



7-1-2020

The Visions of Zion

Peter J. Blodgett

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Blodgett, Peter J. (2020) "The Visions of Zion," *BYU Studies Quarterly*: Vol. 59 : Iss. 2 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol59/iss2/14>

This Special Feature is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

The Visions of Zion

A Century of Documenting the Latter-day Saint Experience at the Huntington Library

Peter J. Blodgett

When Henry Edwards Huntington retired in 1910 from a successful career in railroading and land development, he turned both his great fortune and his vast experience to the advancement of his fondest personal avocation, the collecting of rare books and manuscripts. Already well-known for his accomplishments as a collector, he now applied himself with great effort to this pursuit. By the time of his death in 1927, he had assembled one of the finest private holdings then in existence relating to Anglo-American history and literature. The research library established by Huntington on the foundation of that private collection has remained one of the preeminent resources for scholarship in the United States to this day, and from the beginning it has numbered significant documents of Mormon history among its many treasures.

The earliest Mormon acquisitions by Huntington resulted primarily from his enthusiasm for printed Americana and his decision to buy in their entirety several major libraries owned by other collectors. First and second editions of the Book of Mormon, for example, came to his holdings with the purchase of the E. Dwight Church and Augustin MacDonald collections in 1911 and 1916. The purchase in 1922 of Henry R. Wagner's magnificent array of Western Americana capped this trend, adding seventy-eight volumes concerning Mormonism alone, including a first edition of William Clayton's renowned *The Latter-Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide*. By 1925, Huntington had already gathered a fine collection of printed Mormon titles, focused particularly upon the era of immigration to and settlement of Utah.

In subsequent years, that original assortment of printed works grew enormously in breadth and depth, carefully nurtured by Leslie E. Bliss throughout his lengthy tenure as Huntington librarian. During the 1920s, under Bliss's administration, the library began to expand into the field of unpublished Mormon materials. That pursuit of original sources reinforced Huntington's own interest in collecting the "background materials" necessary for scholarly research, however pedestrian such materials might seem to rare-book collectors. The background materials obtained for the field of western American history included letters, diaries, journals, and reminiscences written by Latter-day Saints both famous and anonymous, as well as by other observant commentators.

As early as 1929, the library added important groups of Mormon manuscripts to its collections of original historical documents. Although not initially pursued with the vigor seen in later years, the acquisition of Mormon manuscripts began with several notable triumphs. In 1929, for instance, the Huntington obtained a series of six original diaries kept by John D. Lee, spanning a period from 1846 to 1876, as well as assorted Lee correspondence and an original diary for the years 1856–1860, initially attributed to Rachel Woolsey Lee. The papers of Jacob S. Boreman, prominent opponent of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and presiding judge at the two trials of John D. Lee, were acquired in 1934.¹ And in 1942, as the New Deal's Works Progress Administration was winding down its operations, the Huntington secured carbon copies of various pioneer reminiscences and histories as well as original historical ephemera brought together by Hugh O'Neil, an editor with the WPA Historic Records Survey in Utah. Measured merely by these three acquisitions, the library had thus gathered a small but crucial collection of Mormon manuscripts that touched upon the end of the formative Nauvoo period, the transcontinental flight to Utah, the colonization of the Great Basin, and the bitter conflict between Gentiles and Latter-day Saints in late-nineteenth-century Utah.

By 1942, of course, the United States had joined World War II, and most of the nation's energies were absorbed by the escalating war effort. At the time, it must have seemed that the preservation of the past would have to give way to the urgent demands of the present. Yet at that very

1. Jacob Smith Boreman, "Crusade against Theocracy: The Reminiscences of Judge Jacob Smith Boreman of Utah, 1872–1877," ed. Leonard J. Arrington, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (November 1960): 1–45.

moment, a series of coincidental events were about to occur that would thrust the Huntington Library into the forefront of institutions collecting Mormon historical materials.

The first link in that chain of events was forged in 1943 when Robert Glass Cleland, professor of history at Occidental College in Los Angeles, became affiliated with the Huntington's research staff. Cleland, a renowned expert in the history of California and the Southwest, sought ways to promote further research in Southwestern history at the library. Aware of the financial support being given to the study of regional history by the Rockefeller Foundation, Cleland prodded the library into applying for a foundation grant. The foundation's humanities program responded in August 1944 with the offer of an annual award of \$10,000 a year for a five-year term to support fellowships and research grants, as well as the acquisition of both original documents and reproductions of those materials not available for purchase or donation. Under the direction of an advisory committee headed by Cleland, a Southwest studies program took shape at the Huntington and began to attract a distinguished community of scholars to San Marino.

Cleland and the Rockefeller grant gave the library the impetus and the wherewithal to collect original source materials for the history of the Southwest. Leslie E. Bliss, still serving as the Huntington's librarian, faced the challenge of ensuring that the funds devoted each year to acquisitions were well spent. Bliss himself had a well-deserved reputation as an able collector and an intelligent student of Western Americana, but collection on the scale envisioned by the grant suggested the need for a full-time field representative. Thus did the Rockefeller grant serve its most important (if unintended) function by triggering the long and fruitful collaboration between the Huntington Library and Juanita Brooks.

Levi Peterson's 1988 biography of Juanita Brooks tells us much about this relationship.² The basic details, however, can be recounted quickly. Brooks had first come into contact with the Huntington in 1944 when she learned of the library's John D. Lee diaries. She visited the library at the invitation of Robert Cleland to consult them for her book on the Mountain Meadows Massacre. After the Huntington had received the Rockefeller grant, Brooks received one of the library's research fellowships in Southwestern history to continue her work. Apparently impressed with

2. See Levi S. Peterson, *Juanita Brooks: Mormon Woman Historian* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), especially chapter 5. See also Juanita Brooks, "Jest a Copyin'—Word f'r Word," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 37 (Fall 1969): 375–95.

the caliber of her research and with her personal contacts in the Southwest, Bliss also hired her under the auspices of the grant as a field agent to collect manuscripts on the region's history. Through the remainder of the 1940s and into the 1950s, Brooks scoured Utah and northern Arizona for diaries, journals, letters, account books, and other documents that would illuminate the settlement and the growth of the Great Basin region. During her labors, she harvested an enormous crop of original records that were either acquired outright by the Huntington or copied and returned to the owners. The Rockefeller grant's renewal in 1951 and Brooks's personal friendship with Bliss kept her active as a field agent well into the 1950s.

Juanita Brooks's notable success as a representative of the Huntington made the postwar decade a golden era for the library's acquisition of Mormon historical documents. The accomplishments of the twenty years thereafter in this field under Bliss's direction, although somewhat more modest in scope, maintained the momentum of previous years. Besides a continuing influx of individual diaries, journals, and autobiographies received from Brooks and other sources in Utah, several collections of notable significance were also added to the library's holdings. The 1959 acquisition of the papers of Frederic E. Lockley Jr., Oregon historian, editor, and rare-book dealer, included various letters written by his father, the editor of the *Salt Lake City Tribune* from 1873 to 1875. The senior Lockley's correspondence commented on many aspects of Mormonism as well as on the 1875 trial of John D. Lee, which Lockley attended. In 1965, the Huntington received another collection dealing with a controversial phase of Mormon history when it obtained the original transcripts of Kimball Young's interviews for his examination of polygamy, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* A year later, the Huntington purchased a group of letters and documents concerning the business affairs of Lewis C. Bidamon, second husband of Emma Hale Smith, widow of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. Inspection of that collection revealed that it contained papers of her son Joseph Smith III, eventual leader of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (today known as the Community of Christ). Finally, in the field of printed matter, Bliss achieved his greatest coup with his successful pursuit of the Lou J. Loughran Mormon Library in 1960. The more than fifteen thousand books, pamphlets, and periodicals that composed this collection represented an enormous treasure trove of rare documents, running the gamut from fervent opposition to passionate advocacy, vastly expanding the Huntington Library's resources in the field.

As the 1960s closed, the Huntington could look back on three extraordinarily productive decades of collecting historical Mormon materials. Since then, although the pace of acquisitions has slowed, the library has continued to make significant additions to both the printed and manuscript collections. The purchase or reproduction of original Mormon family diaries and journals has continued, sometimes with the assistance of Brooks or other Mormon scholars, while fugitive copies of important printed texts have been tracked down through dealers and private collectors. A very rare 1845 broadside printed in Nauvoo, for instance, announces the imminent departure of the Saints from that beleaguered city. A run of *Zion's Watchman* (Sydney, Australia) from its inauguration in 1853 through May 1856 includes the announcement of plural marriage to the Australian believers. English emigrant Edgar Jacob wrote of his impressions of Salt Lake City and its Latter-day Saint inhabitants as he passed through the region in 1873, while career army officer Walter Scribner Schuyler, traveling through southern Idaho territory five years later, commented at length about his encounters with Church members and the practice of polygamy. And from the twentieth century, the minute book of members of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers in San Bernardino, California, reflects the efforts of such organizations to preserve the Latter-day Saint story, while the manuscript autobiography of Almeda Perry Brown captures in detail the life story of a twentieth-century Latter-day Saint woman who overcame great obstacles to become a prominent member of Utah State University's faculty at an important stage in its development.

Such a brief sketch can hardly do justice to the intricate history behind the Huntington Library's Mormon collection. It may convey, however, some sense of the great breadth of resources assembled over the last eighty years. But if the mere size of this collection commands our attention, do its contents merit the scholar's interest?

In the field of printed works alone, the library's accumulated holdings represent an exceptionally useful resource for scholars in many fields. Among the foundation texts of the Mormon faith, the Huntington's rare-book holdings possess over one hundred English-language editions of the Book of Mormon, another forty editions in eighteen separate languages, and examples of editions produced by other groups such as the Brooksites and Whitmerites. Supplementing those many texts are first editions of the Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of the Latter Day Saints (Kirtland, Ohio, 1835), the Pearl of Great Price (Liverpool, 1851), and Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (New York, 1837), as well as many subsequent printings

from the United States and, in the case of *A Voice of Warning*, from overseas as well. Other volumes in the collection include most of the salient writings authored by early Church leaders.³

Over time, the library's staff also brought together an extensive file of newspapers and periodicals documenting the Church's first half-century. Especially of note are complete runs of *The Evening and the Morning Star* in both its original 1832–1835 publication and its 1835–1836 Kirtland, Ohio, reissue; the *Latter-Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio, 1834–1837); and the *Elders' Journal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio, and Far West, Mo., 1837–1838). Other publications inform readers about events during the Nauvoo years (*Times and Seasons*, vols. 1–6, 1839–1846), about the course of the Church's foreign mission endeavors (*Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Liverpool, 1840–1898), and about the initial settlement of the Great Basin (*Deseret News*, vols. 1–12, 1850–1863, and scattered issues from later periods). The Huntington's microfilm collection reinforces the library's holdings of the *Deseret News* in particular with copies of the weekly paper from 1850 through 1898 and of the daily paper from volume 1, number 1, through volume 4, number 124 (November 21, 1867, through April 14, 1871).

Lastly, the Huntington also numbers in its holdings a great many of the major printed works about the Church. Since Henry Huntington's time, the library has acquired a great assortment of volumes attacking, defending, or merely commenting upon Mormonism. Readers may discover the reminiscences of faithful Church members and bitter apostates, doctrinal works elaborating upon the structures of belief within the Church, the observations of such fascinated travelers as Sir Richard Burton, and the vast popular literature—including dramas and dime novels—that uses Mormonism as the backdrop to adventure.

The Huntington's Mormon manuscript holdings demonstrate similarly impressive breadth and depth. The separate collections previously mentioned—such as the Bidamon, the Boreman, and the Lee papers, and such individual treasures as an 1834–1838 letter book kept by Oliver Cowdery and two volumes of diaries kept by Eliza Roxcy Snow for the years 1846–1847—constitute by themselves a splendid array of original documents focused on the Mormon experience.

3. See the brief sketch by Peter Crawley, "Mormon Americana at the Huntington Library," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, nos. 3–4 (Autumn–Winter 1971): 138–40.

The heart of the matter, of course, remains the Mormon File, a synthetic arrangement of manuscripts containing a plethora of reels of microfilm, bound photostats and typescripts, original letters, diaries, journals, minute books, account books, business ledgers, and other documents, assembled in large part under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation nearly seventy years ago. Taken in total, this file now encompasses every phase of Mormon history from the era of the Prophet Joseph Smith through the exodus from Nauvoo, its subsequent relocation to the Great Salt Lake Valley, and the colonization of the Intermountain West by new waves of the faithful. While it would be impossible to comment here upon the content of every manuscript of particular interest, let me offer several examples of the collection's strengths. Mormonism's evolution and the Church's combative relations with its non-Latter-day Saint neighbors (in the state of Missouri, for example) can be followed through a number of sources. Besides Oliver Cowdery's letter book, the Huntington possesses a microfilm copy of David Lewis's account of the Hawn's Mill massacre; Reed Peck's 1839 manuscript description of Mormonism's Missouri period; and original transcripts of the Jackson County, Missouri, court suits filed in 1833 by Edward Partridge and William W. Phelps against the men who tarred and feathered Partridge and looted Phelps's home in Independence.

Of equal significance to other students of the Latter-day Saint experience, the Church's zealous commitment to bring its faith to all peoples is amply reflected in the Huntington's manuscript resources. The Mormon File includes over thirty-five diaries and journals kept by overseas missionaries. While most portray mission work in the British Isles or northern Europe, several describe the search for converts in such distinct locations as Africa, South Asia, and the Pacific islands, as seen in the letters and diaries of Ira Hinckley (New Zealand); the daybook of Peter Hansen (Scandinavia); Albert Jarman's correspondence in the Jarman Family Papers (England); and the diaries of Harvey H. Cluff (Hawaii, Great Britain), John Stillman Woodbury (Hawaii), and Hosea Stout (China). Even those volumes kept by missionaries in the United States, although unfolding in familiar cultural settings, reproduce the various experiences of many dedicated Saints over a five-decade span.

Other documents in the Mormon File and in related collections capture all the steps in the process of gathering the faithful, including raising converts in the foreign missions and then dispersing them across the Great Basin region to hold the land for God's chosen people. Women's voices are heard through the writings of scores of individuals, including

the diaries of Eliza Roxcy Snow, Mary Minerva Dart Judd, Lucy Mack Smith, and Lucy Hannah Flake; the autobiographies and memoirs of Sophronia Moore Martin, Mary Ann Stearns Winters, and Sarah Studevant Leavitt; the poetry of Ellis Reynolds Shipp; and the letters of Maria Bidgood Jarman Ford Barnes, all of which constitute only a tip of the proverbial iceberg, representing a multitude of other journals, reminiscences, and letters that portray the indispensable involvement of women within the sweep of Latter-day Saint history.

We can follow many emigrants through their diaries and autobiographies on the difficult passage from European ports and the eastern states to Utah and realize that despite the helping hand extended by the Church through such mechanisms as the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF), such a journey required great reserves of strength and courage. Drawn together in the Huntington's holdings are manuscripts that trace the stories of Mormon immigrants from England (William Marsden, James Farmer, Benjamin Platt), Scotland (William Richardson), Denmark (John Nielsen), Sweden (Helena Rosbery), Switzerland (Jean Frederic Loba), and Canada (Jesse W. Crosby). The papers of one PEF agent in Missouri, William Young Empey, outline the fund's operations for the 1854 travel season, capturing with unintended pathos the tribulations that might befall the emigrants. In a letter dated April 24, 1854, written from the port of Liverpool, the head of the British mission, Samuel W. Richards, chided Empey for failing to notify him of those emigrants who had died in passage. The lack of news, he sternly reminded Empey, "leaves their friends in this country in terrible suspense." And among Empey's papers are several notebooks containing lists of PEF and 13£Co. passengers, with notations of those who succumbed.⁴

Both within the Mormon File and through related collections such as the diaries of Henry W. Bigler, researchers can find many diaries, journals, and other papers that present the Mormon colonization of the Southwest. There are dozens of journals, diaries, and autobiographies, and multiple collections of personal papers that describe colony building in Nevada, Arizona, and the southern reaches of Utah. Henry W. Bigler's diaries, for example, reach far beyond documenting his celebrated presence at James Marshall's discovery of gold at John Sutter's sawmill on January 24, 1848. Having converted to the Latter-day Saint

4. 13£Co. refers to 13-pound companies, groups of emigrants whose transportation cost thirteen British pounds.

faith in 1837, Bigler found the subsequent decades of his life crowded with adventures as a member of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican-American War, a missionary for the Church twice in the Hawaiian Islands, and a seeker after gold in California before settling in St. George, Utah Territory. The Edwin Bunker Papers include many personal and business records that highlight efforts to establish the United Order in Bunkerville, Nevada, between 1877 and 1879, as well as Bunker's many responsibilities as a Latter-day Saint bishop in Bunkerville during the 1880s. The United Order is also the subject of "Voices from Within," Emma Seegmiller Higbee's account of life at Orderville. Efforts to advance the economic development of the region can be followed through the Huntington's Frederick Kesler Papers, which include nearly sixty volumes of daybooks and account books discussing the various mills that Kesler, a skilled practical engineer, built or operated all over the territory between 1857 and 1894.

On these and many other topics, Mormon collections at the Huntington offer considerable scope for scholarly investigation. The complex phenomenon that is Mormonism, however, did not exist in a vacuum and should not be studied in one. The Huntington also offers scholars access to a uniquely rich array of collateral materials that establish the essential context of Mormonism's place in western history. Of particular note, the library's superb collection of overland journals furnishes a massive amount of information about the trans-Mississippi West and about westward migration, especially during the height of the California Gold Rush. Some of these manuscripts record the passage of their authors through the new Mormon commonwealth; as a group, they describe the hopes and aspirations of western migrants as well as the experience of overland migration. The papers of other historical actors help to capture perspectives on other crossroads in Latter-day Saint history. Included within the library's extensive holdings on the nineteenth-century exploration of the trans-Mississippi West are the papers of John Williams Gunnison and Edward G. Beckwith. Gunnison's materials include letters written to his wife, Martha, during his travels in Utah with Stansbury's expedition in 1849 and 1850 and his command of the ill-fated 35th Parallel Survey in 1853 as the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers sought out a route for a transcontinental railroad. Beckwith's collection contains the journals he kept as Gunnison's second-in-command as well as letters to his wife about the survey's progress and the disaster that befell it. Among the records of Californian Thomas R. Bard, a founder of Union Oil Company and a United States Senator between 1899 and 1905,

are files concerning polygamy (reflecting in part the controversy over the Utah election of Latter-day Saint Apostle Reed Smoot to the Senate in 1902). And in the papers of Albert Bacon Fall, one of New Mexico's first two senators after statehood in 1912 and an unrelenting opponent of the Mexican revolution, are files relating to the Mormon colonies in Mexico (established in response to the federal government's pursuit of polygamists in the 1880s).

Reaching further into the study of western American history, the Huntington has also incorporated the collections of various scholars whose own research enhances the library's resources. The acquisition of Professor Ralph P. Bieber's research archive, for example, further deepens the Huntington's resources concerning western migration and settlement. Bieber accumulated an enormous body of newspaper transcriptions in the course of his long career spent studying the great 1849–1850 rush to California and the development of the American Southwest. Thousands of handwritten notecards and photostatic copies were made from hundreds of newspapers in every state and many territories documenting the overland trek to California, the opening of the Santa Fe Trail, the Mexican-American War, the organization of the western-range cattle industry, and the establishment of overland trade and communication with the Pacific Slope after the American conquest. Another set of newspaper transcriptions compiled by another leading Western historian gathers together information on the topic "Mormons and the Far West." Dale Morgan drew upon newspapers in every state between 1809 and 1857 to reproduce hundreds of articles that might be useful to historians of Mormonism. His assiduous research, like that of Bieber, saved hundreds of sources residing in private hands or in anonymous local historical collections from near-permanent obscurity.

Still other students of California and the West, delving deep into the history of the lands beyond the Mississippi River, have accumulated collections of sources that illuminate aspects of the Mormon experience. Beyond their careers as public school teachers, George and Helen Beattie dug into the past of Southern California's Inland Empire, including the Mormon colony of San Bernardino in the 1850s. Otis Marston, a pioneering boatman on the Colorado River after World War II, assembled a monumental collection of photographs and documents about the Colorado Basin that would eventually incorporate records about the Latter-day Saint presence in the region. Lastly, the Huntington has acquired for its reference collection hundreds of biographical dictionaries, state and county histories, city directories, and microfilm copies of territorial

records from the federal government pertaining to Utah and several of its neighbors. These reference tools help provide the substratum of facts necessary for much historical research.

Without attempting, therefore, to produce a detailed list that enumerates every item in the Huntington's Mormon holdings, this essay has sought to describe the general contours of the collection and to highlight some of its particular strengths. The individual pieces and specific collections cited here represent only a small portion of the whole.⁵ Confronted by this vast assortment of documents, how can contemporary students of Mormonism and of Western American history make sense of it all in undertaking their research at the Huntington?

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, as original and facsimile copies of Mormon manuscripts poured into the library through the efforts of Juanita Brooks and others, the number of acquisitions appears to have overtaxed the resources of the institution to accession, organize, and catalog them rapidly enough to remain current with new materials at a time when large additions were also being made to the holdings in other fields. Although I have found no detailed extant records discussing the library's plans for the Mormon File, it seems likely that the file was created as a temporary expedient to absorb all the Mormon manuscripts into a common grouping. The resulting author card file, providing all too frequently only the barest bones of bibliographic data, thus imposed intractable limits upon access to the Mormon File, limits that generations of researchers struggled against with varying degrees of good humor. Within the last decade, however, a series of concerted efforts on the part of the Huntington has erased nearly all such limits.

As has been true of all major research institutions in the digital age, the Huntington has marked the beginning of the twenty-first century by devoting an ever-increasing share of time, energy, and money to enhancing its presence on the internet. An array of projects that can be grouped generally under the professional heading of "retrospective conversion" has effected the transfer of enormous amounts of descriptive data about many of the library's holdings (including the Mormon File and

5. For a much more detailed discussion of the Huntington's manuscript resources about the Mormon experience, please see Katrina C. Denman, "A Firm Testimony of the Truth: A Guide to Mormon Manuscripts at the Huntington Library, c. 1805-1995," rev. ed. (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 2015), accessed February 28, 2020, <https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p15150coll1/id/9997/rec/5a>.

related collections) into online environments. Of even greater moment has been the Huntington's success in creating permanent records in its online catalog for the vast majority of previously uncatalogued Mormon manuscripts, whether in original or facsimile form (a project begun, I might add, with the generous support of friends at Brigham Young University—such mighty oaks that may grow from carefully planted acorns). With over five hundred records currently representing materials in the Mormon File alone, researchers consulting the library's online catalog now have the welcome opportunity to obtain details such as authorship, date and place of creation, and subject content about thousands of documents concerning the Mormon experience.

The most welcome development of all, however, is surely the Huntington's completion in 2015 of its final project in grappling with the vast Mormon File holdings. Increasingly concerned about the preservation of the nearly two hundred reels of negative microfilm that constitute a significant portion of the Mormon File, the Huntington engaged an outside vendor, Backstage Library Works, to scan these microfilms and generate documents in PDF form to serve as reference copies. As the PDFs came to hand, we were eventually able to retire all the microfilm negatives to serve as a preservation archive. The resulting PDFs also made it possible for the Huntington to undertake a full-fledged item-level cataloging project. Katrina Denman, then Library Assistant for Western American History, began by verifying extant descriptive information; she then greatly expanded the records through subject cataloging of the documents. By the project's conclusion, thanks to Ms. Denman's exceptional industry and skill, hundreds of documents previously accessible in many cases by author name only received detailed records that incorporated subject terms based on internationally recognized archival standards. Building upon these digital documents and digital records, the final stage of the project fed directly into the burgeoning Huntington Digital Library, in which we created a collection (characterized internally by the elegant term "bucket") now known as "Mormonism and the West." Here, researchers with online access anywhere on the planet are able to call up the full text of hundreds of letters, diaries, journals, life histories, autobiographies, and reminiscences that span nearly three-quarters of a century of Latter-day Saint experiences—men and women, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, first-generation converts and pioneers in the Great Basin Kingdom, farmers, homemakers, teachers, mechanics, cobblers, ranchers, masons, and factory workers, capturing the substance of their lives—sometimes with frustrating brevity or sometimes

in staggering detail, made available now to help us comprehend past, present, and future. Here indeed are the records that help us to grasp the truth of the observation by the great English social historian George M. Trevelyan: “The poetry of history lies in the quasi-miraculous fact that once, on this earth, once, on this familiar spot of ground, walked other men and women, as actual as we are today, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passions, but now all gone, one generation vanishing into another, gone as utterly as we ourselves shall shortly be gone, like ghosts at cockcrow.”⁶

The Huntington’s relationship with those who study the Mormon experience has been a long and fruitful one. Since its founding, the library has assembled a collection of Mormon materials with few parallels outside of Utah. It has hosted several generations of scholars who have authored the works that have defined and redefined the parameters of the field. The efforts to enhance the accessibility of the library’s holdings to that global community of researchers have been built and will continue to be built upon the firm foundation laid since the time of the Huntington’s creation, ensuring the library’s ability to assist serious advanced research in Mormon history for generations to come. At this happy confluence of the Huntington’s centenary and the bicentennial of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, let us then bend our shoulders yet again to the wheel and carry on with this great work.

Peter J. Blodgett is the H. Russell Smith Foundation Curator of Western American History at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens. He has written and spoken widely on the history of the American West and is currently editing a four-volume series entitled *Motoring West: Automobile Pioneering 1900–1940* for the University of Oklahoma Press.

6. George M. Trevelyan, from “Autobiography of an Historian,” in *An Autobiography and Other Essays* (1949) as quoted in https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/G._M._Trevelyan, accessed May 17, 2020.