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The Eli H. Peirce Collection of Mormon Americana at Harvard University

Alan K. Parrish

Some of the controversial saga surrounding Harvard's acquisition of the heart of its Mormon collection has been published; however, no attempt has been made to evaluate the content and significance of the materials Harvard acquired.¹ Likewise, no attempt has been made to answer some of the unresolved questions concerning the collector, Eli H. Peirce, and certain details of the negotiations. This article endeavors to resolve some of those controversies about Peirce and to provide some analysis of the large collection Harvard purchased from him in 1914.

Born in Salt Lake City on September 27, 1850, Eli Harvey Peirce, Jr., was the son of Utah's 1847 pioneers. They had fled the East and crossed the plains to escape religious persecution from Eastern neighbors who would not tolerate a belief in Joseph Smith, the religious ideas he taught, or the devoted life required by his teachings. His father was bishop of the Brigham City Ward and was sent on a Church mission while Eli was just a boy. The elder Peirce died from an illness he contracted on that mission. Many years later Eli served a similar mission, a mission that altered the course of his life. His adherence to the Church developed as a result of that service. Following his mission, Eli became an ardent defender of the faith and began to collect books and pamphlets about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its people.

From its earliest days, much had been written for and against the Church. Nine months prior to his own sudden illness and death, on February 10, 1915, Eli sold his valuable collection to Harvard University. Some of Harvard's top officials were drawn into the purchase

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negotiations by the renowned historian of the American West, Frederick Jackson Turner, whose driving interest set the whole effort in motion. Turner considered the collection a vital library resource to support the program of studies on the American West he was developing.

Life Story of the Collector

Though born of Mormon pioneer stock and raised in protected Mormon communities, Eli grew up quite outside the religious life one would expect. His assessment of his first twenty-six years, to the time of his first mission call, indicates his lack of devotion:

My mind to that time had been entirely given up to temporalities. I had never read to exceed a dozen chapters of the Bible in my life, and little more than that from either the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants, and concerning Church history was entirely ignorant. Had never made but one attempt to address a public audience, large or small, and that effort was no credit to me. Had been engaged in the railroad business for a number of years, and this occupation would have deprived me of meetings and religious services even had my inclinations led in that direction, which I frankly confess they did not. I had become almost an inveterate smoker, and bought cigars by the wholesale, a thousand at a time. Was addicted to the use of language which, if not profane, was at least vulgar and reprehensible. Frequently visited saloons, but was not a habitual drinker. Was not proficient in billiards, but squandered considerable money in acquiring what little knowledge I possessed of the game; and pool frequently cost me more for drinks than my board bill came to. Though these indiscretions were common and frequent, thanks to a mother's sagacious training, they never led to grosser or more alluring ones.

Nature never endowed me with a superabundance of religious sentiment or veneration; my region of spirituality is not high, but below the average. A phrenologist once said to me: "You are too level-headed to ever make a sanctimonious church member." With this list of disqualifications, which serious reflection helped to magnify, is it surprising that I marveled and wondered if the Church were not running short of missionary material.²

Eli served in the Eastern States Mission from November 1875 to September 1876. On his return, he passed through Council Bluffs, Iowa, where he received another call to serve in Iowa with Elder James A. Little. In April 1877, Eli was given a second honorable release. Three days after returning home, Eli was called by President Brigham Young, speaking from the pulpit during general conference, to accompany Young's son and Eli's cousin, B. Morris Young on another mission, this time to Iowa, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. His departure was delayed four months, but this mission lasted from August 1877 through August 1878. He calculated the



Eli Harvey Peirce (1850-1915), avid collector of early printed materials about the Mormons. (Courtesy of Lydia Peirce, Salt Lake City.)

financial burden of his missions at \$1,320 and three years of lost wages, but, he declared, "I have never for one moment regretted the sacrifice; the experience gained more than compensated for time, labor and means; while the knowledge acquired, of the things of God and the testimony of Jesus, I hold as invaluable."³ His was a productive mission. He became a preacher of note, succeeded in baptizing 108 people, and he had many unusual experiences with healing the sick.

In 1882, Eli married Lydia Snow, daughter of Mary Elizabeth Houtz and Lorenzo Snow. In 1888 he followed Church teachings and entered polygamy by marrying Henrietta "Etta" Madsen. Eli and Lydia had four children before Lydia's death in 1898. Eli and Etta also had four children. The families resided in Brigham City, where he was a telegrapher for eighteen years. During these years, he was a fully participating church member. His ecclesiastical responsibilities as an active member of the Fifty-ninth Quorum of the Seventy included presiding over the seventies in the town of Mantua. He was also a successful local stage actor and is credited with organizing the Brigham Dramatic Association. He was also a prominent speaker and a popular figure.

In 1890, Eli began to devote his talents to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. At this time, the family moved to Salt Lake City, making their permanent residence at 161 C Street. Eli's church activity during the major period of his life centered around the Tabernacle Choir. In addition to singing in the choir, he served as its business manager for a considerable time. Beyond his regular administrative duties, he compiled and published a volume containing printed news coverage of six choir excursions between 1893 and 1909.⁴

In 1911 a lengthy letter from Eli defending certain actions of the Tabernacle Choir was carried in the *Deseret News*.⁵ Newspaper accounts record Eli's defense of Church members in Brigham City against charges from Reverend R. G. McNiece⁶ of Ogden, who, in addressing the citizens of Brigham City, challenged anyone to debate him on the issues he raised in criticizing LDS beliefs. On at least two occasions, Eli defended the faith in major addresses from the pulpit in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.⁷

Eli worked in the insurance business for many years, first with the Heber J. Grant Company and later as a general agent with his own office. Large advertisements for Peirce Independent Underwriters appeared regularly in the Salt Lake City directories from 1900-10. He sold his business a few years before his death. The hard economic times of the 1890s forced Eli to enter into bankruptcy proceedings in 1899. Several personal items, including his books, were listed in

Etta's name. Lewis B. McCornick, a Harvard-educated Salt Lake City banker who assisted Harvard in negotiations with Eli, wrote, "It appears that Peirce was discharged from the bankruptcy court sometime ago and prior to that time had made over into his wife's name a part of the library."⁸ The collection survived the claims of creditors and its value became a vital part of the family's financial security. Naturally, the Harvard sale was a matter of great importance to Etta and the family.

Harvard's efforts to purchase the collection faltered in 1911 but were renewed in 1914. Key figures involved in the acquisition seemed less than enthusiastic about spending much money on "Mormon" materials and were determined to pay the bare minimum to acquire the Peirce collection. These same officials made considerable efforts to avoid paying commissions to the Torch Press Book Store and the Shepard Book Company, with whom they had corresponded in discovering the collection. They even sent their own agent to Salt Lake City to deal directly with Eli, though to have a staff examination of such a large purchase may have been standard procedure. Roger Pierce replaced E. H. Wells as Secretary of the Harvard Alumni Association and the Harvard Commission of Western History and thus became Harvard's major representative in acquiring the collection. Assisting Roger Pierce with the final arrangements were David Heald, a member of the library staff, and Lewis B. McCornick, a 1902 Harvard graduate living in Salt Lake City.

Despite their own shrewd behavior and subsequent refusals to pay the commissions, Harvard negotiators criticized the business behavior and moral character of Eli, Joseph Smith, and the people of Utah. After reading the accounts of his emissaries in the final negotiations, Roger Pierce wrote the following to McCornick.

I might have known that he was shifty on his feet from the indignation he worked up at my request that there should be something written in the option. Evidently there is considerable in the religion of the Latter Day Saints not found in the "Book of the Mormon." I should say that Joseph Smith had very little on him. I suppose that this is nothing new, however, to you who live in the atmosphere all the time.⁹

Published accounts of Harvard's negotiations with Eli raised questions about his church standing and marriage.¹⁰ McCornick sent word east that if Eli sold the collection to "Gentiles" at Harvard, there would be Church disciplinary action leading to his excommunication. Heald reported that Etta Peirce insisted on receiving half of the proceeds from the sale while Eli attempted to make private arrangements to prevent it. Careful study of his life has failed to yield any

evidence to support these assertions. Available information indicates that his was a happy marriage and that he was highly regarded by neighbors, business associates, and Church leaders.

Less than nine months after the sale to Harvard, Eli H. Peirce died. A paragraph from one of the obituaries reads:

Eli Harvey Peirce, actor of note during the early days of Utah, collector of rare volumes and singer of ability, who had been associated with the Salt Lake tabernacle choir for years as business manager and successful insurance man, died at L.D.S. hospital at 2:40 o'clock yesterday afternoon. Peritonitis was the cause of death, which came after but four days of illness. He was 64 years of age.¹¹

Probate records list among his assets, a "library of 1500 volumes." The records further indicate receipts for \$2,250.00 from the sale of approximately twelve hundred of these volumes.¹²

Funeral services for Eli H. Peirce, Jr., were held on February 12, 1915, in the LDS Salt Lake Eighteenth Ward chapel. The services began with prayer offered by his longtime friend, Charles W. Nibley, the Presiding Bishop of the Church. A special chorus of forty members from the Tabernacle Choir performed several selections in memory of their friend and colleague. Rudger Clawson and Orson F. Whitney, members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, spoke. Both had been associated with Eli for the twenty-five years he had lived in Salt Lake City, and Elder Whitney had been his bishop. They commended Eli's exemplary role of devotion and church activity. Elder Clawson said he could unhesitatingly place Eli Peirce in the First Resurrection among those faithful to gospel principles. They both spoke highly of his integrity "in every capacity."¹³

Harvard's Quest for the Peirce Collection

Frederick Jackson Turner's arrival at Harvard in the autumn of 1910 drew the attention of Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper. She was interested in creating a memorial in honor of her father, Charles Eliot Perkins, who had been instrumental in establishing railroads in the western United States while residing most of the time in Burlington, Iowa. She expressed her desire to E. H. Wells, secretary of the Harvard Alumni Association. Shortly thereafter he presented her with a recommendation that she

lend a hand in assisting the Harvard Library to build up a collection on the history of the West which would enable Professor Turner to carry on his historical work more easily. As you probably know, Professor

Turner had at his command at Madison in the library of the State Historical Society the most complete collection on the history and development of the West that has ever been brought together.¹⁴

Alice Hooper became an ardent supporter of Turner's efforts to establish a strong program of study on the American West and agreed to contribute a thousand dollars a year as a memorial foundation in her father's name to build a library collection of valuable items according to the judgment of Professor Turner.¹⁵ On November 8, 1910, Hooper sent to the president and fellows of Harvard, her written answer which in part stated:

In talking with Mr. Turner, lately called to the Chair of History, at Harvard University, I find that the collection of material bearing on the history & development of that part of America which lies beyond the Alleghanies, is incomplete and I write to offer to the Harvard College Library the sum of one thousand dollars a year, as long as I am able to give it, for the purchase of books and material for the above collection.¹⁶

Turner, who had been accustomed to the splendid collections at the University of Wisconsin, had been invited to Harvard to establish a similar program. Following a brief acquaintance with and limited discussion of Hooper's interests, Turner wrote her an expression of his gratitude:

I am sure that it is possible to make your gift in honor of your father, the means of making Harvard a unique center, in important respects, for understanding how the West was built up. Students of later generations—not only those of the present—will appreciate it, and will be obliged, I hope, to come to Harvard for important sources of their country's history.¹⁷

Through the Harvard Library, the Harvard Commission on Western History, and the alumni offices, a campaign to collect library material was launched. On February 2, 1911, Alfred C. Potter, assistant librarian of Harvard University, requested information on a Mormon library offered for sale by the Shepard Book Company of Salt Lake City. In their response, the Shepard Book Company described the collection:

It consists of about 1400 volumes—All books obtainable [*sic*] pro and con on the subject of Utah and Mormonism. Many of the pamphlets on the subject have been bound up in volumes [47] of say 500 to 600 pages each yet when bound are counted as one volume. . . . There are only five collections of Mormonism in this country—viz., the one in Congressional Library, one (the Berrian Collection) in N.Y. Public Library, one in Wisconsin Library at Madison, The Church (Mormon) Library here, and the one we offer for sale. . . .

... We can assure you that its like cannot at this day be duplicated at all, while many of the volumes could be, yet there are many rare ones that can not be at all procured.¹⁸

The cost of the collection, \$6,000, was far in excess of the funds Mrs. Hooper had offered, yet when no other sources were forthcoming, Turner attempted to convince her to make the purchase anyway. Enclosing a copy of the Shepard letter, Turner described to her the value of Mormon material to a library on the American West.

Mormonism touches not only Utah but the characteristics of a vast area about Utah where Mormons are living, and it touches some pretty important matters of national legislation as well—so such a library has a value beyond local history. Perhaps in the long run its greatest value will lie, however in the field of the history of religions. Here was a native growth under the eyes of the American of the nineteenth century, of a religion that colonized an area equal to that of a great European nation, and built up an industrial empire at the same time. I wish we could get a donor, and I am sending you the letter remembering your desire to know when such things appeared.¹⁹

Hooper's response may have reflected the national view of the Church in 1911. That year *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, a popular family magazine, ran a series of strongly critical articles about the Church that gave the impression that it was made up of strange notions and strange people. Her answer to Turner stated:

Of course I'm too poor to give this particular collection on Mormonism and while it must be of value have we not other things now which we need more than this kind of a collection? There can be no doubt about the Mormons' part in our western country from Nauvoo on, and if we were very rich it would seem a pity to allow this to get away from us—but I don't know of anyone whom I could induce to bury \$4500 with the Mormons!²⁰

Efforts to acquire the collection, having failed for want of capital, remained dormant for three years until notice of a larger collection was announced by the Torch Press Book Shop. Investigations soon revealed that this was in fact the same collection, though substantially larger through Eli's continuous collecting efforts. Greater efforts were made this time by Harvard alumni officials, library staff, Professor Turner, and even Harvard president, Charles W. Eliot. Ultimately, Harvard bypassed both the Torch Press Book Shop and the Shepard Book Company and dealt directly with Eli in arranging the purchase. On March 3, 1914, a document labeled "classified schedule, Mormon library of E. H. Peirce" became the basis of a thirty-day option to purchase which was granted to

Harvard. Handwritten on the face of this document, over the signatures of E. H. Peirce and Roger Pierce, is the statement, "This option to hold good for thirty days after submission of complete schedule."²¹ As soon as the complete schedule arrived, university officials assiduously sought to determine the value of the collection and the extent of duplication in their current holdings.

Noteworthy opinions of the Peirce collection are contained in the correspondence file of the Harvard Commission on Western History. Roger Pierce recorded that

the History Department at the University is of the opinion, from information which they have at hand, that this is an exceedingly valuable collection and that future investigation will prove that it would be a great addition to the Harvard University Library.²²

Lewis B. McCornick had been asked to check into the value of the collection. He reported:

There is no question about this library being complete and valuable, but that value can be best determined by the need of the University. It is perfectly safe to say that no such library could be again accumulated for thrice the asked price.²³

Worthington C. Ford of the Massachusetts Historical Society wrote Professor Turner:

The newspapers, pamphlets and books of local (Utah) imprint would by themselves be worth four or five thousand dollars, and in the auction room might bring more. Assuming them worth that much in money, they are worth more to the Harvard Library, where the possible utility of the material must count, rather than the money value. It is an unusual opportunity, and all the more unusual as representing so remote a region, for few (if any) Eastern collections would give attention to the subject. Taking the list as it stands, and the little prospect of having as good an opportunity to obtain what the College Library needs, I consider the price not only fair, but on the whole moderate. What is difficult to obtain in the collection is worth to the Library what must be paid for the whole collection. The sale of duplicates will be so much gain.²⁴

In a letter to his distinguished grandfather, Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard, Roger Pierce stated that:

From such expert opinion as I obtained there [Salt Lake City] and have since obtained, it is the second most valuable collection of Mormon material in existence; the most valuable one is in the possession of the Mormon Church.

The History Department is extremely desirous of obtaining this for the Harvard Library.²⁵



Charles William Eliot (1834–1926). Eliot, who served as president of Harvard University from 1869 to 1909, encouraged the purchase of the Eli Peirce collection of Mormon Americana for the university's archives. Photographed about 1910. (Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.)

President Eliot's response, as an assessment of Mormonism, is of interest and significance to the Church because Eliot, in his day, was the foremost citizen of the country in many peoples' estimation and certainly the foremost educator.

I cannot think at this moment of any person who would be likely to give the money to obtain that Mormon collection. Nevertheless, I very much hope that you will ultimately succeed in buying it; for thirty years hence it may be possible for some impartial scholar to write a very interesting account of the whole Mormon movement. It had many quite extraordinary merits in the way of exploration, pioneering, colonizing, and cooperation in fundamental industries.²⁶

David Heald, the Harvard librarian who went to Salt Lake City to finalize the purchase, examined and packed each volume in the collection, arranged for the shipping and insurance, and supervised loading the cartons on the train. By the time he left Salt Lake City, he had developed considerable competence on Mormon library materials. In a letter from Roger Pierce to Mrs. Hooper is the following important evaluation of Eli's collection: "Mr. Heald, on his return trip visited the University of Wisconsin, and saw the collection of Mormon material which they have. In his estimation it is not nearly so valuable or complete as ours."²⁷

After Roger Pierce obtained for Harvard a thirty-day option to purchase the collection, news of the transaction leaked to the press and the *Salt Lake Herald* published an announcement. From information in letters from Lewis B. McCornick to Roger Pierce, it appears that the University of Utah, the Governor of Utah, and the Church were quite opposed to the sale and that serious efforts to prevent it would be made. McCornick even suggested that Eli Peirce's actions would likely result in his excommunication from the Church:

From the beginning I have suspected Mr. Pierce's [*sic*] intentions in this sale, as he is directly under the influence of the Mormon Church, and the church has often forbidden him to sell the collection. The church exercises such an influence by giving counsel, and this mild form of threatened excommunication is seldom broken.²⁸

David Heald indicated to Alfred Potter, assistant librarian over the Purchasing Department, that Eli had received "a letter from the Prophet urging him not to sell, saying that would be a sin for the library to get into the hands of the enemies of the faith."²⁹

Eli's letters imply that someone from the Church had been in contact with him, because he indicated to Harvard that the Church was interested in purchasing approximately five hundred items from

the collection. McCornick became alarmed, and Turner and the others at Harvard sent David Heald to Salt Lake City to oversee the exchange and prevent Church, state, or university officials from interfering with the acquisition or commandeering the collection. While Eli may have wished to duck out of the sale to Harvard in favor of an arrangement with the Church or another purchaser, such a conclusion finds no support in the available records.

In the final negotiations in Salt Lake City, the Shepard Book Company insisted on its commission. Eli agreed they were entitled to it even though their contract had expired. Heald refused and tempers flared. Finally, it was agreed that Eli would pay seventy-five percent and Harvard twenty-five percent of the commission. On May 18, 1914, Heald wrote to Potter with a sense of relief:

I lived up to my telegram of yesterday and shipped the books early this afternoon by freight. They are in twenty-six cases—total weight upwards of 5,200 pounds, and at three dollars and some odd cents per hundred weight, the freight charges come to the tidy sum of \$161. I have sent you by registered mail the following documents—

- (1) Receipt for \$6,562.50, payment in full signed by both the Peirces
- (2) Receipt for \$100 from Shepard Book Co.
- (3) Bill of lading for books
- (4) Insurance policy [\$25] for shipment.³⁰

Harvard's total costs, exclusive of Heald's personal expenses, were \$6,848.50. Having been persuaded by Turner, Alice Hooper agreed to pay \$6,000; the remainder came from Harvard Library funds. Hooper's enthusiasm over the purchase had grown through the period of negotiations as indicated in a letter to Roger Pierce:

My dear fellow, far from thinking you pressuring I like your keen interest & the expression of it= If we catch those Mormons I shall be glad of it= paying the piper is a good deal more than I can do without some sacrifice but so thoroughly do I believe in the gamble of the thing as an important asset for our purpose that I undertake to finance the venture= In so doing I am pleasing myself & it therefore seems to me as being hardly a matter for praise= but pleasure & satisfaction on the part of man making for nice collection of American Hist. is certainly legitimate. . . . I am but a passenger paying my fare & being carried along by those in command who know far more than I may ever dream of knowing.³¹

A few days later Alice Hooper again wrote Roger Pierce expressing her pleasure in the acquisition and significant praise for the efforts of those involved in carrying out the plan:

I have read the enclosed letters in regard to the purchase of the Mormons with a real thrill. You Mr. Turner & Mr Coolidge showed great wisdom in speeding Mr. Heald to Salt Lake when you did & I owe you each & all a debt of gratitude certainly because my satisfaction is great in this acquisition & I feel sure this collection adds a value & an importance to the Charles Elliot Perkins Collection which will mean something for always.³²

On June 12, 1914, the day the shipment arrived at Harvard, Hooper sent Roger Pierce a long-awaited letter: "I think your plans for the Mormons excellent & herewith enclose my checque [*sic*] for six thousand dollars. The cost of the Mormon Library belonging to your Utah namesake. I hoped to be able to supply an extra five hundred at some future date."³³

The Peirce Collection

After many failed attempts to find it, the detailed schedule Eli submitted to Harvard officials listing the actual contents of his collection finally surfaced. In the Library Order Department records for the relevant years was a large, crumbling, gray envelope labeled "Mormon Library." On fifty-one single-spaced typed pages, is a list of the volumes in the collection, including the name of the publication, the number of volumes, the author or publisher, the place of publication, year of publication, approximate value, and notes. In the margins are numerous notations in Eli's familiar handwriting. Also in the envelope were four half-sized pages of blue Hotel Utah stationery. On two of these, Heald had begun letters to Potter, dated May 17, 1914. On the back of these pages is a list from 1 to 51 and a number matching the number of volumes listed at the bottom of each of those fifty-one pages. The total for the fifty-one pages and the purchase price shown is 2,612 "@ \$2.50 per vol. = \$6,530." On the last page, centered at the top appears the following note, "E. H. Peirce Library, Count of sheets by bound vols."³⁴ A legal-sized sheet at the back, apparently made up after the books were sorted and packed, showed unlisted and missing volumes which changed the total to 2,622 volumes and the price to \$6,562.50.

A review of the inventory of the Peirce library shows that Eli was a thorough collector. The very detail with which the list is made out is an indication of the meticulous attention he gave to such things. As the whole collection is best measured by the sum of its many parts, a brief review of those major parts will help determine the contribution the collection makes to the Harvard library.

LDS Church Periodicals

The first eight pages in the schedule list the Church periodicals that were included. They are listed chronologically by date of publication. (See table 1.)

LDS Church Scriptures

The LDS scriptures in the collection included twenty copies of the Book of Mormon. Among them were copies of the first, second, and third American editions; the first, second, third, and fourth European editions; a Deseret alphabet edition; a copy of an edition published in Chicago by the Northern States Mission in 1907; an early, bound, triple combination volume of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price; and a copy of early editions in ten foreign languages. There were seven copies of the Doctrine and Covenants, including the first, second, third, and fourth American editions; the first European edition; one bound in the triple combination volume; and two foreign language editions. There was also an 1888 Salt Lake City edition of the Pearl of Great Price.

Pamphlets

Perhaps the most unique part of the Peirce collection is the pamphlet collection. The pamphlets were bound into 47 volumes of about 800 pages each. Eli Peirce prepared a directory of all of the pamphlets arranged in alphabetical order by titles, including authors, dates of publication, total pages, and estimated values. The number of pages listed in the directory is 37,846 from a total of 1,016 individual publications. Harvard has made microfilm copies of this collection for research and for purchase by other libraries.

The pamphlets were organized by Peirce into twelve classifications and were cut and bound together in an attractive binding with a red and black spine. The bindings have deteriorated badly, and Harvard has wisely placed restrictions on their use. It appears that the pages, however, are in excellent condition. They had been cut for uniform binding, excepting those of smaller size, and the edges have been painted to give them a green and white finished appearance. All forty-seven volumes would occupy approximately fourteen feet of bookshelf space.

The description at the top of the index, written in Eli's handwriting, reads: "A collection of pamphlets for and against the Church of

Table 1: Peirce Collection Periodicals

Periodical	Years	Vols.
Evening and Morning Star	1832-33	2
Messenger and Advocate	1834-35	2
Elders' Journal	1837-38	1
Times and Seasons	1839-46	6
Millennial Star	1840-1913	75
Gospel Reflector	1841	1
The Prophet	1844	1
Frontier Guardian	1849-51	3
Guardian and Sentinel	1852	1
Udgorn Seion (Welsh)	1849-55	8
Deseret News	1850-63	13
Etoile du deseret (French)	1851	1
The Seer	1853-54	2
Zion's Watchman	1843-44, 1855-56	2
Skandinaviens Stjerne (Danish)	1853-89	33
Le Réflecteur (French)	1853	1
Journal of Discourses	1854-86	26
The Mormon	1855-57	3
Der Darsteller (German)	1855-57	3
The Western Standard	1856	1
Die Reform (German)	1862	1
Woman's Exponent	1872-1905	34
Juvenile Instructor	1866-1906	41
Nordstjerman (Swedish)	1877-80	4
Ungdommens Raadgiver (Danish)	1880-86	4
The Contributor	1880-96	17
Morgenstjernen (Danish) & Historical Record	1882-90	9
Deseret Home	1882-83	2
Deseret Weekly	1888-92	8
Zion's Home Monthly Magazine	1888-94	3
Der Stern (German)	1894	1
De Ster (Dutch)	1896-1904	9
Improvement Era	1897-1908	11
The Children's Friend	1902-13	10
Young Woman's Journal	1889-1910	21
Elder's Journal	1903-07	4
Liahona	1906-08	2
Utah Genealogical & Historical Magazine	1910-12	3
Southern Star	1899-1900	2
Conference Reports	1897-1912	8

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Almost a hundred items in the pamphlet collection exceed 100 pages in length and several exceed 200 pages. The pamphlets cover numerous topics of historical interest about the Church, its people and practices, the railroad, legislative and legal topics, Indians, the University of Utah, Church manuals, and much more. There are numerous items listed as “Reorganite,” “Josephite,” “Strangite,” the “Mission Tract Society,” the “Tribune,” and the “Utah Gospel Mission.” It is evident that Eli sought everything he could obtain about the LDS Church, both pro and con. This breadth made his collection more valuable.

The pamphlets span nine decades, from the 1820s through 1912. No date is given for many of them, but table 2 shows the distribution by decade of those that are dated. Of the 83 pamphlets from the 1830s–1840s, many are by prominent Church leaders as indicated in table 3. The pamphlets are bound and categorized by topic, and each is identified by a label printed on its spine, as shown in table 4.

A Mormon Bibliography, 1830–1930, edited by Chad J. Flake of the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University, is the authoritative bibliographical listing of publications on Mormonism in its first century. Considerable efforts were made to locate in Flake’s bibliography each pamphlet named in the Peirce index, but about 250 items were not found. Evidently Peirce had a wider focus than that covered in the bibliography.

Mormon Magazine Miscellany

A unique part of the collection is a set of fifteen volumes labeled “Mormon Magazine Miscellany” and listed as “magazine articles for & against” the Church. Above the listing, in Eli’s handwriting, is the notation, “Chiefly Anti-Mormon.” The inventory list indicates that these fifteen volumes contain 350 articles spread across a total of 6,052 pages.

Legal and Legislative

In the collection is a substantial legal and legislative section with a nearly complete set of the acts, resolutions, and laws from the Utah territorial and state legislative sessions beginning in 1855 and running through 1909. There are also numerous copies of the House and Senate journals of the State of Utah, a copy of the proceedings of the Utah State Constitutional Convention, dated 1898, and the charter

**Table 2. Chronological
Distribution of 1830–40
Documents**

Decade	No. of Pamphlets
1820s	1
1830s	8
1844s	75
1850s	83
1860s	19
1870s	76
1880s	200
1890s	117
1900s	106

Table 3. Distribution by Author

Authors	No. of Pamphlets
Parley P. Pratt	6
John Taylor	5
Orson Hyde	3
Joseph Smith	2
Orson Spencer	2
Brigham Young	1
John P. Greene	1
Thomas Ward	1
John E. Page	1
Lorenzo Snow	1
Benjamin Winchester	1

Table 4. Topical Breakdown

Labels	Volumes
Doctrinal	1-3
Historical	4-6
Ecclesiastical	7
Biographical	8
Constitutional	9
Governmental	10
Poetical	11
Educational	12
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relating to the early organization of Salt Lake City. Another volume contains the proceedings of the State Bar Association for 1894-1905. Sixteen volumes of the Utah Reports contain the State Supreme Court cases for 1872-91.

Church History and Teachings

The collection appears to be substantially complete in books on the doctrinal teachings and Church history written mostly by LDS authors and used widely within the Church in its first century. There are also copies of numerous hymnals used over many years in Church worship services.

Publications of Dissenting Factions

A section labeled "Publications of Dissenting Factions" is made up primarily of material from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). There are copies of an 1858 and 1874 edition of the Book of Mormon published by the RLDS Church and copies of their first, second, and third editions of the Doctrine and Covenants. There is a copy of the 1867 edition of the RLDS "Retranslation Scriptures," the first published edition of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. There are approximately thirty other volumes on miscellaneous subjects.

Assorted Publications

Mormon publications in foreign languages consist of about 35 volumes. Almost 20 volumes are about Utah history before the arrival of the Mormon pioneers. Another section of about 150 volumes is labeled, "Antiquitie - Indian Tradition Etc. Confirming Book of Mormon History." More than 100 volumes are listed under the label "Other Sects, Creeds and Denominations."

Utah Publications and Authors

A large section (about 225 volumes) under the label "Utah Publications & Utah Authors" includes a wide assortment of local histories and literary expressions about Utah, the life of its people, its geology, fauna, flora, mining, agriculture, locally produced magazines, business and university directories, volumes of the proceedings of local lodges of the Masons and other fraternal orders, and publications of various local clubs.

Anti-Mormon Publications

There is a large section of anti-Mormon publications of local, national, and international origin. Under a separate heading, yet also largely anti-Mormon, is a 75-volume section labeled, "Doctrinal—published outside the Church." These volumes and the large numbers of anti-Mormon publications in both the pamphlet and magazine article collection gave rise to the rumors that the Church opposed the sale to Harvard. Some have wondered if its existence indicated that Eli Peirce himself was skeptical about the Church. As noted above, such conclusions are not founded in fact, and Eli's faithfulness is a matter of record.

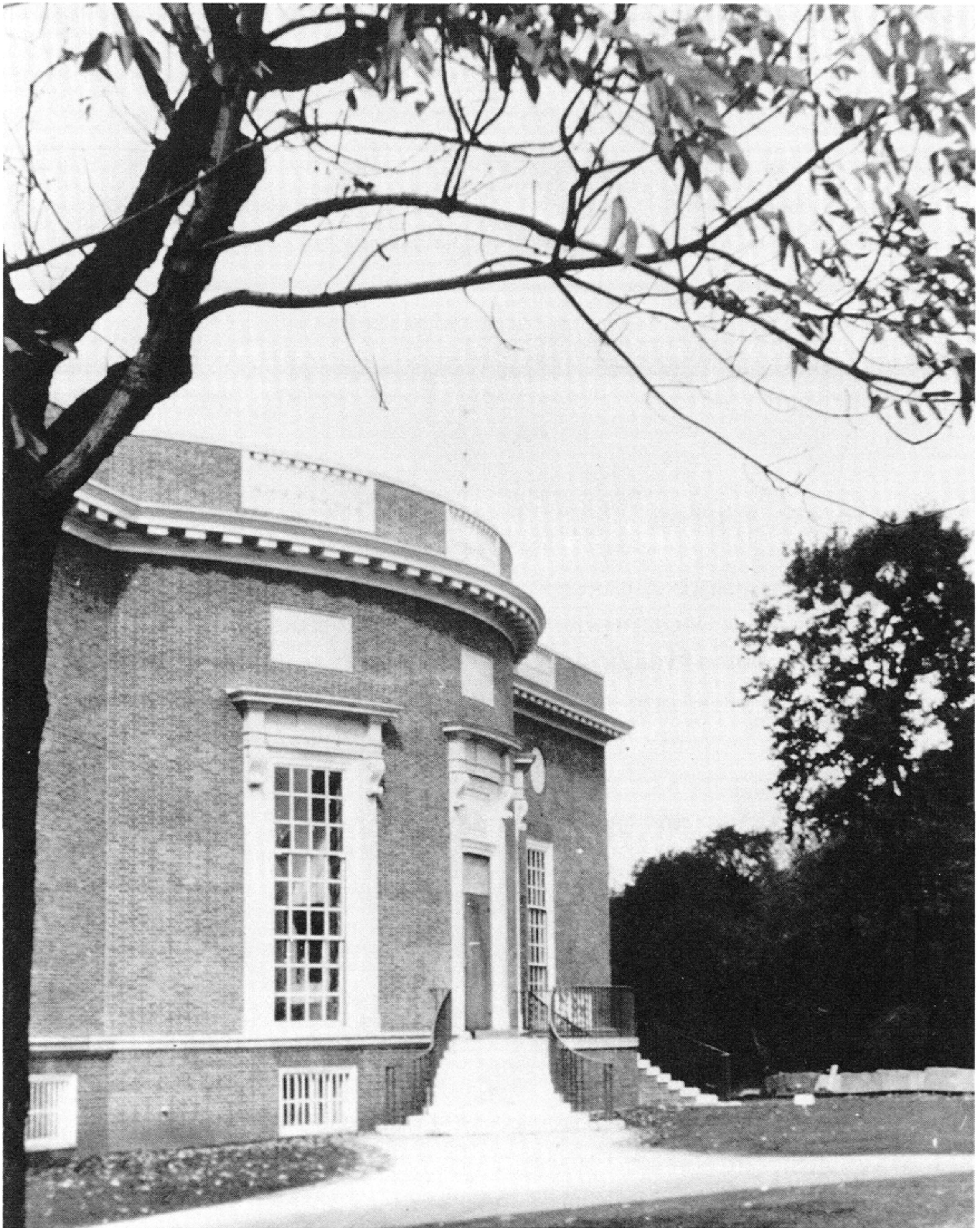
Mormon Americana

Further evidence that Eli was an avid collector of anything relating to Utah or Mormonism is seen in the Americana section, the largest single part of his collection. This section lists approximately nine hundred volumes in seventeen pages of inventory and is arranged alphabetically by author. Justification for the volumes in this large collection is given in his handwriting as part of the heading preceding this section, "Americana. . . Treating of Utah and (or) the Mormons Incidentally."

Conclusion

This paper does not attempt to assess Harvard's total holdings on Mormonism. Harvard had gathered many materials before it acquired the Peirce collection, and it has since added many more including some unique items. For example, between 1948 and 1955, the Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, sponsored the "Comparative Study of Values in Five Cultures" in the Rimrock Area of western New Mexico. "Mormons" was one of the five cultures studied. Many notable social scientists participated in this study and files of their research notes and field diaries are on file at Harvard.

In the single purchase of the Eli H. Peirce Collection, however, Harvard acquired one of the best collections of printed Mormon Americana of the time. It was acquired from a practicing and believing Mormon who was also a conscientious collector. The collection included all items obtainable for and against the Mormons and their beliefs. The most significant features of the collection are the pamphlets and magazine materials purporting to deal with the



Houghton Library, Harvard University, where the Eli H. Peirce collection is housed. This exterior view was photographed about 1942. (Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.)

subject or people associated with Mormonism. The collection supports the kind of scholarly research that Frederick Jackson Turner envisioned as part of his academic program on the history of the American West. Through it, Harvard can boast of having one of the finest collections of early printed materials treating the broad subjects of Mormonism and Utah.

NOTES

¹ Ray Allen Billington, "The Origins of Harvard's Mormon Collection," *Arizona and the West* (Fall 1968): 211-24.

² Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family History of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 407-8.

³ Snow, *Biography*, 421.

⁴ Eli H. Peirce, Jr., *Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Being a Collection of Newspaper Criticisms and Cullings from Metropolitan Magazines and Musical Journals Covering Six Excursions, from the World's Fair in 1893 to the Seattle Exposition in 1909* (Salt Lake City: E. H. Peirce, 1910).

⁵ *Deseret News*, February 22, 1911, 4.

⁶ *Salt Lake Herald*, September 5, 1886.

⁷ *Deseret Evening News*, September 12, 1892, and October 22, 1894, 2.

⁸ Lewis B. McCornick to Roger Pierce, May 19, 1914, The Harvard Commission on Western History, Correspondence Box L*O, "Mormon Collection," UA III.50.29.12.2.5, Harvard University Archives, Pusey Library, Harvard University. Hereafter cited as Harvard Archives.

⁹ Roger Pierce to Lewis B. McCornick, May 25, 1914, Harvard Archives.

¹⁰ Billington, "The Origins of Harvard's Mormon Collection," 211-24. See also, Ray Allen Billington, *Dear Lady* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1970), 34-37.

¹¹ *Herald-Republican*, February 10, 1915.

¹² Petition for Sale of Personal Property, Third District Court, Salt Lake County, Utah. Regarding the estate of Eli H. Peirce, August 14, 1915.

¹³ "Last Rites for Eli H. Peirce," *Deseret Evening News*, February 12, 1915, 9.

¹⁴ E. H. Wells to Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper, August 26, 1910, Box: UA III.50.29.12.2.7, Harvard Archives.

¹⁵ An extensive record of the friendship and association of Turner and Hooper, documenting their efforts to raise a substantial collection of Western American materials is recorded in Billington, *Dear Lady*.

¹⁶ Alice Forbes Perkins Hooper to the President and Fellows of Harvard University, November 8, 1910, Box: UA III.50.8.11.1, Harvard Archives.

¹⁷ Billington, *Dear Lady*, 89.

¹⁸ Shepard Book Company to Alfred C. Potter, February 6, 1911, Harvard Archives.

¹⁹ Billington, *Dear Lady*, 94.

²⁰ Billington, *Dear Lady*, 95.

²¹ Classified Schedule, Mormon Library of E. H. Peirce, Harvard Archives.

²² Roger Pierce to L. B. McCornick, March 20, 1914, HCWH.

²³ Lewis B. McCornick to Roger Pierce, March 30, 1914, Harvard Archives.

²⁴ Worthington C. Ford to Frederick Jackson Turner, May 10, 1914, Harvard Archives.

²⁵ Roger Pierce to President Charles W. Eliot, May 4, 1914, Harvard Archives.

²⁶ President Charles W. Eliot to Roger Pierce, May 7, 1914, Harvard Archives.

²⁷ Roger Pierce to Alice Hooper, June 10, 1914, Box: UA III.50.29.12.2.7, Harvard Archives.

²⁸ Lewis B. McCornick to Roger Pierce, April 14, 1914, Harvard Archives.

²⁹ David Heald to Alfred C. Potter, May 17, 1914, Harvard Archives.

³⁰ David Heald to Alfred Potter, May 18, 1914, Harvard Archives.

³¹ Alice Hooper to Roger Pierce, May 14, 1914, Box: UA III.50.29.12.2.5, Harvard Archives.

³² Alice Hooper to Roger Pierce, May 29, 1914, Miscellaneous Correspondence, "Mrs. Hooper," Box: UA III.50.29.12.2.7, Harvard Archives.

³³ Alice Hooper to Roger Pierce, June 12, 1914, Box: UA III.50.29.12.2.7, Harvard Archives.

³⁴ In Box, U.A. III.50.8.116, "Library-Order Dept.," Harvard Archives.