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Editor's Introduction

Susan Elizabeth Howe



It is with pride and gratitude that we present this issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly*—pride in recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution giving women the right to vote and the 150th anniversary of the granting of that right to the women of Utah, and gratitude to the excellent historians, other writers, and artists who have contributed to the issue. McArthur Krishna and Bethany Brady Spalding have written three books with the title *Girls Who Choose God*, and Kathleen Peterson, the artist whose work we feature on the cover, has illustrated those books. Katherine Kitterman and Rebekah Clark have spent the past two years working for Better Days 2020, researching and writing about the very topics that we take up in our issue. Carol Madsen has studied Emmeline B. Wells and the *Woman's Exponent* throughout her distinguished career and has written not one but two stellar biographies about Emmeline. Sheree Bench and Cherry Silver's current project is to edit and put online all of Emmeline's diaries. Melinda Evans is an attorney and graduate of Stanford Law School, where she discovered Belva Lockwood's courageous defense of the Church against unconstitutional laws regarding both polygamy and women's suffrage. Jill Derr is the most knowledgeable person in the Church today about Eliza R. Snow and is in the process of writing a biography that will bring together the story of her long, productive life. Connie Lamb, senior librarian in the Harold B. Lee Library, is BYU's women's studies librarian and teaches library patrons how to do research. Anne Snyder is the editor in chief of *Comment Magazine*, the author of the book *The Fabric of Character: A Wise Giver's Guide to Renewing Our*

Social and Moral Landscape, a senior fellow of the Trinity Forum, and a fellow or board member of several other organizations that promote Christian thought in the development of leadership and social contracts to help unite our fragmented society. Laurel Ulrich, Claudia Bushman, and Richard Bushman need no introduction, having blessed us with monumental studies of early Americans, Mormon women, and Joseph Smith and received so many national awards for their groundbreaking work. Tyler Chadwick has edited two major collections of poetry by Latter-day Saint poets and published his own collection of poetry and essays, and Marilyn Bushman-Carlton has published three fine poetry collections. This gifted and accomplished group of people has made it possible for us to bring together what we think is a significant publication to engage us, to inform us about significant history and the ideas that fueled it, and to lead us to consider how these stories and concepts may enlarge our sense of ourselves and the work we might do for the Lord.

The last three decades of the nineteenth century were an excruciating time in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, when both men and women faced arrest and imprisonment for polygamy, when the Church's very existence was threatened by the U.S. government, and when the women citizens of Utah Territory achieved the right to vote, then saw it taken away, then reclaimed it in the state constitution twenty-four years before the women in most states were enfranchised. Katherine Kitterman's fine essay "First to Vote: Utah's Unique Place in the Suffrage Movement" brings to life the entire fifty-year saga in a lucid and fascinating account. She has also acted as the co-editor of this issue, and I thank her for the wise and important suggestions she has made throughout the editorial process.

Several of the other essays cover some of the same territory as Katherine's, but each author looks at the material through a different lens and draws original, insightful conclusions from it. Rebekah Clark demonstrates how the men of the Church—particularly the leaders—supported women in their campaign for suffrage. Melinda Evans introduces us to Belva Lockwood, the nationally prominent woman who often championed Utah women and the Church, despite the country's general antagonism toward polygamy. Carol Madsen shows us the role the *Woman's Exponent* played in promoting suffrage and polygamy by disseminating news, reports of Relief Society and suffrage events, and information to the sisters. And in Cherry Silver and Sheree Bench's superbly edited contribution, we are able to read Emmeline B. Wells's own words as recorded in her diaries and reported in the *Woman's*

Exponent regarding two significant occasions—her trip to Washington on behalf of the Church in 1879 and her participation in the events surrounding the state constitution and the subsequent celebration of statehood.

In their insightful essay, McArthur Krishna and Bethany Spalding make the point that most members of the Church know little about the lives and contributions of early Mormon women. A blog I read a while ago claimed that the first feminists in the Church appeared in the 1970s. Although the term wasn't in use then, actually our nineteenth-century sisters were feminist in every positive sense of that word. They believed that women's subordination to men was a condition of the Fall, that women were eternal beings with free agency and choice, that they were created in the image of their Heavenly Mother and had the potential to become like her in stature, that they had a necessary role in the work of the Lord, including the use of their spiritual gifts to bless others, and that they would be raised to equal status with men in the fulness of this final dispensation of time. Of course, they supported women's suffrage.

Carol Cornwall Madsen's essay shows us that the women of the Church never subscribed to the traditional nineteenth-century, culturally constructed view of woman as an "angel in the house," a being who had to be preserved from the rigors of public life; denied participation in education, businesses, professions, and politics; and sheltered at home with her children. Later in the century, another model called "the new woman" developed, which Madsen explains as a woman who was independent, educated, outspoken, political, and professional as well as motherly. Her essay demonstrates that the work the nineteenth-century women of the Church carried out in promoting women's suffrage and in defending themselves against caricatures by antipolygamists required them to develop the qualities of the new woman, not the demure silence and deference attributed to the angel in the house.

The lives of most nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women did not allow them to be pampered, protected, and removed from the world. Some were polygamist wives (and, after the Manifesto, not considered by the government to be wives at all) who had to provide for themselves and their families with very little help. Many women had to take charge of family business or farming concerns while their husbands were away on missions, often for several years. They proved themselves to be capable, in whatever roles they were asked to fulfill.

Nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint women wrote well and advocated for their own causes. They spoke in public to large gatherings of both men and women, an unusual skill for women of the nineteenth

century. They took on major assignments like storing grain and developing a silk industry. They planned together and networked to enlist sisters throughout the territory in achieving their goals. They successfully headed large organizations; they were trusted by priesthood leaders to carry out major projects for the Church; they acted independently and forthrightly in representing the Church and themselves to the nation. Eliza R. Snow, as introduced to us by Jill Derr, is a consummate example of such a woman. Eliza was known by four titles—poetess, presidentess, priestess, and prophetess—and Jill explains what work Eliza carried out to earn each one.

Although there is much to learn from the articles in this issue, there is much more that has yet to be written. Another important essay included here, by Connie Lamb, teaches about the many bibliographic research sources that are available to anyone—student, scholar, family-history enthusiast, or descendant—who has a question about an individual woman, an event, or an institution. In examining some of the resources Connie suggests, I found a life story of over fifty pages by Margaret Johannah Edwards Haskell (1835–1909), the grandmother of my mother’s father, a narrative my immediate family had not known about. There must be many more treasures for other researchers and family historians to discover.

Also included in this issue are the delights of personal essays and poetry. Three premier historians—Laurel Ulrich, Claudia Bushman, and Richard Bushman—take off their academic robes and let us in on their personal musings. Laurel discusses her most famous phrase, “Well-behaved women seldom make history,” where it came from, how it was noticed, and what effects it has had on her life. Claudia, who has long been a champion of women writing their life stories, offers a delightful account of her and Richard’s courtship. Richard describes his lifelong interest in art and how that led him to found the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts to bring LDS artists of every kind together, support them with grants and stipends, and promote their work. The poems in this issue are all winners of this year’s Clinton F. Larson Poetry Contest, sponsored by BYU Studies. Tyler Chadwick’s “Psalter for the Eternal Mother” is both meditation and prayer; he also won an award for “Our Lady of the Unicorn Blanket-Cape,” a poem of blessing addressed to his young daughter. Marilyn Bushman-Carlton gives us “Learning to Touch” about her own daughter, a doctor, who arrives at the bed of her dying grandmother and knows, because of her medical training, how to comfort her.

To return to the women's suffrage theme of this issue, during the debate on including women's suffrage in the Utah State Constitution, Orson F. Whitney said this: "I believe in woman suffrage. I have always believed in it. I look upon it as another step, another impulse of humanity toward perfection. Its success is assured. . . . Its triumph is decreed. Its destiny is fixed. It is the march of human liberty, the pageant of eternal progress, and those who will not join it must stand aside and see the great procession sweep on without them."¹ The early Saints "believed in" suffrage as though it were a tenet of their faith. Why? Because they had been taught by Joseph Smith, a prophet of God, that moral agency and individual personal choice are necessary for the growth of each individual on earth to become like their Heavenly Parents. Because the more freedom we have, the more we are able to develop our gifts and talents; to become greater, more whole people; and to choose whether to follow God or Satan—whether to bless others or to satisfy ourselves. This growth of each human being is the purpose for which the earth was created, for which Christ suffered the excruciating pain of the Atonement for our sakes. D&C 93 reminds us that considering ourselves eternal beings with vast, God-endowed potential is a belief of such power that if we truly grasp it, our worth and the meaning we can find in our lives are immense. Any political arrangement that limits freedom and growth is contrary, therefore, to the purposes of the Lord (see D&C 101:77–80). It is appropriate to *believe* in women's suffrage, and, as Anne Snyder reminds us in her fine essay, to believe in the vision and growth and wisdom and abilities of all confined and marginalized people, and to work for their freedom and for the blossoming of their lives.

We hope that all our readers will enjoy this issue and benefit from it. We hope that women will see themselves in the courageous, determined, and capable women who brought about women's suffrage in Utah. We hope that men will see themselves in the brethren who gave their full and vocal support to this cause. We hope that everyone who reads this issue will realize that knowing and learning from the history of the early Saints—and particularly of our nineteenth-century sisters—makes possible a greater vision of what is feasible for our relationships, achievements, and contributions to the work of the Lord.

1. Orson F. Whitney, Proceedings and Debates of the Convention Assembled to Adopt a Constitution for the State of Utah, Day 27, March 30, 1895, <https://le.utah.gov/documents/conconv/27.htm>.