. a carriage came for us to the Hotel to take us to the depot, and entering the cars we were received by half a dozen Gentlemen, among them President Young. Soon the car became filled by the elite of the city's population, including quite a number of ladies,³³ to all of whom we were introduced. President Young took a seat next to me and I had 10 minutes conversation with him, when he left me to

31. This "apostate" is undoubtedly William Hickman (1815–83), who was excommunicated in 1868 for reasons that remain unclear. Faced with a sure conviction in 1870 for the murder of Frank Moreno, Hickman was supposedly promised immunity if he implicated several leaders of the Church in an unsolved 1857 murder. Hickman's statements before a grand jury in fall 1871 brought about charges of incitement to murder against Brigham Young, Daniel H. Wells, and seven other Latter-day Saints. All pled not guilty. Awaiting trial, Mayor Wells and President Young were placed on house arrest for 120 days, while the others were jailed for six months in the Fort Douglas prison. Hickman also served time but was later released. When the United States Supreme Court discovered the anti-Mormon tactics the chief justice and his predecessors had used, they invalidated all criminal proceedings in Utah during the previous eighteen months. Charges in the murder case were dropped. Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, *A Book of Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 118–24; Hope A. Hilton, "*Wild Bill*" Hickman and the Mormon Frontier (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 123–28, 133–34, 138; Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 372–73.

32. This stretch of the railroad was completed just four days before. "Conference Trains," *Deseret Evening News*, September 28, 1872.

33. The gentlemen on this excursion included Brigham Young, George Q. Cannon, George A. Smith, Daniel H. Wells, and Orson Pratt. "Distinguished Party," October 1, 1872. The only lady who can be identified is the wife of Hiram B. Clawson.

bestow the favor and honor of his company upon some on [*sic*] else. —In stature he is not above the middle-size, but well-made and, considering his age, upwards of 71 years, remarkably elastic in his movements. He looks 15 to 20 years younger than he is. —There is nothing plebeian in his appearance; on the contrary, his rather <handsome,> intellectual, not decidedly masculine features, his hands, his feet—all seem to point to patrician origin, while by his dress and manners he might readily be taken for an English Gentleman. He is courteous and yet with a touch of hauteur; in his conversation he is studiously guarded and—more than seemed to me consistent with good taste—he endeavors to give his utterances a sanctimonious turn. This however may be the natural promptings of a Saint with more than a dozen wives.

I had half an hour's talk with one Mrs. Young and did not find it tedious; rather greater exertion was required to prevent pauses in the conversation with a daughter of President Young's + one of Genl. Clasen's wives, areally beautiful young woman, but reserved, not to say shy in her manners. The thought struck me to inquire after her children and then she spoke with a mother's eloquence. I could readily believe that her daughter, <the one> 5 years old, was "a dear little thing,"—and no doubt a perfect beauty— I added, to which with a sweet smile, she replied: "I am sure you would say so, if you were to see her."³⁴

Every one in the car shewed a desire to make the trip pleasant to us; whatever deserved notice along the road: the irrigation of the fields, the natural reservoirs from which the water was drawn, Utah Lake and the river Jordan; the mines that had been recently opened + c. [etc.]—all was pointed out to us; and by order of President Young the train stopped to give us the opportunity of examining some smelting works³⁵ near the road. Well pleased with our trip, but rather tired by the day's work we returned to our hotel in time for supper, soon after which nothing had greater attraction for me than my bed.

34. Bierwirth was speaking either with Alice Young Clawson (1839–74) about her daughter Luna (1866–?) or with Emily Young Clawson (1849–1912) about her daughter Carlie Louine (1869–1965), whose age he would have incorrectly recorded.

35. The *Deseret Evening News* made a point of the smelting works:

On the return of the company the car stopped at the Saturn Smelting Works. . . . Mr. G. W. Gerrish, Superintendent of the work, explained the process of smelting to the visitors. Some idea of the results that are being accomplished there may be formed from the statement of Mr. Gerrish, that from 7 o'clock on Saturday morning until the same hour on Sunday morning they ran off forty-two tons of ore, only 29 per cent of which was lead, and the per centage of slag was very small, not exceeding from one to one and a quarter. ("An Excursion," *Deseret Evening News*, October 1, 1872)

One little incident of the trip I still wish to mention. Passing the entrance to the Emma Mines,³⁶ I told a Gentleman at my side, that I had been trying to get specimens of Utah ores, had been for the purpose to the Bureau of Mines, but had not been successful. He with a smile inquired, if I wished to speculate in mines? I replied that nothing was further from my thoughts; but I had wished to get the ores for my son's cabinet of minerals.—When we were near the end of our journey, he asked when I intended to leave? and on my saying that it would be at 1 o'clock the next day, he bade me good night with the remark that he would have the pleasure of seeing me once more before my departure.—And sure enough, by 11 o'clock a.m. the next day he appeared with a parcel in his hands containing half a dozen specimens of Utah ores, all properly labeled, which he handed me, apologizing that want of time had not allowed him to collect a larger number; but that he had requested a friend and had sent his son to find a few more. Soon thereafter the two messengers arrived bringing what they had been sent for, thus ~~completing the collection and~~ making me the owner of a really valuable collection of minerals <Utah ores>.—I have related the circumstance to show that Mormonism does not destroy, nor weaken the inducements to gentlemanly attention and courtesy.

On the 1st of October [1872] we left the beautiful city of the Saints. Again at the dépôt we found several of our friends, who had come there to bid us Good bye. Our thanks were not mere façon de parler.³⁷ We felt indebted to them for a highly interesting experience in our journey. And now, after our return from places much farther west, we still consider the visit to the Mormons on the whole the most satisfactory part of our voyage inasmuch as, besides making us acquainted with one of the richest and loveliest sections of the country, it has enabled us to form our own opinion of a people, of whom our knowledge was based on more or less incorrect and often altogether false reports.

The *Salt Lake Daily Herald* added: "The visitors expressed themselves highly pleased with the progress which had been made in the development of this valley." "Distinguished Party," October 1, 1872.

36. The Emma Silver Mines are in the Little Cottonwood mining district at Alta, nineteen miles southeast of Salt Lake City. These mines were the first in the area. The major tunnel collapsed on June 3, 1872; due to this accident and mismanagement, the mine became largely idle thereafter. W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Infamous Emma Mine: A British Interest in the Little Cottonwood District, Utah Territory," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 23 (October 1955): 339–62.

37. That is, facades for the purpose of diplomatic conversation.

In order not to be misunderstood I may as well here mention what I told one of the “apostles,” that I had been twice to the tabernacle, & had heard two of their prominent men deliver elaborate discourses on doctrinal points; but that they had failed to convince me of the truth of their religion and that I surely could never become a Mormon. I feel so still; but candor compels me to say that, apart from the abomination of Polygamy, there is nothing in the doctrines of Mormonism deserving condemnation, tho’ there is no doubt a good deal in them that unbelievers will treat with derision. And Polygamy is not one of the original tenets of the church, but was palmed upon it in later years to the disgust and horror of its right-thinking members, as conclusively shewn by Mrs. Stenhouse in her recently published highly interesting book.³⁸

Judging of the people by what we saw of them, considering the circumstances under which about a quarter of a century ago they were driven from Illinois, the hardships they had to endure before they reached the “land of promise” which however was then not a “land flowing with milk and honey,” but a barren valley without a tree in it, without water courses, enclosed by a range of towering [?], snow-capped mountains; bearing in mind that they brought with them only a few carts and mules and not by any means a full supply of human food, nor clothing to resist the rigor of the rapidly approaching winter; imagining their position when, in obedience to a revelation from on High (as they humbly believed) they pitched their tents in the wilderness—and then beholding what in a score of years they have made in this wilderness: one of the best cultivated & most prosperous section of the Union, with a capital rivaling in attractions the loveliest inland cities and with numerous settlements all giving proof of earnest thrift;—regarding and considering all this, the conclusion to me is irresistible that, nothing but entire and abiding faith in the truth of their

38. Fanny Warn Stenhouse was the first wife of T. B. H. Stenhouse. Together, the couple helped open the Italian Mission of the Church. Afterwards in Utah, T. B. H. Stenhouse worked as a reporter for the *Deseret News* and married a second wife, Belinda Pratt. When Zina Young, Brigham Young’s daughter, did not reciprocate Stenhouse’s romantic interest, the reporter’s activity in the Church began to wane. He affiliated with the Godbeites, divorced Belinda Pratt, and apostatized with Fanny, with whom he penned several anti-Mormon works. Ronald W. Walker, “The Stenhouses and the Making of a Mormon Image,” *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 51–72. The book to which Bierwirth refers is Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, *A Lady’s Life among the Mormons: A Record of Personal Experience as One of the Wives of a Mormon Elder, during a Period of More Than Twenty Years*, 2d ed. (New York: Russell Brothers, 1872).

religion could have given the people the strength and patience and power of endurance that have been required to accomplish, what they now are able to exhibit to the visitor from afar.

In thus endeavoring to do justice to the people who still have to suffer from violent and in some respects ~~certainly~~ unjust prejudices, I must say once more that nothing can, nor should, mitigate the abhorrence of Polygamy. But I may say, the death knell of that detestable institution is heard throughout the territory and loudest in Salt Lake City. The voices of common sense, of decency, of Christian morality, have begun to find attentive listeners, and when they speak in manner and words like Mrs. Stenhouse in her good book, they cannot fail to have a salutary effect. The people still have pluck enough to resist brute attacks, but they will not and do not obstinately shut their ears to the honest admonition of reason, nor will they remain insensible to the gentle tones of Christian sympathy. Already there are churches of various Christian denominations in Salt Lake City: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist & Methodist, with steadily increasing congregations exercising a salutary influence;³⁹ and since the opening of the mines, the successful development of which is powerfully assisted by the opening of RRoads, there is a rapid increase of the Gentile population, whose votes will no doubt ere long determine the elections. The heads of the Mormon Church will be deprived of the direction of affairs, and the loss of political power will be fatal to their influence upon both society & religion. Mormonism, as originally taught, may live in Utah—and I do not see why it should not as well as the other countless dilutions of our Lord's teachings; but Polygamy is dead and will soon ~~be buried~~ be buried.

Now for California!

39. The Episcopalians entered Utah in 1867 and had within three years built the Cathedral Church of St. Mark. The First Methodist Church was organized in Salt Lake City in 1870. Presbyterian and Baptist congregations were organized in Salt Lake City the following year. See *World's Fair Ecclesiastical History of Utah* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1893), 191–203, 222–23, 258, 276–77; and Robert Joseph Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah: A Study in Religious and Social Conflict (1862–1890)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1971), 38–41, 162–63.

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