John B. Fairbanks: The Man Behind the Canvas

Rachel Cope
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd
Part of the Art and Design Commons, and the Mormon Studies Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4620

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
JOHN B. FAIRBANKS:
THE MAN BEHIND THE CANVAS

by
Rachel Cope

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History
Brigham Young University
August 2003
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Rachel Cope

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

July 3, 2003
Date

Thomas G. Alexander, Chair

July 3, 2003
Date

Richard E. Bennett

July 3, 2003
Date

Marian E. Wardle
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate’s graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Rachel Cope in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographic style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

July 7, 2003

Thomas G. Alexander
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Neil York
Department Chair

Accepted for the College

Renata T. Forste
Associate Dean, College of Home, Family, and Social Sciences
ABSTRACT

JOHN B. FAIRBANKS:
THE MAN BEHIND THE CANVAS

Rachel Cope
Department of History
Master of Arts

A biographical sketch of artist John B. Fairbanks, this thesis primarily probes Fairbanks' evolution as an artist. From amateur, to art missionary, to professional artist, Fairbanks influenced his cultural surroundings in Utah and in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His commitment to his career and his impact on others significantly affected Utah and Mormon art. Thus it is important to understand and recognize the full portrait of John B. Fairbanks.

John B. Fairbanks, born on 27 December 1855, developed an interest in art while still young. Until reaching the age of thirty-four, he often worked as an amateur artist, eager to one day receive professional training. Although a difficult career path to follow, he maintained his focus on art and hoped for future opportunities in this field.

In 1890, Fairbanks learned that he, along with artists John Hafen and Lorus Pratt, and later Edwin Evans and Herman Haag, would be subsidized by The Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints to study art at the Académie Julian in Paris, France, in order to prepare them to paint murals in the Salt Lake Temple. As an art missionary, Fairbanks developed a more complete understanding of art and embraced the process of becoming an artist.

Upon returning to Utah from Paris, Fairbanks helped paint murals in the Salt Lake Temple. Following this unique privilege, he worked as a professional artist. During this phase of his life, he had the opportunity to teach various students, most importantly, his sons J. Leo and Avard. In addition, Fairbanks created several substantial works and helped influence the cultural environment of the Church and the state of Utah.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis chair, Professor Thomas G. Alexander, as well as committee members, Professor Richard E. Bennett and Professor Marian Wardle, for the direction and suggestions they offered me as I worked on this project. Professors Ignacio Garcia, Susan S. Rugh, Mary S. Richards, and W. Jeffrey Marsh also deserve a special thank you for content and editorial suggestions, as does Ikechukwu Nnabuife Chukwunwike Ikeme. Most importantly, my parents Victor Fairbanks and Elizabeth Farrell Cope have supported and encouraged me constantly in this endeavor. My gratitude also extends to my siblings Jacob, Erin, Kelly, Evan, Jessica, Michael, Elizabeth, Sean and Kade Cope. Finally, I want to thank my grandparents, J. Austin and Florence Fairbanks Cope for encouraging me to pursue such an important topic.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT** ................................................................. iv

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** .................................................. vi

**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS** ............................................ ix

**Chapters**

I. John B. Fairbanks: A Historiographical Discussion ....................... 1

- Purpose of this Study
- Historiographical Review
- Primary Sources
- Contributions of this Thesis
- Content of this Thesis

II. From Tracing to Sketching: The Early Life of John B. Fairbanks ....... 30

- A Link to the Past
- Birth of John B. Fairbanks
- Education and Art
- An Introduction to Art
- Marriage
- Southern States Mission
- Pursuing a Career in Art

III. Leaving an Impression: The Impact of the Paris Art Mission on
John B. Fairbanks’ Artistic Development .................................. 66

- Early Utah Art
- Art Background
- The Goal to Study in Paris
- Académie Julian
- Purpose of the Art Mission
- Early Feelings About Art in Paris
- An Extended Call
- Recommencing School
- Summer With Rigolot
- Last Months in Paris
- Conclusion
IV. “A Disposition and Desire to Study”: The Artistic Legacy of
John B. Fairbanks .......................................................................................... 109

Construction of Early Temples
Mural Painting in America
Creating Murals in the Salt Lake Temple
Contributions to Utah Art
Death of Lillie
Benjamin Cluff Expedition to South America
Traveling East With Hafen
Farm in Canada
New York City
Return to Paris
Later Art
Conclusion

APPENDIX A ........................................................................................................ 151

APPENDIX B ........................................................................................................ 165

APPENDIX C ........................................................................................................ 172

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................. 174
**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

**Figure**

1. J. Leo Fairbanks, Photograph of John B. Fairbanks Sketching Outdoors in Utah Valley, ca 1897 ................................................................. x


4. Albert Gabriel Rigolot, *Summer in the Vale of Cheuvreuse* ................... 167


11. Photograph of John B. Fairbanks, circa 1885 ....................................... 174

12. Southern State’s Mission Certificate, 1881 .......................................... 175

13. Paris Art Mission Certificate, 1890 ................................................... 176

14. Photograph of American Artists Taken at the American Club in Paris, 1890 .. 177

15. Photograph of Students at the Académie Julian, circa 1890 ...................... 178

16. Photograph of Fairbanks’ Art Studio in Salt Lake City, circa 1930 .......... 179
J. Leo Fairbanks, Photograph of John B. Fairbanks sketching outdoors in Utah Valley, circa 1897, Brigham Young University, Photo Archives, Provo, Utah
CHAPTER 1

JOHN B. FAIRBANKS: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DISCUSSION

Unlike many other frontier settlements, Utah had a “strong affinity for the fine arts.” Led to the Rocky Mountains by Brigham Young, a man who encouraged artistic creations and cultural influences, the Mormons, many of whom had been exposed to museums and galleries before migration westward, appreciated the aesthetic. Thus, as LDS missionaries proselytized in foreign countries and throughout the United States, they encouraged skilled artisans and craftsman who had converted to the Church to travel westward. Eventually, experienced artists migrated to Utah Territory and assisted in developing a cultured society. Other artists, such as John B. Fairbanks (1855–1940), were born and raised in the newly settled territory.

---

1 Vern G. Swanson et al., *Utah Painting and Sculpture*. (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1997), 13.

2 Many of the Mormon pioneers had been raised in the Eastern United States or in Europe. As a result, some of them had witnessed cultural influences and various forms of aesthetic beauty. Such individuals found it difficult to adapt to life in the desert.


4 Examples of artists who migrated to Utah are: George M. Ottinger, Danquart Anthon Weggeland, Alfred Lambourne, William Warner Major, and C.C.A. Christensen.
Initially, temporal affairs preoccupied the Saints; and thus individuals sought occupations that would enable them to secure the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. With time, they completed homes and established businesses. Aware of the importance of art, Brigham Young continually encouraged interest in this area. Following the improvement of physical comforts throughout the territory, immigrant artists, including George Ottinger (1833–1917) and Danquart Anthon Weggeland (1827–1918), painted scenery for the Salt Lake Theater. Later, portrait painting developed as a source of income throughout the territory, and the picturesque landscapes of the Rocky Mountains and other scenic areas inspired many beautiful works. Furthermore, as architects designed and constructed church and civic buildings, artists were commissioned to create paintings for these structures.

Many of the artists who arrived in Utah had previously been exposed to a basic foundation in art history and technique and were acquainted with the works of Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), Salvator Rosa (1615–1673), and Guido Reni (1575–1642), as well as some of the more modern works of Sir Edwin Landseer (1802–1873), Paul Delaroche (1797–1856), and William Kaulbach. Although geographically isolated, especially before the completion of the continental railroad system in 1869, the Utah territory was not completely exempt of outside influences. Exposure to books, newspaper articles, and visiting artists allowed local artists to become “somewhat aware of the

---

5 Saint is a name used for a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Vern G. Swanson et al., Utah Painting and Sculpture. (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1997), 13.

6 Ibid.
Barbizon movement of the forties and fifties, the realism of the fifties and sixties, and impressionism in the seventies and eighties."

Those living in the final decade of the nineteenth century witnessed vast changes in Utah art. In 1888, artists John Willard Clawson (1858–1936), James Taylor Harwood (1860–1940) and Cyrus E. Dallin (1861–1944) began studying art in Paris. Then, in 1890, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints agreed to send art missionaries, John B. Fairbanks, John Hafen (1856–1910), Lorus Pratt (1855–1923), and later Edwin Evans (1860–1946) and Herman Haag (1871–1895) to enroll in the Académie Julian in Paris. Upon returning home they painted murals in the Salt Lake Temple and created artwork for the Church. They also contributed to art education and art organizations in Utah. Specific sources that relay insights into Fairbanks' life story will be discussed throughout this chapter.

**Purpose of this Study**

John B. Fairbanks contributed much to Utah and Mormon art history thanks to his service as an art missionary in Paris, France. Following his training at the Académie Julian, he helped paint murals in the Salt Lake Temple. Later, he taught art classes, worked as a photographer, contributed to art organizations throughout the state, served as the official artist of the Benjamin Cluff Expedition, and trained his sons, J. Leo (1878–1946) and Avard (1897–1987), to become artists. To fully comprehend his accomplishments, it is requisite to understand Fairbanks' life.

Aspects of Fairbanks' career can be found in articles and books that discuss Utah

---

7 Ibid.
and Mormon art history; and family histories provide brief biographical accounts. Yet even though remnants of his life are scattered throughout such sources, one merely gains a knowledge of surface details about Fairbanks. It quickly becomes apparent that no source has thoroughly described the rich life Fairbanks lived, and thus a more thorough biographical analysis needs to be written. To make it possible to understand this artist, this study first examines his developing interest in the artistic profession, followed by an analysis of his Paris training and the subsequent impact it had on his art career.

**Historiographical Review**

While a published, academic biography of Fairbanks does not exist, he did dictate a short autobiographical account to his wife; and his son, John B. Fairbanks, Jr., wrote a portion of his father’s story. Furthermore, an overview of events from Fairbank’s life are found in books and articles discussing incidents he participated in, such as the Paris Art Mission and the Benjamin Cluff Expedition. While training in Paris, Fairbanks was influenced by Impressionists and the Barbizon School of landscape painters. Hence, material discussing impressionistic art, Parisian art institutions, American art history, and the evolution of art in Utah allows this study to place Fairbanks in his appropriate sphere. Most useful are primary sources that reflect Fairbanks’ personal experiences. Journals, correspondence, notes, and artwork provide fundamental details.

**Family Histories**

To understand who John Fairbanks was, one must first consider the history of the Fairbanks family, a record of which has been compiled in a book edited by Kathryn
Fairbanks Kirk, titled *The Fairbanks Family in the West: Four Generations*. This text provides short sketches about different Fairbanks family members. Although detail is rather limited, the book serves as a foundational study for a biography of Fairbanks. It not only offers a glimpse into his life story, it also contains accounts of his parents, children, and grandchildren, thus providing crucial details about the individuals who most influenced Fairbanks. Notwithstanding the benefits of this work, it is important to remember that it has been authored as family history and does not probe into background issues, details, and context; its main value is the connection it provides between John Fairbanks and his family members.

Fairbanks’ second wife, Florence Gifford Fairbanks, recorded “The Life of John B. Fairbanks,” as her husband dictated it to her. An unpublished manuscript, it can be viewed in the L. Tom Perry Special Collection’s Library in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University, or in the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This text describes numerous incidents from Fairbanks’ life, beginning with his infancy and ending with late adulthood. While simple in prose and lacking in an abundance of background detail, the document provides an autobiographical framework written from the subject’s perspective. Such a viewpoint adds important elements of insight which will contribute immensely to a biographical study.

---


John B. Fairbanks, Jr., authored an additional unpublished biographical sketch, "John B. Fairbanks 1855–1940: Patriarch of the World's Largest Art Dynasty." Written as a family history, this work displays the tender admiration of a son for his father. Although nostalgic at times, it provides essential insights into Fairbanks' relationships with others, and it contains many useful details about the Benjamin Cluff Expedition, as well as a simple chronological account of Fairbanks's life. Because broad assumptions and generalizations are evident throughout the text, they reveal events and ideas that must be further explored in this work. The author does not place the subject in the context of his surroundings, and although much of the information he uses is drawn directly from his father's journal accounts, his study lacks additional sources. For example, the author does not consider the letters Fairbanks wrote while living in Paris, thus overlooking the experiences that molded him into the artist he became. Nonetheless, this manuscript is crucial to this work and serves as a helpful overview of Fairbanks. It can be viewed as a basic starting point for this biographical study.

Community History

Fairbanks must be placed within his surroundings in early Utah life. His parents, John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks, arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on 6 October 1847. They remained there until 1851, when Church leaders asked John Boylston to settle approximately sixty-six miles south of Salt Lake City, in Payson, Utah. A History of Utah County by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, a synthesis of events about Utah County from

10 John B. Fairbanks, Jr., "John B. Fairbanks 1855–1940: Patriarch of the World's Largest Art Dynasty" (copy is possession of author), Spanish Fork, Utah.
its first settlement to the present day. This study allows Fairbanks to be placed in his geographical environment.\textsuperscript{11} Most helpful is the author’s discussion of Payson, Utah.

After reviewing material about the entire county, it is essential to move to community history. \textit{Peteetneet Town: A History of Payson, Utah} by Madoline C. Dixon creates a helpful overview of the beginnings and development of Payson, Utah, the community in which Fairbanks was raised and where he made his first artistic attempts.\textsuperscript{12} The Fairbanks family is mentioned in this book, and incidents relevant to Fairbanks’ life story can be located therein.

The Southern States Mission

Two years following his marriage to Lillie Huish, Fairbanks was called by Church leaders to serve a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Southern United States; he remained in this capacity for two years. To grasp the significance and difficulties of his experiences during this time, it is important to consider Heather Seferovich’s “History of the LDS Southern States Mission, 1875-1898.”\textsuperscript{13} This thesis provides a statistical analysis of the mission, as well as a discussion of the persecution and trials that accompanied missionary work in this area. Furthermore, it presents an overview of the entire mission during the years Fairbanks served there.

\textsuperscript{11} Richard Nietzel Holzapfel, \textit{A History of Utah County} (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1999).


\textsuperscript{13} Heather M. Seferovich, “A History of the LDS Southern States Mission” (M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1994).
Art Experiences

As a young man, Fairbanks developed a lasting friendship with artist John Hafen, who encouraged him to become an artist and offered advice and support on numerous occasions; the two friends studied and worked together throughout their lives. Since the men had interconnected experiences, material about Hafen inevitably leads to a greater understanding of Fairbanks. Although it is not an extensive work, the thesis “A Study of the Life of John Hafen, Artist, With an Analysis and Critical Review of His Work,” by William Lee Roy Conant, Jr., discusses essential aspects of Hafen’s life. This work is not only valuable as a biographical study because Fairbanks and Hafen worked together as colleagues, but also because it briefly explains the development of their friendship. The thesis also provides an overview of the Paris Art Mission and other experiences the two artists shared.

Although not directly about Fairbanks, A Basket of Chips: An Autobiography of James Taylor Harwood is another work that describes the life of one of Fairbanks’s contemporaries. Like Fairbanks, Harwood studied in Paris and then worked as an artist on his return to Utah. In many ways, the author explains the frustrations he encountered as a professional artist and the financial difficulties he experienced. Besides displaying the negative aspects of an art career, however, the text also allows a reader to see the personality of an artist, and his unique ability to observe beauty when others fail to notice.

---


An important memoire, this work provides a glimpse into the lifestyle of Utah artists.

Paris Art Mission

In 1890, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sponsored artists John B. Fairbanks, John Hafen, and Lorus Pratt to study at the Académie Julian in Paris, France, an institution recognized for its excellent artistic training. Although not as prestigious as the École des Beaux Arts, thousands of American artists received training at the Académie Julian. Eventually, Edwin Evans and Herman Haag joined the art missionaries at this institution. This opportunity prepared them to paint murals in the Salt Lake Temple.

The most extensive study of this missionary period is found in the book *Harvesting the Light: The Paris Art Mission and the Beginnings of Utah Impressionism* written by Linda Jones Gibbs. Gibbs begins with a description of pre-Paris art in Utah, thus linking Fairbanks' experiences to the experiences of other Utah artists. The author then discusses the Paris Art Mission, a key event in Fairbanks' life. In addition to describing the mission, Gibbs considers impressionism and analyzes the impact of the Paris training on the artists. She further explains how their artwork evolved and notes the improvements in their skill that resulted from their study. Also dispersed throughout the book are numerous photographs and paintings that reflect the skills and interests of the Utah artists and allow readers to see the impact of art training on the men. The book is


17 Gibbs, *Harvesting the Light*. 
most helpful because it places Fairbanks in context with the other artists and analyzes the development of his artistic technique.

Several articles also detail accounts of the Paris Art Mission. William C. Seifrit wrote “Letters from Paris,” a work based on letters sent by John B. Fairbanks and John Hafen to their spouses.\(^\text{18}\) The article contains rich detail about Fairbanks’ experiences as an art missionary, and the background information used in this paper provides insight into the primary sources available. Most valuable, however, is the voice of John B. Fairbanks found throughout the text. In providing an understanding of Fairbanks’ perspective, this article may be considered one of the most helpful sources. However, as the primary sources used by the author are reviewed, it becomes apparent that many important details about Fairbanks’s experiences as an art missionary are yet to be considered.

Another article about the art mission is “John Hafen and the Art Missionaries,” by Martha Elizabeth Bradley and Lowell Durham, Jr.\(^\text{19}\) This account is also thorough in its use of primary sources, although it focuses almost exclusively on the correspondence of John Hafen. Nevertheless, a few paragraphs near the conclusion consider Fairbanks and the remainder of his art career.

Another article, “Harvesting the Light: the 1890 Paris Art Mission,” by Giles H.


Florence, Jr., lacks in detail and primary research.20 The information about Fairbanks in this article is minimal and inaccurate. For example, the author states erroneously that Fairbanks lived his final fifteen years in New York. Instead, Fairbanks lived in Salt Lake City in the Highland Park Ward, not in Highland, New York, as the author indicates. Florence’s use of poorly researched secondary sources and his failure to conduct primary research are evident in this blunder.

Parisian Art Academies

Studying in Paris was not unique to the art missionaries; it was a common phenomenon among American artists of the late nineteenth century. Because of the vast influx of art students in Paris during this time, the government institution known as the École des Beaux-Arts reached its capacity. This prompted the formation of studios and académies for private instruction.21 Aware of the need for art education, Rodolphe Julian organized his first atelier in 1868. The success of this institution led to his opening numerous ateliers for art students throughout the Paris area.

John Fairbanks studied in the Académie Julian while residing in Paris. Here he received exposure to the techniques of professional artists, techniques that led to an improvement in the quality of his artwork. Explaining the background details about the nature of art institutions, Albert Boime wrote The Academy and French Painting in the

---


As indicated in the title, this book probes into the training artists could acquire in Paris in the 1800s by describing different art institutions, analyzing various forms of art, and discussing the art curriculum; Fairbanks was exposed to all of these. Although Boime’s work allows readers to place nineteenth-century art students, such as Fairbanks, within their educational environment, it would have been more helpful if the author had considered various institutions in detail, and highlighted the similarities and differences between them.

To understand the educational and artistic environment to which Fairbanks was exposed while studying in Paris, it is crucial to review works that further probe into such topics. *The Studios of Paris: The Capitol of Art in the late Nineteenth Century*, by John Milner, is one such book. The author gives details of Parisian art during the era in which Fairbanks received exposure to these influences. Since Milner explains artistic styles and techniques, discusses teachers and institutions, and describes the opportunities to display work in Parisian art culture, it is possible to capture the essence of Fairbanks’ training for this study. This monograph provides a more complete view of Paris and its art during the time John studied there.

Complimenting the general synthesis of Parisian art in Milner’s work, another book, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth Century American Painters and Their French Teachers*, by H. Barbara Weinberg, offers a more detailed glimpse of Fairbanks’

---


environment. This book is vaguely similar to Milner’s text, but is more narrow in focus. Weinberg ties culture and background details about Paris art into her study as she discusses specific teachers and ateliers, including those with whom Fairbanks became most familiar. The most significant information for a study of Fairbanks’ life is found in the final chapter of the work, which focuses completely on the historical and educational value of the Académie Julian.

For specific details about the Académie Julian, Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of The Academy Julian edited by Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane R. Becker, provides insight. Although this work is written specifically about the women who attended the Julian, it probes into the very nature of the school, discusses the institution’s curriculum and describes its formation, thus making it possible to place Fairbanks within his correct academic context.

Articles are another important source of information for this atelier. “Women at the Académie Julian in Paris,” by Catherine Fehrer contributes to an understanding of this institution. Again, although it focuses on the education women received, it also explores the history of the school and general characteristics that defined experiences of typical art students like Fairbanks. Fehrer wrote another insightful article, “New Light on

---


the Académie Julian and Its Founder (Rodolphe Julian).”

Focusing specifically on the founding of the school and the role of Julian in its formation, the author aptly describes how the institution affected art students. Finally, M. Riccardo Nobill authored an article titled simply “The Académie Julian.” The main value of this work is its date of publication, 1889, the year before Fairbanks began studying in Paris. Although the article is not analytical, it does provide a historical overview and discussion of the Académie Julian and its students from a late nineteenth-century perspective.

Evaluations of other American art students are also helpful in understanding Fairbanks’ experiences. An American Art Student In Paris: The Letters of Kenyon Cox, edited by H. Wayne Morgan, delves into the experiences of Kenyon Cox (1856–1919) as he studied at the École des Beaux Arts and the Académie Julian. His letters, often addressed to his mother, offer insights into the educational environment and social atmosphere of the Académie Julian during the late nineteenth century. From this book, one pictures how the activities other art students participated in can help define similarities and differences between Fairbanks’ experiences and those of other art students.

Salt Lake Temple Murals

As noted, John Fairbanks painted murals in the Salt Lake Temple after returning


home from Paris. Wallace Alan Raynor describes the construction of the Salt Lake Temple in *The Everlasting Spires: A Story of the Salt Lake Temple*. Although the book centers on the exterior of the temple, it also provides an account of the architectural design of the edifice and the labor required for its construction. Unfortunately, the author does not describe the interior decoration Fairbanks contributed to as a muralist. Thus, the book’s main value to this biographical study is the context it provides.

A historical overview of the earliest temples can be found in Laurel B. Andrews’ *The Early Temples of the Mormons: The Architecture of the Kingdom*. Focusing primarily on the history of the architectural design of temples, the author provides essential details about the exterior development of the Salt Lake Temple, as well as a limited discussion of the interior, including a brief account of the temple murals. *Every Stone a Sermon* by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel also tells the story of the Salt Lake Temple. Although it is not an extensive work, the author covers many significant ideas and briefly introduces the contributions of the art missionaries.

Terry J. O’Brien’s master’s thesis, “A Study of the Effect of Color in the Utah Temple Murals,” analyzes the artwork displayed in several of the early Utah temples. The historical background found in this work is rather narrow in scope, but the discussion

---


of the technique and color in the murals reveals their design. O’Brien suggests that the
artists used specific colors and shades to create certain moods, and he provides details
about each of the murals, as well as a table that indicates which colors the artists used in
each room. An understanding of this material indicates the extent of training in Paris.
Additionally, *The House of the Lord* by James E. Talmage is crucial for one seeking to
comprehend the nature and purpose of the Salt Lake Temple murals. While this detailed
book chiefly contains a historical and theological analysis of temples, chapters on the
interior and exterior design of the Salt Lake Temple are also included. Most important, it
is here that one reads physical descriptions of the murals that decorate the stately walls of
the sacred edifice; these descriptions are detailed in such a way that readers can visualize
the pastoral scenes Fairbanks helped paint. This book also contains several pictures of
the temple, including the World Room, where Fairbanks did the majority of his mural
work.

**Mormon Art**

Besides painting murals in the temple, Fairbanks also created works that
decorated buildings throughout Utah, particularly Mormon structures. Recognizing the
skills of various Mormon artists, Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis authored *Images
of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints*. In addition to the numerous pictures displayed
throughout the text, the authors also incorporate an analysis of art’s impact on The

---

and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974).

34 Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis, *Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints*
(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995).
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. John B. Fairbanks and his sons J. Leo and Avard are included in this framework. The authors indicate that the Salt Lake Temple murals served as Fairbanks’ most important contribution.

Since art has had a definite impact on Mormon culture, and Fairbanks played a role in this realm, it is important to review works that discuss the development of Mormon art. “A Study of Representative Examples of Art Works Fostered By the Mormon Church With An Analysis of the Aesthetic Value of These Works,” by Monte B. DeGraw defines specific traits of Mormon art, ultimately explaining that the different examples reflect historical glorification and depict moral codes and scriptural teachings.\(^{35}\)

Most significant for one studying Fairbanks is DeGraw’s discussion and analysis of temple murals, particularly the Salt Lake Temple. Another work that probes into Mormon art is “Culture and the American Frontier in Mormon Utah, 1850-1896.”\(^{36}\) In this lengthy dissertation, Arthur Bassett probes the cultural and intellectual foundations of Mormon art during the territorial period and devotes an entire chapter to art and architecture. While his sole focus is not Fairbanks and his colleagues, he discusses the art mission. Most significantly, the author explains that Mormon artists living during this era


stretched beyond their personal limitations and sought means to obtain new artistic skills.

Temporal Missions

Before the economic and cultural establishment of Utah, Church members occasionally served temporal missions to develop the financial, aesthetic, and educational foundation of the Church. While several missions focused on manufacturing goods lacking in Utah society, the Paris Art Mission emphasized the creation of beautiful art. Yet despite differences, each of the unique missions developed skills and resources lacking in an isolated territory. Hence, articles relating to a variety of mission calls such as the paper mission and the gold rush mission, allow readers to evaluate the types of calls and to compare and contrast them with a mission seeking the refinement of artistic abilities. Richard Saunders wrote "'Rags! Rags!! Rags!!': Beginnings of the Paper Industry in the Salt Lake Valley, 1849-58" and Eugene Edward Campbell explained financial matters in his article "The Mormon Gold Mining Mission of 1849." Although only a small sampling of work reflective of the missions that enabled people to establish economic strength or develop new skills, the articles reflect the desire to refine abilities and become self-sufficient. The Paris Art Mission is similar to these calls because it was not an ordinary proselytizing mission.

Utah Art History

In a study of Fairbanks’ life, it is also necessary to consider information that reflects Utah art history. Vern G. Swanson, Robert S. Olpin, and William C. Seifrit co-

authored *Utah Painting and Sculpture*.

This book reflects the diversity and quality of Utah’s artistic creations and traces the progress and evolution of the Utah art traditions of painting and sculpture from pioneer origins to contemporary practices. Naturally, the information concerning the era of the Paris Art Mission and John B. Fairbanks’ life is most useful to this work. However, the value of the book extends beyond a specific time frame, encompassing Utah art from its inception to its current trends. This broad analysis allows Fairbanks to be placed within his environment, and makes it possible to understand what preceded and followed him.

Swanson, Olpin, and Seifrit also wrote *Artists of Utah*.

This book provides brief biographical sketches of artists from the Utah area. Each section is followed by a chapter that discusses the people involved in art and their contributions throughout their careers. Although this book is a general study of Utah art history, it does allow readers to learn about and understand artists and their influences. Olpin and Swanson, in conjunction with Donna Poulton and Janic Rogers, wrote a third book, *Utah Art, Utah Artists*.

This text not only provides a very brief overview of Utah art, it also includes a vast array of art examples. This enables readers to review and compare Fairbanks’ works with that of his colleagues.

*One Hundred Years of Utah Painting* by James L. Haseltine serves as a textual

---

38 Vern G. Swanson, et al., *Utah Painting and Sculpture* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith Publisher, 1997).


40 Vern G. Swanson, et al., *Utah Art, Utah Artists* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2001).
basis for numerous paintings and biographical accounts of several influential artists.\textsuperscript{41} It is helpful for those seeking a basic summary of Utah art. And since the book lacks specific detail, it is wise to consider the more recent works of Swanson, Olpin and Seifrit. Another work, \textit{Devotees and Their Shrines} by Alice Merrill Horne, provides brief biographical sketches of different Utah Artists.\textsuperscript{42} Her analysis of Fairbanks, although minimal in length, is very insightful as it explains how he influenced his sons.

Even though Fairbanks is not included in "A Circumspection of Ten Formulators of Early Utah Art History" by Thomas A. Leek, his colleagues, including John Hafen, are.\textsuperscript{43} In this thesis, the author begins with a brief overview of Utah art history, followed by a discussion and analysis of ten significant Utah painters and sculptors. Reading about their experiences helps one gain a further understanding of Fairbanks. Through comprehending his surroundings, it becomes easier to contextualize his contributions and experiences.

\textbf{Benjamin Cluff Expedition}

A decade following the Paris Art Mission, John Fairbanks received another unique type of “mission call” that related to his artistic training. In 1900, Benjamin Cluff, President of Brigham Young Academy, received permission to search for Zarahemla, a

\textsuperscript{41} James L. Haseltine, \textit{100 Years of Utah Painting} (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, Inc., 1965).


\textsuperscript{43} Thomas A. Leek, "A Circumspection of Ten Formulators of Early Utah Art.” (M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1961).
city mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Several men were chosen to accompany him on this journey; Fairbanks served as photographer and artist for the Cluff Expedition. Despite Fairbanks’ connection to the expedition, little work has been done to recount his role. Yet Fairbanks, as well as others involved in the trip, kept extensive journal accounts that would allow the story to be retold. In their book Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny, Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen devote a portion of one chapter to a discussion of the Cluff Expedition. The account provides a general outline of the expedition and those involved, with brief reference to Fairbanks’ experiences. A more detailed account of the event is found in Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, edited by Ernest L. Wilkinson. A chapter in this book probes into some of the larger issues involving the trip and relies on some of their journals, including Fairbanks’, to tell the story.

Mormon History

When studying the life of John B. Fairbanks, one must also understand the dominant influence of The Church Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Besides affecting his faith, values, and quality of life, it also encouraged him to pursue an art career and then used his work in temples and other buildings. Church leaders set Fairbanks apart as an art missionary in 1890, a time that Thomas Alexander has defined as an evolutionary period for The Church (see Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints,


Alexander argues that during this period, temporal matters were separated from spiritual matters, and Church programs developed into more structured organizations. While the text does not discuss art and Fairbanks’ influence specifically, nor does it include detailed analysis of the Salt Lake Temple, it does explain the ideas and changes that impacted him. Hence the book creates a religious context in which the life of Fairbanks can be better understood. Although Alexander’s thorough research and complex analysis provides the background necessary to understand Mormon society at this time, it is also important to consider The Story of the Latter-day Saints by Glen Leonard and James B. Allen. This book clarifies issues surrounding the innovations and growth of the Mormon Church throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

American Art History

Beginning in the late-nineteenth century, and extending through the early decades of the twentieth century, American artists diversified their techniques. By studying in Europe, particularly in Paris, they adapted artistic skills that later evolved to fit the American environment and experience. Hence, many artists during this era moved beyond realism and embraced impressionism and modernism. In the late 1890s, ten men who had been trained in these institutions withdrew from the Society of American Artists and united in an effort to implement new styles in American art, such as impressionism.


When reviewing such details, it is helpful to begin with the simple book *The Ten*, by Patricia Jobe Pierce. The main value of this book to a biographical study of Fairbanks’ is the brief overview of the history of the Académie Julian that is provided in the first chapter of the work. Additional details about the institution are available in the biographical accounts of some of “the ten” scattered throughout Pierce’s work. Hence it becomes possible to understand a typical day at the school and to recreate the environment that Fairbanks engaged himself in.

When studying an artist it is also important to understand the evolution of artistic trends and the styles that preceded and followed one another. In *The Shock of the New*, Robert Hughes analyzes the changes in art that have occurred from 1880 to the present. His text, rich in detail and thorough in explanation, adds to an understanding of why Fairbanks’ artistic style evolved.

*New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* by H. Wayne Morgan further places art in the context of American culture and discusses some of the transitional periods it underwent. Rather than focusing on specific artists and paintings, the author delves into larger issues, such as the manner in which Americans received, analyzed, and debated art in this time period. Most significant to this work, the author discusses the emergence of impressionism and modernism in American culture.

---


Since Fairbanks was influenced by the impressionist painters, it is necessary to review the history of impressionism. Although it originated in Europe, impressionism spread to America. William H. Gerdts describes this artistic style in his book *American Impressionism.*\(^5\) A professor of art history, Gerdts intertwines the historical value of pieces of art with an evaluation of the quality of the artist’s work. While discussing the dominant art styles of specific periods, the author also includes detailed accounts of information relating to the artists and académies to which Fairbanks became exposed. Thus the book becomes fundamental to understanding American art at the time of his story. Also authored by Gerdts is the monograph *Masterworks of American Impressionism,* which contains some historical accounts of impressionism, but is mainly a collection of art.\(^5\) Although less descriptive than the author’s other work, the extensive array of prints allows readers to understand the significance of impressionism in American culture. One can gain an appreciation for early American art through this book, recognizing that Utah art was influenced by these styles. In addition, many of the artists depicted in these books received training at the Académie Julian.

**Primary Sources**

An immense amount of primary material relating to the life of John B. Fairbanks is also available. Letters, journals, certificates, notes, paintings, important documents and other valuable items can be located. Since the information contained in these sources has

---


not been used by scholars to discuss Fairbanks’ life, they provide the basic structure of this work.

The John B. Fairbanks Collection (L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University) contains journals, letters, important documents, and biographical sketches. Fairbanks kept extensive journal accounts during certain periods of his life; these fourteen journals are located at Brigham Young University. In his journals Fairbanks reports events from his missions in the Southern United States and in Central America. Although many of the entries are limited in length, they enable readers to understand his daily activities as well as his personality and fascination with art. Fairbanks placed particular emphasis on the Cluff Expedition, a time of great trial and hardship in his life. These entries reflect his personality and the numerous incidents he recorded become invaluable to his story.

Due to Fairbanks’ limited account of the Paris Art Mission is his journal, one must rely on the detailed letters he wrote to his wife while serving in Paris (copies of these are located in the Special Collections Library in the Springville Museum of Art and the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Throughout this correspondence he includes his feelings about art, describes his schedule and daily activities, relates his progress as an art student, and notes cultural experiences and his


54 John B. Fairbanks, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Special Collections, Springville Museum of Art Library, Springville, Utah.
surroundings. Readers not only learn significant details about his mission, they also learn of his nature.

While studying in Paris, Fairbanks received letters from his wife and Church leaders. The correspondence with his wife provides insights about his family while he was away, and demonstrates the strong relationship they shared. Letters from Church leaders commend Fairbanks for his faith and express confidence in his ability as an artist and as a church member. Finally, notes from friends demonstrate the loyal relationships he cultivated. Such information contributes much to an understanding of his personality.

Fairbanks also kept notes about art history and techniques. He outlined the names of artists and works he admired, discussed the different attributes of art in various nations, and expressed his view of aesthetic beauty. His interest in art history reflects his desire to know and understand his profession. Fairbanks understood the importance of education and believed that through constant study and persistent faith, he could reach his potential. His determination is reflected in his attempts to understand great works of the past, as well as artistic techniques current at the time he lived.

The John Hafen Collection (located in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University), contains insightful letters Hafen wrote to his wife during the Art Mission, as well as journal accounts and other

---

55 John B. Fairbanks, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Perry Special Collections.
documents. Hafen's correspondences is an important source, for he records many incidents in which Fairbanks participated, and adds variety and depth to the information found in his letters. Hafen was not only gifted with a pallet and brush, he also had an ability to express his feelings and describe experiences. Even as a writer, he painted beautiful scenes. Thus the information found in this collection adds useful details about the Paris Art Mission.

Another crucial source for this story is an oral interview with Avard Fairbanks conducted by his son Eugene Fairbanks (transcripts in possession of the author). Before recounting events from his own life, Avard discusses his father's past as an art missionary. Although only a few pages long, this account provides important details and poses further aspects of a biographical study. After discussing the Art Mission, Avard moves on to describe his own life. Yet many of these events explain John B. Fairbanks' later years and his continual involvement in the art world and his influence on his young sons.

Finally, viewing Fairbanks' artwork is fundamental to creating an accurate perception of his life and works. These paintings, mainly landscapes, reflect the stylistic changes he underwent while training in Paris. Impressionism is sometimes evident, and

---

56 John Hafen, Papers, Correspondence, and Memorabilia, 1879–1918, Perry Special Collections.


58 Located in the Brigham Young University Museum of Art, The Springville Museum of Art, the LDS Church History and Art Museum, and the Fairbanks' Family Collection.
thus his improvement over time cannot be denied. Fairbanks' harvest scenes reflect his surroundings, as well as his simple message of abundance and progress. Other paintings suggest "survival and self-contained efficiency." The subjects he painted reflect his experiences.

Contributions of this Thesis

Since no scholar has ever undertaken a biographical study of John B. Fairbanks, this work will outline the course of his life, with particular emphasis on the artistic developments that influenced his work and led to his contributions to his chosen field. Although artistic interest did not serve as the only aspect of his character, it did influence his very nature and leads to a greater understanding of who he was.

As can be concluded from this chapter, there is an obvious lack of specific historiographical material on Fairbanks' life. Even those sources which evaluate events he became involved in, such as the Paris Art mission, tend to place greater emphasis on artists other than on Fairbanks, thus making Fairbanks a part of the mission rather than viewing the mission as a portion of Fairbanks' life. Since studies that include him in their analysis are limited in scope, and biographical studies of him have been written only as family histories, it is necessary to produce a work that acknowledges who he was and how he contributed to the field of art. A complete portrait of Fairbanks, rather than an unfinished sketch, will contribute much to Utah and Mormon history. Just as a painting cannot be understood in a single glance, an artist cannot be described by a sole event.

---

59 Gibbs, 45.
Insights about his life will be new and valuable. By placing him within his historical context and understanding the environment in which he was raised, studied, and lived, it becomes possible to see more than the silhouette of a man. As the numerous facets of his life are compiled and analyzed, the minute details that define who he was will become apparent.

**Content of this Thesis**

It is important to understand that the sole focus of this work is not artistic analysis, but rather a discussion of John B. Fairbanks’ life, with particular emphasis on his artistic career. Certainly each role he played and each event he participated in reflected his artistic interest and love of the aesthetic. Yet, even though artistic analysis is needed to enhance the story of this artist, it will not overshadow the biographical aspects of this work. Instead, the numerous conditions that led to John B. Fairbanks becoming an artist and his succeeding contributions will be explored and his character will be analyzed in connection to his training.

Although developing a career in art seemed difficult in a small Utah farming community, Fairbanks had the determination and the foresight to do what many others would not attempt. He allowed his paintbrush to become the means through which he stood on the forefront of cultural and artistic development in Utah. Quiet and humble, yet determined and strong, John took the road less traveled. “And that . . . made all the difference.”

---

CHAPTER 2

FROM TRACING TO SKETCHING:

THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN B. FAIRBANKS

As a young man, John B. Fairbanks became acquainted with budding artist John Hafen. Intrigued by Hafen’s ability to paint, he sat for hours each day and admired his friend’s work. On one occasion, Fairbanks felt inspired to emulate Hafen’s artistic example. He recalled, Hafen “was at work on a painting and he had one on the wall; a thrill went through my body from my head to the very ends of my fingers and toes. I was charmed. I don’t know what I said nor what I did but I know I shall never forget my feeling.” 61 This simple epiphany foreshadowed Fairbanks’ future career.

To truly understand Fairbanks, one must consider the process by which he became an artist followed by an analysis of some of his artistic contributions. Careful research reveals that his progress as an artist can be viewed in three interconnected phases: his

developing interest in art coupled with a desire to pursue it as a profession, undergoing intense artistic training in Paris which allowed him to gain an understanding of what an artist truly is, and pursuing a focused and professional art career.

Although the Paris Art Mission had the most profound impact on the development of Fairbanks’ artistic abilities, his family, cultural interests, religion, marriage, and friendships contributed to the mosaic that ultimately composed his artistic nature, and led to the possibilities of Paris training. Thus, before considering Fairbanks’ art career, it is essential to understand how his pre-Paris experiences ignited his interest in art and became the basic foundation of who he was and what he would become.

**A Link to the Past**

The present is best explained through the past. And Fairbanks’ past opens windows of insight into his life, for his development as an artist is inextricably linked to the conversion of his parents’, John Boylston and Sarah Van Wagoner Fairbanks, to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although he entered the world eight years following their exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Salt Lake Valley, this migration westward profoundly affected his life. It not only influenced where he lived, it also enabled him to cultivate friendships with artists such as John Hafen, molded his view of the world, and shaped and transformed his interest in aesthetic values. His love for his physical environment impacted his future work as a landscape artist; the majestic mountains and the endless fields of golden grain he learned to love at a tender age motivated him to paint harvest scenes as an adult. Most important, The Church of Jesus Christ impacted Fairbanks’ art career because it sponsored him as an art missionary,
asked him to paint murals in temples, requested his work for Church buildings, and employed him to teach in educational institutions. In many ways, the early decisions of his parents, particularly their decision to join the Church, ultimately determined his career as a native-born Utah artist.62

John Boylston and Sarah Van Wagoner Fairbanks

On an early spring day in 1817, Joseph and Polly White Fairbanks of Queensbury, New York, welcomed John Boylston Fairbanks into the world.63 John Boylston’s birth occurred during a period of extensive spiritual re-birth, as well as during a season of topographical rebirth. Because many Americans at this time participated in religious revivals and intense theological questioning, this era became known as the Second Great Awakening. The surge of religious change that enveloped the country allowed common people to become preachers; citizens of every social rank immersed themselves in their evolving religious atmosphere. While it is impossible to know if the Fairbanks family attended religious revivals, it is certain that they eventually participated in events referred

62 John B. Fairbanks, Jr., “John B. Fairbanks: Patriarch of the World’s Largest Art Dynasty,” 1. Even the early Utah artists who were primarily raised in Utah had entered the territory as immigrants. According to his son, John Fairbanks was the first artist born in this area.

63 John Boylston Fairbanks was born on 28 April 1817.
to as a democratization of American Christianity by historian Nathan Hatch.\textsuperscript{64} Only three years following the birth of John Boylston, fourteen-year-old Joseph Smith, Jr., entered a grove of trees “on the morning of a beautiful, clear day” near his home in Palmyra, New York, and there received his First Vision.\textsuperscript{65} The results of this event ultimately impacted and altered how the Fairbanks family lived, and even fifty years later, affected Fairbanks’ artistic associations and training. And not long after Smith reported that he would not join any established Church, Sarah Van Wagoner was born at Pompton, New Jersey, to Halmagh John and Mary Van Houten Van Wagoner. The Fairbanks family eventually settled in Meads Basin, New Jersey.\textsuperscript{66} About the time they moved to this location, Smith organized a new religion in Fayette, New York, later known as The Church of Jesus

\textsuperscript{64} Nathan O. Hatch, \textit{The Democratization of American Christianity} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Hatch argues that religious leaders who emerged in the early nineteenth-century were no longer trained theologians; rather, common, uneducated lay persons became church leaders. Thus, religious organizations appealed to a broad, and often an uneducated, audience.

\textsuperscript{65} Joseph Smith, \textit{History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints} vol.1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949; reprint, 1976); Joseph Smith History 1:14 (Salt Lake City: The Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981); After being exposed to religious revivals, young Joseph Smith, Jr., questioned which church contained the true gospel of Jesus Christ. After careful reflection and study, he read James 1:5. Heeding the counsel found in this scripture, Joseph determined to ask God the question that perplexed his soul. Early one spring morning he sought his answer by praying in a grove of trees located near his home in Palmyra, New York. Here he saw God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. After asking which Church to become a member of, he was told to join none of them. See, Joseph Smith History 1:1–20.

\textsuperscript{66} Sarah Van Wagoner was born on 11 July 1822; Katherine Fairbanks Kirk, ed. \textit{The Fairbanks Family in the West: Four Generations}. (Salt Lake City: Paragon Press, 1983), 135.
Christ of Latter-day Saints.\(^{67}\)

**Introduction to Mormonism**

Almost immediately Smith sent missionaries to proclaim the restored gospel and within a decade of the church’s organization, Mormon leaders sent John Leach to serve as a missionary in New Jersey.\(^{68}\) While preaching in this area, Leach became acquainted with John Boylston. After teaching John Boylston the doctrines of the Church, Elder Leach baptized him on 16 March 1843. This same missionary aided in the conversion of the Van Wagoner family the following year.\(^{69}\) While attending Church, John Boylston became acquainted with Sarah Van Wagoner. They began courting and on the 31 August

\(^{67}\) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized on 6 April 1830; following the organization of The Church, it became known as “The Church of Christ.” By 1834, people mockingly referred to Church members as “Mormons” or “Mormonites,” drawing this name from the Book of Mormon. During that same year a Church council decided that “Latter-day Saints” was a better alternative. But by the mid-1830s, the title “Church of the Latter-day Saints” was commonly used. Then, in 1838, a revelation specified that the official name of the Church would be “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” Sec, D&C 115:4; Arnold K. Garr et al. eds. *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 206.

\(^{68}\) John Leach was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from Pilling Lane, Lancashire, England. He served as a missionary in New Jersey and was instrumental in establishing a branch of the Church in Little Falls and Meads Basin, New Jersey. See *Times and Seasons*, 4 (November 1842—November 1843): 286–287; shortly following the organization of The Church, the prophet Joseph Smith gave his brother Samuel several copies of the newly printed Book of Mormon and asked him to share the message of the restoration with others. Thus, Samuel became the first Mormon missionary. Shortly thereafter, Joseph called four other missionaries, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson, to preach to the Lamanites (the Lamanites are a group of people in the Book of Mormon. Members of the Church believe that many Native Americans are descendants of these Book of Mormon people and often refer to them as Lamanites). By the end of 1830, two-hundred-eighty converts had been baptized into the Church. Following this event, the number of missionaries increased, and missionary work became a fundamental aspect of Mormonism.

\(^{69}\) The Van Wagoner family was baptized on 4 February 1844.
1844, John married Sarah in a ceremony performed by Elder Leach.

Nauvoo

Persecution is a defining factor in the early history of Mormonism. From New York to Ohio to Missouri, enemies of the Church forced the Saints to flee in search of new homes. Eventually, Mormon refugees moved from Missouri to Quincy, Illinois, and then to Commerce, Illinois (later named Nauvoo). Industrious, cooperative, and determined, the Saints enthusiastically constructed the thriving city of Nauvoo. Eventually, the population of the City Beautiful exceeded the population of Illinois' major cities. In addition to establishing this grand city, the Mormons also strengthened their religious organization. By 1841, construction on the Nauvoo Temple had begun.

Despite the Saints' success as they established their city, previous patterns of persecution recurred. On 27 June 1844, a ruthless mob murdered Joseph and his brother Hyrum in Carthage, Illinois. Mormon enemies hoped the demise of the prophet would lead to the Church's ultimate destruction. Yet construction on the Nauvoo Temple continued and faith remained strong; the Church did not die.

Shortly following Smith's death, John and Sarah Fairbanks, along with several family members, decided to join the Mormon population in Nauvoo. After packing their belongings, they left their home in New Jersey and reached their destination on 1

---

70 Joseph Smith informed Church members that Nauvoo was Hebrew for "City Beautiful." Glen Leonard, Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 245.

71 Brigham Young, the senior member of the Quorum of the twelve apostles of the Church at this time, led the Mormon people west, and was eventually sustained as prophet on 27 December 1847.
November 1844. John Boylston then worked as a stonecutter on the Nauvoo Temple.\(^72\)

Fifty years following John Boylston’s contributions to the magnificent edifice in Nauvoo, his son, John, also had the opportunity to help beautify a temple. Sharing similar values of faith and sacrifice, father and son considered it a privilege to help construct and decorate temples of God. John Boylston’s example influenced his son’s desires.\(^73\)

Although Orson Hyde and Wilford Woodruff did not officially dedicate the Nauvoo Temple until 1 May 1846, the attic rooms were dedicated on 30 November 1845 so the sacred ordinance of the endowment could begin.\(^74\) One historian explains that “the attic chamber was divided with canvas partitions for the various ‘sacred departments’ of the endowment ceremony.”\(^75\) Shortly thereafter, the administration of the endowment began, occurring in a completely furnished space in the attic council chamber of the

\(^72\) Limestone existed in abundance not far from the Nauvoo Temple site. See, Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 245; funding for the temple came from the tithes of Church members. But they helped pay with labor and materials as well as money. Historian Glen Leonard noted the following: “This vast construction project depended mostly upon two sets of trades: first, the stonecutters and stonemasons responsible for the limestone walls, and second, the sawyers, woodworkers, and carpenters who built the interior framework and did the finish work.” See Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 249.

\(^73\) Currently, one of John B. Fairbanks paintings is located in the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple.

\(^74\) Hyde and Woodruff served in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church; after construction is completed, temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are dedicated as houses of God. Only spiritually and morally worthy members of The Church are allowed to enter a temple following its dedication; The first endowment in this dispensation was received on Wednesday and Thursday, 4 and 5 May 1842, and included Joseph Smith and nine other Church leaders. Ordinance work in the Nauvoo Temple began on 10 December 1845. The ordinance work continued until 7 February 1846, three days after the exodus West began. See, Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 259 and 261; Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 253.

temple. On 21 January 1846, John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks participated in the ordinance of the endowment. Two days later, they received the sealing ordinance of marriage for time and eternity.

Joseph Smith’s martyrdom did not stifle the hatred many individuals in Illinois had for the Mormon people. As early as October 1845, citizens of Hancock County offered the Saints two options: they must leave Nauvoo the following spring or be destroyed. Fearful of intense opposition against the Saints, threats against his own life, and rumors of an advancing U.S. army that had supposedly been sent to fight against the Mormon people, Brigham Young understood the inevitability of westward migration. Thus, he pushed for the completion of the temple and prepared the Saints for their epic journey. Only sixteen months following the murder of the prophet Joseph, Brigham Young began leading the Mormon people west.

It would have been impossible for every Mormon family to depart from Nauvoo in the initial company led by Charles Shumway. Because of this, those who remained in the city continued to prepare for their journey, moving as health, provisions and teams

76 The endowment is a sacred ordinance that takes place in the temple. Approximately 5000 Saints were endowed in the Nauvoo Temple; Leonard, Nauvoo, 261.

77 Mormons believe that temple sealings unite families for eternity. The sealing of couples in eternal marriage was introduced by Joseph Smith in May 1843, before the Nauvoo temple was completed. The first temple marriage occurred on 1 January 1846. Between 7 January and 5 February 1846, several new marriages took place, and many married couples were sealed so their marriage became an eternal commitment. See Leonard, Nauvoo, 262.

78 Richard E. Bennett, We’ll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus 1846–1848 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 6.

79 Bennett, 3.
permitted. While waiting to continue westward, the Saints who had departed from Nauvoo settled in Winter Quarters, Nebraska. John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks, as well as several family members, left Nauvoo on 25 April 1846 and set up a tent in Iowa territory that same day. Shortly thereafter, they too established their residence in Winter Quarters.

While living in Winter Quarters, the Mormons experienced deprivation, disease, inadequate medical treatment, hunger, malnutrition, and even death. Caring for an expectant wife, as well as elderly parents and in-laws, John Boylston worked constantly, performing most duties alone. His journal entries, usually consisting of a single sentence, often incomplete, and sometimes conveying little more than a few sparse words, nevertheless describe his daily routine at this time. He recorded many of the tasks he performed, including construction projects, hauling wood, cleaning, cultivating and planting crops, and visiting and offering blessings to the sick. As his journal entries are processed, it quickly becomes evident that physical labor composed his existence at this time. John Boylston worked—and he did very little more.

Despite the trials the Fairbanks’s experienced in Nebraska, happiness enveloped the family on 27 November 1846 when Sarah gave birth to a beautiful daughter named Harriet. Yet tragedy quickly followed with the death of both of Sarah’s parents and John Boylston’s father, as well as the tiny infant. When reflecting on the harsh winter endured

---

80 Bennett, 32.

81 John Boylston Fairbanks, Diary, April 1846, John Boylston Fairbanks Collection, Special Collections, Marriot Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.
in Winter Quarters, it seems appropriate that Avard Fairbanks, grandson of John Boylston and Sarah Van Wagoner, and son of John B. Fairbanks, later created the tender sculpture “Tragedy at Winter Quarters” on the site of the Pioneer Mormon Cemetery to honor those who passed away during the exodus. To Avard, this statue was more than a work of art; he felt deeply the intense emotion of this event. Thus he carefully depicted experiences his ancestors had endured and suffered while living in this extreme environment.82

The Journey West

As the summer of 1847 approached, the Mormons heeded the counsel of Brigham Young by preparing to continue west.83 Church leaders organized the Saints into groups that traveled together as they embarked on the journey “with captains of hundreds, captains of fifties, and captains of tens, with a president and his two counselors at their head, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles.”84 On 17 June 1847, the Fairbanks family left Winter Quarters. John Boylston became the captain of the fourth ten of the second fifty of the third hundred, with Willard Snow as captain of the fifty and Jedediah M. Grant serving as captain of the hundred.85

82 Kirk, Fairbanks Family in the West, 140.

83 On 14 January 1847, Brigham Young, leader of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, received a revelation which explained the organization of the Camp of Israel and the journey West. See Doctrine and Covenants 136; Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 14 January 1847, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; hereafter, Journal History.

84 Doctrine and Covenants 136:3

85 Jedediah M. Grant was one of the twelve apostles of the Church; 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 vol. 2. (Salt Lake
Naturally, the Saints stored practical goods in their covered wagons. As a result, little space could be found for family heirlooms and personal treasures. Yet such conditions did not stop artistic items from being transported to Utah in the mass exodus, for many Saints understood and appreciated the value of art. Because of this they "brought choice musical instruments, . . . beautiful dishes of rare design, pottery and . . . paintings and pieces of sculpture, as well as other kinds of objects of artistic worth."86 Sarah Fairbanks, a woman who later gave birth to artist John B. Fairbanks, included valued prints in her wagon. To transport such items in a journey that eliminated many fundamental items indicates the extent to which she valued art. She did not view paintings as a frivolity, but rather as a necessity. Thus this woman proved to be an excellent mother for a future artist, as her personal feelings about art cultivated and encouraged her son’s views about aesthetic beauty. Had Sarah considered art unnecessary, her son might have shared a similar attitude, and might never have pursued his artistic goals.

For three and one half months, John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks walked from Nebraska to the Salt Lake Valley. By the end of their journey, they trudged across the rugged slopes and deep terrain of the Rocky Mountains, perhaps even crossing points their unborn son would one day capture on canvas. Although an arduous and physically taxing activity, they pressed forward, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley on 6 October 1847. Lacking provisions, they endured hunger, cold and fatigue. Historian Andrew Jensen

86 Gerrit De Jong, Jr., Living the Gospel (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1956), 205.
noted that their first home in Salt Lake City “was a covered wagon box, the front end gate having been removed and a piece of carpet hung up for a door; at the rear was the bed under which were the trunks; in front was a small stove, and a piece of carpet covered the floor. One chair was the extent of their furniture.” 87 The family later resided in a small cabin built by John Boylston.

As the population of Salt Lake increased, Church leaders organized wards. David Fairbanks, brother of John Boylston, became the bishop of the First Ward, and John Boylston served as his ward clerk. 88 The Fairbanks family remained in Salt Lake until 1851, when Church leaders asked the two brothers to settle sixty-six miles south of Salt Lake, in Payson. 89

Payson, Utah

Once again, the Fairbanks brothers, along with Henry Nebeker and David Crocket, agreed to leave their homes. Without complaint, they settled in the newly established town of Pacen (later spelled Payson). But due to a scarcity of water, the families quickly left Payson and traveled three miles east where they settled in Pond Town, later renamed Salem.

---


88 The First Ward in Salt Lake City was organized on 22 February 1849.

89 James Pace was asked by Brigham Young to settle Peteetneet Creek in Utah Valley. Brigham Young renamed the town Payson in 1851 after Pace (Pacen). The creek on which the town is located is named in honor of Indian Chief Peteetneet.
At this time, the Timpanogots Utes also lived in Pond Town. Because of tension and misunderstandings that arose between this group of Native Americans and the families settling on their land, the Saints abandoned Pond Town in 1853, and the Fairbanks family, along with others, returned to Payson. By this time, a dam had been constructed in Payson Canyon, thus eliminating water shortages. On returning to Payson, John Boylston built a log cabin, south of the Tithing House, facing the town square.

**Birth of John B. Fairbanks**

A citizen of Payson recalled, "The year 1855 was ushered in with all the peace and prospects of a good life that one could expect in a new country with the people surrounded by tribes of Indians, almost shut out from the knowledge of the world, subject

---

90 Kirk, *Fairbanks Family in the West*, 145.

91 Mormons pay one tenth of their income as tithes to The Church. In the nineteenth-century, each Mormon town had a tithing house and people donated ten percent of whatever constituted their increase. This included goods and produce as well as cash. One author noted, "Under the direction of Bishop Hancock [in Payson], several public work projects were started for these poor. One of these, the Tithing House, was located on the northwest corner of Main and Second North Streets, though it was not completed until 1861. The Tithing House had a cellar with sandstone walls and a dirt floor where vegetables were stored. The main floor was six steps off the ground. This area was used for public business with the tithing office. The upper story was used as a school. A corn crib, granary, and barn were directly behind the Tithing House. The building seems to have been adobe lined with wood framing. A rock wall, two or three feet high, surrounded the lot. Under the direction of Bishop Young, a fence was put through the yard to protect the hay." Sue Ann Larsen, "The Pioneer Home of John B. Fairbanks," (Boulder, Colorado: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1979), 2; Larson, 2–3.
to plagues of insects, droughts, and so on.”

Although this author makes the living conditions appear difficult, enterprising individuals adapted to their environment. Furthermore, during this year, citizens of Payson constructed the first adobe homes, and some families even began to use shingles on their roofs in place of dirt and sod. While the exact date is unknown, it is believed that John Boylston constructed his home around 1855. One source notes that it was “located in front of their log cabin, facing the town square, within a stone’s throw of the community well, south of the tithing house, and across the street from the old Tabernacle. The address was 143 North Main.”

When Sarah Fairbanks gave birth to her sixth child and fourth son on 27 December 1855, the family had established themselves well in the Payson area. They


93 In 1980 the Fairbanks home was moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, and restored in the Pioneer Trail State Park. Several interesting facts should be noted about the Fairbanks home: it served as the official meeting headquarters for Brigham Young and other Church leaders, such as George A. Smith, while traveling south. John Boylston served as bishop (1862–1869); the south upstairs room was known as Brigham Young’s room; Brigham Young was staying in the Fairbanks home when he received the telegraph in which rebaptism for Martin Harris was requested; Brigham Young, returning from St. George, was at the Fairbanks home when he missed the Golden Spike Ceremony held in Promontory, Utah; a prayer circle was formed here on 22 July 1860; a School of the Prophets was organized in the upstairs rooms in September 1868; the home became a trading post where meetings were held to negotiate peaceful relations with the Indians; the home served as a relay station for Pony Express Riders. See, Kirk, *Fairbanks Family in the West*, 145–51.

The home “was built in two stages, and it is believed that John Boylston was the builder and architect of the home. First, a two-story structure with two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs with a fireplace in each room. Next, a large kitchen with a stove and fireplace (though when each was built is not known) and finally a small pantry and porch on the north with a small storeroom on the south end of the kitchen. A well also existed just off the kitchen on the south. Another bedroom was even later added on the south backside of the kitchen but has since been razed. Later, the south room and porch were enlarged.” See, Larsen, 3.
named the infant John Fairbanks after his father; at his mothers’s request, the son added
the initial “B” to his name following the death of John Boylston in 1875.94 Although
thrilled with the new addition to their family, John Boylston and Sarah became concerned
when they realized their baby had a crippled left foot. Young John’s parents prayed
constantly that he would have the ability to walk like other children. Then, to ensure that
he did not place limitations upon himself, they did not pamper him nor emphasize his
physical handicap. Since the family did not underscore Fairbanks’ disability, he rarely
reflected on it, and later became alarmed when he overheard a conversation between two
men who pitied him.95 Questioned one of these gentleman: “I wonder what will become
of that poor little crippled boy.”96 Filled with dismay, Fairbanks rushed home and asked
his mother about his foot. Sarah assured him that although painful at times, he could
participate in the same activities as the other children.97 Comforted by his mother, he
continued to ignore his disability and functioned as a healthy child. Hence, from an early
age, he had the ability to look beyond limitations. Rather than allowing weaknesses and
difficult tasks to conquer him, he mastered them. Such determination proved fruitful to
Fairbanks’ future endeavors in the field of art.

John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks’s actions left a deep impression on their son
and affected his decisions. For they not only dictated rules, they taught their children by

94 John Boylston Fairbanks passed away on 14 May 1875.

95 Florence Gifford Fairbanks, 3.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.
example. John Boylston served in numerous positions in the community and the Church. In addition to his duties as bishop, he worked as a member of the city council and participated in other civic organizations in Payson. John Boylston received two calls to serve as a proselytizing missionary in the Eastern United States and later Great Britain, in addition to his service as a settlement missionary in Payson and his exploratory mission in White Moutain. John Boylston's complete willingness to serve as a missionary had a profound impact on his young son, for he would later serve proselytizing and nontraditional missions as his father had done. Since Fairbanks observed his father's actions and paid heed to his attitude and conduct, he understood the importance of accepting service requests from the Church. Therefore, when asked to sacrifice, he did not hesitate; he emulated his father's example.

Because of John Boylston's church responsibilities, the Fairbanks children became acquainted with Mormon leaders, including Brigham Young, the prophet of the

98 On 19 November 1869, John Boylston started on a mission to the Eastern States to visit his relatives and to preach the gospel. He returned home on 10 April 1870; on 20 April 1871, John Boylston left home for a second mission, this time to Great Britain. He traveled throughout Liverpool, England, for several months and was then transferred to Nottingham to preside over the Nottingham Conference. John was later transferred to London to preside over the London Conference; he occupied this position until he was released to return home. On the journey back to America he was given charge of a company of 510 Saints (291 British and 219 Scandinavian), which sailed from Liverpool on 3 September 1873. Near Sable Island, the ship struck a sand bar and was unable to move for several hours. John remained calm, and by doing so, not only gained the confidence of the Saints, but also of other passengers and the ship's crew. He insisted they would not sink. The captain himself took courage from John's faith and optimistic attitude. Although the ship began to leak, the pumps stopped it from filling with water. The journey recommenced, and they landed safely in New York on 29 September 1873. They later arrived in Salt Lake City. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 352; During the purported Utah War in 1857, Brigham Young encouraged Saints living in the north to move south for protection. John was asked to explore White Mountain in search for settlements for those moving south.
Church. When John Boylston served as the bishop of Payson, Young resided at their home so often that the family designated the south upstairs rooms as "Brigham Young’s room." In addition to housing Church leaders, a School of the Prophets was organized on the upper floor of the home in September of 1868. Later in life, Fairbanks relayed a tender scene he had witnessed to his wife. As a young boy, he often played in the same room in which official meetings were held. On one occasion, he recalled that President Young had received a message inquiring whether or not he would sanction the rebaptism of Martin Harris into the church. Tears streamed down the Prophet’s face, Fairbanks explained, and Young promptly replied, “Of course he can.” Witnessing such events, and associating with the prophet and apostles not only taught John the importance of heeding the direction and advice given by General Authorities, but also prepared him for relationships he would have with Church leaders in the future. From his father he learned to respect these men and to approach them when necessary. Certainly his familiarity with early leaders gave him the confidence to speak with future leaders when making crucial requests about art. The relationships he cultivated as a child may well have led to the relationships he developed as an adult.

During his youth, Fairbanks also became aware of his mother’s tenacious manner. At times, the Fairbanks family had limited resources and an array of responsibilities because of their father’s civic and religious duties. When food became scarce and

---


provisions short, Sarah Fairbanks did not murmur, but instead discovered ways to solve the family’s problems. Raised in such an environment, Fairbanks knew that doing replaced doubt. His mother’s teachings gave him courage, not only as a child, but also as an adult.

**Education and Art**

Although Utah lacked an abundance of facilities for higher education, her public education system displayed a quality similar to that of surrounding territories.\(^{101}\) During this time, school districts generally built schoolhouses with money from property taxes. By 1863, the city of Payson built an adobe school on a hill in the “southern suburbs (Main at Third South Street).”\(^{102}\) Thus Payson had the first high school south of Salt Lake City.\(^{103}\)

At the age of seven, Fairbanks began attending school. Shortly afterward, he contracted typhoid fever, which forced him to withdraw. Following recovery from his illness, he recommenced his education, but then his sister accidentally ran an awl into his knee. His leg became inflamed with infection, and once again, he lost a year of school. He could not commence his education until his tenth year.

\(^{101}\) The public education system ended following eighth grade.

\(^{102}\) Dixon, 18.

During his absence from school, Fairbanks further cultivated his appreciation and love for the aesthetic. His mother valued art, and as noted earlier, when moving from the East, included several prints in the covered wagon as the family migrated to Utah. Sarah intended to hang these black and white prints in her home. According to historian Andrew Jenson, these pictures included copies of a steel engraving of Rosa Bonheur's (1822–1899) “Horse Fair”\(^\text{104}\) as well as a print of the Fairbanks home in Dedham, Massachusetts.\(^\text{105}\) Because her children lived in a territorial environment that lacked an abundance of cultural influences, Sarah felt determined to educate them and to expose them to beautiful works of art. Perhaps she encouraged John more than her other children because she knew of his love for art and his natural talent in such areas.

Unable to afford picture frames, Sarah kept the treasured prints rolled in a trunk. Her children, especially John, loved to remove the artwork from storage and gaze at the images. Due to this constant use, the pictures began to fray on the edges.\(^\text{106}\) Despite the lack of protection, Sarah finally determined to hang the pictures on the walls so the children could continue to enjoy them. One print in particular displayed a castle constructed into the side of a rock. Since John adored this image, his mother hung it in his room. Throughout his life, the budding artist would gaze at the beautiful picture and

\(^\text{104}\) John painted a copy of this picture as an adult. This picture is currently displayed in the Utah County Building.

\(^\text{105}\) Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1941), 737. The Fairbanks home in Dedham, Massachusetts, is the oldest frame home in America. Later in life, John painted a picture of this home.

imagine it in color. Perhaps he began to visualize scenes and images worthy of an artist’s eye, an eye that would one day direct a paintbrush in creations of its own.

Whatever Sarah’s motive in sharing her prints with her children, she certainly succeeded in encouraging John to love the natural beauty of his surroundings and taught him to find simple pleasure in small and even insignificant scenes. Because of the effect of her teachings on her son, evidence of Sarah’s training can be seen in his adulthood as well as his childhood. Even as a man, Fairbanks’ perceptions of nature reflected his mother’s teachings.

Later in life, Fairbanks occasionally kept personal notes concerning art history as well as his personal thoughts about aesthetic work. For example, he wrote, “The artist makes a careful study of the beautiful forms and tones and tints in nature. They see little beauty spots here and there that the ordinary observer would pass by. They represent upon canvas certain phases of nature beautiful nooks and corners are pointed out to the people and they see beauty that before had been unobserved. They are brot [sic] nearer to nature and are better able to appreciate through the artists efforts some of Gods creations that now produce a certain degree of pleasure or happiness that otherwise would have been lost.” 107 Such comments can be tied to his mother’s teachings and her love for natural beauty. Without Sarah’s assistance, he might not have developed such insights.

Eventually, Fairbanks no longer felt content merely viewing the art of others. While he appreciated their work, he wanted to create his own images. Aware of her

107 John B. Fairbanks, Personal Notes, Papers and Biographies, 1891–1937, Perry Special Collections.
young son’s interest, Sarah taught him to grease paper so it would be transparent enough to trace pictures. He devoted hours to this practice. Eventually, Fairbanks began to sketch freehand.\textsuperscript{108} John’s mother admired his work and encouraged him to pursue his artistic talent. At one point, without the consent of the family, he carefully illustrated in the margins of his father’s large dictionary.\textsuperscript{109} To the young boy’s surprise, John Boylston did not consider this creative masterpiece a great asset to his book. Nonetheless, he recognized his son’s potential and purchased paper so the boy would have a more suitable place to continue his work. Throughout the remainder of his childhood, Fairbanks enjoyed creating artistic works, never realizing that such a task would ultimately define his existence.

As a teen, Fairbanks also developed musical talent. He taught himself to play the drums, harmonica, jew’s harp, fife, flute, coronet, and concertina. Using his skill, he played the second coronet in the Payson Brass Band and as a young man played the drum for roll call and drill practices for the town.\textsuperscript{110} These activities serve as another example of his love for culture. Aside from music, school and work consumed his life. Although art remained a passion, he did not consider the possibility of pursuing his main interest as a career. Living in a farming community, he naturally assumed he would work on the land. From his cultural perspective at this time, art served as a hobby, not a means of temporal survival.

\textsuperscript{108} John’s first project was a picture of his brother and sister riding a horse to school.


\textsuperscript{110} Kirk, The Fairbanks Family in the West, 223–224.
Fairbanks assumed responsibility for his family at the age of nineteen, as a result of his father's untimely death. In the fall of 1875, his father and he spent an entire day irrigating their land. Although physically exhausted, John Boylston attended a city council meeting after completing the work. During this gathering he developed acute pneumonia. Following a painful illness of five days, he died, leaving a wife and eight children. At this time much of Fairbanks' attention shifted from art to helping his family survive.

An Introduction to Art

Unlike many early Utah artists, Fairbanks did not receive exposure to artistic training as a young man. He never had the opportunity to study under artists like George Ottinger or Dan Weggeland, as some of his colleagues had. However, high school teacher Joseph Longking Townsend encouraged him to pursue his talent and instructed him to the extent of the teacher's ability. As noted, Fairbanks' mother also

113 His friend, John Hafen, for instance, studied in Dr. Karl G. Maeser's school. Hafen also visited the studios of artists Dan Weggeland and George Ottinger. Leek, "A Circumspection of Early Utah Art," 31.
114 Joseph Longking Townsend was born on 9 August 1849 in Canton, Bardford County, Pennsylvania. He was educated at the West Side High School of Cleveland, Ohio, Girard, Kansas, Kidder and the University of Missouri. At the age of twenty-one he was offered a professorship at the Agricultural College of Missouri, but due to illness could not accept the position. On 8 August 1872 he moved to Salt Lake City, hoping to improve his health. Six months following his arrival in Salt Lake City, Townsend joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph taught penmanship at Morgan's Commercial College and later became principal of Payson High School. He married Alta Hancock; they were the parents of eleven children. In addition to his educational responsibilities, Joseph also composed poetry and hymns.
recognized and acknowledged Fairbanks' potential.

Shortly following the death of his father, Fairbanks became acquainted with artist John Hafen. This young Swiss convert to the church came to Payson as an agent for a company that sold corn shellers.\textsuperscript{115} Thanks to a similarity of interests, the two men became immediate friends. Eventually, the company that employed Hafen went bankrupt. After careful contemplation, he decided to remain in Payson so he could pursue his love of painting. Thus he rented a large room above a millner store.\textsuperscript{116} Fascinated by his friend's work and ambition, Fairbanks devoted his evenings to watching Hafen paint rather than playing baseball, as he had previously.\textsuperscript{117} The moments he spent in observation altered the course of his life and prepared him for a career as an artist.

On one occasion, Fairbanks suggested an improvement to one of Hafen's pictures, but the artist disagreed. To ascertain who had the correct opinion, the two friends consulted Joseph Townsend who agreed with Fairbanks. Pleased with his ability to critique, and aware of his love for art, Hafen questioned, "John, why don't you become an

\begin{itemize}
\item Several of his hymns include "Beautiful Words of Love," "Choose the Right," "Hope of Israel," "Kind Words are Sweet Tones of the Heart," "The Iron Rod," and "The Day Dawn is Breaking." Pyper, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{115} A machine that strips the kernels of dry corn from the cob.
\item \textsuperscript{116} John B. Fairbanks, "Sketch of the life of John Hafen." Papers and Biographies, Perry Special Collections.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Fairbanks, "The Life of John B. Fairbanks," 9.
\end{itemize}
artist?" Fairbanks quickly insisted that he could not pursue such a career because of responsibilities with his family and farm. Unwilling to accept no as an answer, and perhaps semiaware of his friend's future potential, Hafen offered to furnish art materials and insisted that the young man at least attempt to paint. Fairbanks succumbed.

That evening Fairbanks rushed home with his newly acquired art supplies, knowing his mother had gone to a Relief Society meeting. He did not want his family to suspect his plan. Entering his room, he glanced at the print of the old black and white castle hanging on his wall and became determined to reproduce the image in color. He hid his new project behind his chest of drawers so his mother would not see it. Each evening after completing chores, he closed his bedroom door and painted the scene, which had by then almost become a part of him. He finally committed to canvas the shades and tones of color he envisioned as a youth. After completing the work, Fairbanks viewed it with satisfaction. For the first time, he considered the possibilities of an art career. Eager to surprise his mother with his finished project, Fairbanks rushed to find her. As he did so, his two younger sisters admitted they had seen his work, but immediately assured him that his mother did not suspect anything. Shortly afterward, when he exhibited his first oil painting to his mother, she questioned if Hafen had given it to him as a gift. When her son informed her that he had painted the scene, Sarah clasped

\[118\] Kirk, *The Fairbanks Family in the West*, 225.

\[119\] A female organization in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that focuses on serving and offering relief to those in need.
him in a hug, and with tears in her eyes, exclaimed, “Why, John, you are an artist!”

This reaction instilled in him a determination to succeed. Although demonstrating “primitive draftsmanship,” his first painting served as an incentive to persevere as an artist (fig. 1).

As Fairbanks began to pursue his artistic talent, his relationship with Hafen strengthened. The two became best friends and spent their days painting together. In many ways, therefore, their paintings often had similar characteristics. One art historian noted that both men painted European scenes, although they would not study there for years. Under the tutelage of Hafen, Fairbanks not only developed new skills, he also learned of the importance of art in his life. With time, art defined who he was and what he would become. The following words, penned by Hafen, reflect the feelings he cultivated within Fairbanks: “The influence of art is so powerful in shaping our lives for a higher appreciation of the creations of our God that we cannot afford to neglect an acquaintance with it. We should be as eager for its companionship in our homes, for it has as important a mission in shaping our character and . . . our happiness as anything we term necessities. Life is incomplete without it. A religious life is not an ideal religious life without art.”

Fairbanks patterned his life on this perspective and created works for

---


121 Gibbs, *Harvesting the Light*, 16, 60.

122 Ibid.

sale. Eventually, merchants displayed his art in store windows. Edward Reid purchased his first painting in exchange for a suit of clothing.

**Marriage**

While attending ward choir practice, Fairbanks became acquainted with Lillie Huish.\(^{124}\) One evening, as rain fell from the darkened sky, he escorted her home. At this time, he worked as the scribe for patriarch William G. Young.\(^{125}\) After giving Lillie her patriarchal blessing, Young mentioned to Fairbanks that she would make a fine wife. Perhaps smiling at the irony of the comment, he quickly informed his elder friend that thecourting process had already begun. Later, while enjoying the festivities of a Christmas dance, Fairbanks asked Lillie, “Do you know what I want for Christmas?” “No,” she responded. “I want you,” he declared.\(^{126}\)

On 24 June 1877, Bishop Joseph Tanner performed John and Lillie’s marriage ceremony in his home. Following the harvest season, the newlyweds gathered several items in a covered wagon, and with three other couples began the two week journey to the recently dedicated St. George Temple. To finance their trip, the Fairbanks’ sold pipe at Silver Reef, a mining district just north of St. George.\(^{127}\)

---

\(^{124}\) A ward is a Mormon congregation, set within specific geographical boundaries. The division of Nauvoo into political "wards" led eventually to a practice of dividing Church membership into geographically defined congregations called wards. The ward choir is composed of volunteers.

\(^{125}\) John received his own patriarchal blessing on 10 February 1877 from Zebedee Colton.

\(^{126}\) Kirk, *Fairbanks Family in the West*, 248.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 249.
The practicality of adulthood and the responsibilities of marriage limited some of John’s artistic endeavors. Determined to provide for his wife and later children, and consumed by the laborious process of constructing a house, Fairbanks had very little time to paint. Yet even though artistic goals did not seem to be a great prospect, they remained the central dream looming in his future.

In 1881, while expecting their third child, Fairbanks received a call in general conference to serve in the Southern States Mission.\(^{128}\) As he considered the prospects of accepting missionary service, he felt overcome with fear and emotion, worried that his crippled foot could not bear the physical strain. Furthermore, he wondered if his invalid mother and expectant wife could function without his assistance; agreeing to leave his family seemed impossible. After much fasting and prayer, Fairbanks and his family determined that he must serve the mission. Overlooking his own fears, he assured his wife and mother that all would be well, and informed them that if he devoted his time to missionary service, he would have the ability and strength to proselytize. Then, in an attempt to earn money, Fairbanks canvassed the community of Payson with the book *Women of the Frontier*. After laboring diligently, he received commissions for a total of $150. In addition to this effort he continued taking orders and selling paintings until his

---

\(^{128}\) “Until the early 1880s, most missionaries were called on missions from the pulpit at general conferences, or they were set apart at conference time. Eventually, President John Taylor slowly discontinued this practice and replaced it with letters from the Church’s missionary department. It appears that even though the method of notifying the missionaries changed over the years, October and April remained important months for calling missionaries.” Heather Seferovich, “A History of the LDS Southern States Mission.” (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1996), 49; John B. Fairbanks, Personal notes, 10 October 1881, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Springville Museum of Art.
departure, anxious for any financial means that could sustain his family during his absence.\textsuperscript{129} Throughout this time, Lillie supported her husband constantly, even though she was six months pregnant and knew she would have to deliver the books he had sold.\textsuperscript{130}

Following an emotional departure from his family, John noted in his journal, “I left my wife and sisters on the platform crying.”\textsuperscript{131} Such a sight wrenched his heart, but remembering his father’s example as a missionary and relying on personal faith, John believed his family and he would persevere. On 10 October 1881, Wilford Woodruff, Moses Thatcher, and Lorenzo Snow set Fairbanks apart as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the Council House in Salt Lake City.\textsuperscript{132} Upon arriving at mission headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, under the direction of mission president John Morgan, Fairbanks was assigned to serve in Jones County, Mississippi.\textsuperscript{133} Shortly after arriving there, he received word that his son Vernon Walter had been born

\textsuperscript{129} Kirk, \textit{Fairbanks Family in the West}, 225

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{131} John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 10 October 1881, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{132} Missionaries passed through Salt Lake City to be set apart and ordained by General Authorities and to receive parting counsel. After completing their business in Salt Lake City, they often traveled to Ogden, Utah, where the transcontinental rail line departed from the state. Missionaries often left in groups, whether traveling to the same mission or not. See Seferovich, 64–66. John left in the company of thirty-six elders, most traveling to Europe. John B. Fairbanks, Personal Notes, 10 October 1881, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Springville Museum of Art.

\textsuperscript{133} John B. Fairbanks, Personal Notes, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Springville Museum of Art.
on 14 November 1881.

**Southern States Mission**

The Southern States Mission, reestablished in 1875, had a reputation for violence, persecution, and miserable weather conditions. As one historian noted, “Traveling in rain and mud exacted a high price from the elders, often causing physical exhaustion and, undoubtedly, contributing to a weakening of their immune systems.” Thus, while residing in the South, Fairbanks experienced great discomfort from his crippled foot. Notwithstanding the pain, he continued to work with dedication and zeal. Comments such as “I am very lame but trust that God will enable me to do what walking I have to do” interlaced his journal. As the agony increased, John became determined to overcome it. After seeking a priesthood blessing, and anointing his ankle with precision, he recorded, “This morning my ankle is much better than it was yesterday morning. We went into the woods to have prayer and to anoint my ankle for the purpose of having all deformities removed.” With time, Fairbanks’ crippled foot no longer burdened him.

---

134 The Southern States Mission ceased to exist during the Civil War period. But by 1867 Church leaders believed missionary work could resume in this geographic region. Shortly thereafter, Church leaders called John Brown to serve as mission president of this area; his duties eventually included all areas west and south of Philadelphia. Despite fervent hopes that missionary work would excel in the South, it quickly became apparent that this was a temporary situation. Thus, there was no official mission leader in this area for six years; this changed when Henry G. Boyle was called to serve as the mission president in 1875. In 1878, John Henry Morgan replaced Boyle as mission president. See, Seferovich, 18.

135 Seferovich, 70–71.


letter from Lillie rejoiced at this news as she wrote, “Was glad to hear that you was [sic] well, and had got over your lameness.”\textsuperscript{138} Although he walked with a limp throughout his life, he did not suffer the pain he had as a young man.\textsuperscript{139}

While serving his mission, Fairbanks exposed himself to new sites and experiences. As an artist, he appreciated his surroundings and expressed admiration for the beautiful scenery he encountered. Naturally, he paid particular attention to works of art. For example, after viewing a courthouse in St. Louis, Missouri, he wrote: “On the inside of the dome there are some large pictures and a number [sic] of portraits.”\textsuperscript{140} Besides noting the works of art he viewed, he helped maintain his artistic ties by corresponding with Hafen. Although Fairbanks was a devoted and focused missionary, one quickly notes his artistic characteristics when reading his accounts. His enduring interest and his passion for art shaped his worldview, enabling him to note the beautiful colors and details of his surroundings. Furthermore, his service in the South prepared him for future missionary work of a unique nature.

While Fairbanks served as a missionary, Lillie and he corresponded regularly to ease the pain of separation. For example, after giving birth to their son Vernon, Lillie announced the exciting news to her husband and then explained the reactions of their two older children to their infant brother: “Nettie come [sic] up to the baby and, she said poor

\textsuperscript{138} Lillie Fairbanks to John Fairbanks, 4 December 1881, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter, Church Archives.

\textsuperscript{139} John B. Fairbanks, Jr., “Patriarch of the World’s Largest Art Dynasty,” 226.

\textsuperscript{140} John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 14 October 1881, Perry Special Collections.
little brover you have not seen your pa have you."¹⁴¹ Lillie also described important events and incidents to her husband. For example, she provided a very detailed description of their Christmas celebration. Delighted with the extensive information his wife relayed, he exclaimed, "It is a great satisfaction to a missionary to know that every thing [sic] is going on all right [sic] at home and especially to know that his wife is enjoying herself and that he is sustained by her faith and prayers."¹⁴² Besides describing major events, Lillie also shared with him sweet little stories about the children and kept him informed of daily events.

At this time, Lillie cared for three little children and worked as a seamstress so she could save money. Although the work strained and taxed her, she did not complain to her husband about the difficulties of acting as a single mother. Throughout their lives together, they had limited resources because his artistic goals did not prove overly fruitful. Still, Lillie did not complain, but supported her husband in all circumstances. Their love and devotion displayed for each other is a great indication of the closeness of their relationship. Just as it was difficult to be the wife of a missionary, it would also prove difficult to be the wife of an artist, for a steady income did not exist, traveling became necessary, and frustration abounded. Yet Lillie did not complain to her husband about his mission or his chosen profession but constantly supported his decisions.

Because of her acceptance, it is evident that she believed in his ability.

¹⁴¹ Lillie Fairbanks to John Fairbanks, 4 December 1881, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Church Archives.

¹⁴² John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 25 July 1882, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Church Archives.
The Southern States Mission became a preparatory experience for Fairbanks, foreshadowing another mission he would embark on in the future. Serving as a proselytizing missionary at this time taught him patience and diligence. Further, he learned to accept temporary separation from his family and to appreciate his wife and her willingness to sacrifice in behalf of the Church and him. Most important, Fairbanks witnessed miracles, including a physical transformation of his lame foot, and an increased ability to endure persecution, sickness, hunger and fatigue. Later, as an art missionary, these lessons benefitted him, although the experience in Paris related more to developing skills and artistic improvement than to overcoming physical infirmities. Fairbanks’ missionary experiences in the Southern States gave him the strength to fulfill future missionary service.

Although Fairbanks enjoyed serving his mission, he felt relieved to return home. He arrived in Provo, Utah, on 26 September 1883. In his journal, he noted, “Saw John Hafen the first person I met with whom I was acquainted,” thus resuming their intimate friendship.143 Shortly thereafter, Lillie Fairbanks met her husband at the train station in Payson. A joyous reunion followed, as Fairbanks greeted his family. He later recalled, “all were glad to see me.”144

Pursuing a Career in Art

Following Fairbanks’ return home, his young family moved into his mother’s house. To his surprise, Lillie had saved two hundred dollars while he served his mission in

143 John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 26 September 1883, Perry Special Collections.

144 Ibid.
the South. With this unexpected sum of money, the young couple purchased land and later built a brick home to replace the log cabin that existed on the lot.

Again, Fairbanks’ interest in art peaked. He hoped he could further pursue his passion, though he often questioned the possibilities of such a dream. Perhaps age became his greatest fear. He knew he was no longer a young man, and he understood that he had a growing family to provide for. Considering the possibilities of an art career from a practical perspective made the goal seem impossible, and even, he feared, irresponsible. In many ways, then, he questioned if his career choice might be unwise. Despite these concerns, a significant portion of his heart remained committed to the pallette; Fairbanks knew his entire soul was linked to paint brushes and canvas. Although fears may have existed, his hopes and dreams to become what he knew he should be could not be stifled. Time constraints and the lack of temporal means could not deter his dreams of an art career.

Immediately following his mission, Fairbanks needed to find a job so he could support his family. Initially, he worked for his father-in-law, painting furniture for twenty-one dollars a month. He remained in this position until an otherwise unidentified Mr. Hancock offered him a salary of forty dollars a month. Shortly after accepting the offer, a Mr. Starks, a crippled man with a large family, and a former employee of Mr. Hancock, returned to see if a job was available. Understanding the difficulties associated with a disability, and knowing it would be easier for a younger man to find employment
than an older man, Fairbanks resigned his position to Mr. Starks. Then, not knowing
where to find employment, he wrote to Hafen, who lived in Ogden. Hafen responded
quickly, informing him that he had enough work to keep both men busy. Fairbanks
traveled to Ogden, where he learned to make crayon portraits. The two friends shared the
work and split the profits. This cooperation and concern for one another further
strengthened their friendship. Fairbanks and Hafen later moved to Logan to conduct
similar work.

Working with Hafen

Notwithstanding the seemingly impossible tasks of pursuing a career in art,
Fairbanks and Hafen continued to dream and hoped for future possibilities in professional
art. They also supported one another in their difficult endeavors. From letters, it becomes
evident that they worked together regularly. Throughout the 1870s and the 1880s, Hafen
and Fairbanks struggled financially, working on art whenever an opportunity became
available. They also attempted to work as photographers.

Although Fairbanks recognized the difficulties associated with an art career, he
continued to pursue his dream. His greatest support came from his dear friend, Hafen. As
usual, Hafen’s encouragement and foresight inspired him to work as an artist.
Furthermore, Hafen’s love for Fairbanks became evident in his constant willingness to
assist him. On one occasion, he described his friendship with Fairbanks in a letter to his


146 Photography served as a common practice for artists of this time period. Hafen and his
wife Thora Twede opened a photographic gallery, first in American Fork and later in Springville.
wife, Thora: “I have heard a great deal about Brotherly love towards one another among the Saints of God; if it ever has or does exist I have tasted of this feeling with John. There is not a single barr or obstacle or unpleasantness between us, no misunderstanding. We see eye to eye. He is a man I can love as a dear brother.”

Following Fairbanks and Hafen’s combined efforts of sketching and canvassing in small communities, Fairbanks next worked as a photo enlarger for Springville’s noted portrait photographer George Edward Anderson. Shortly thereafter, in May 1886, Fairbanks finished a crayon portrait of George Q. Cannon that was said to possess “genuine merit.” Less than a year later, he completed a similar portrait of Heber J. Grant. The report of this picture read as follows: “an excellent likeness, the best we have examined of the handiwork of the artist.” Despite these simple moments of recognition, artistic success still remained minimal. And notwithstanding Fairbanks’ noble efforts, he had to sell newspapers for a living in the early Spring of 1889. One article reported, “Mr. J. B. Fairbanks . . . was in town [Heber] the fore part of the week canvassing for the Salt

147 John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 8 October 1883, John Hafen Collection, Springville Museum of Art.
148 Swanson, *Utah Painting and Sculpture*, 43.
149 Ibid.
Lake Herald.\textsuperscript{150}

Fairbanks’ work as an artist, although rarely profitable and often discouraging, soon proved to be promising. Even though his early artistic efforts were little more than attempts, these experiences prepared him for a future that would be completely defined by artistic skills and techniques. Just as Fairbanks began to fear that true artistic success might be impossible, new opportunities emerged. He had cultivated and developed his interest in art and it was time to develop as an artist. Ironically, these new artistic possibilities came as a mission call.

\textsuperscript{150} Swanson, Utah Painting and Sculpture, 43.
CHAPTER 3
LEAVING AN IMPRESSION:
THE IMPACT OF THE PARIS ART MISSION ON
JOHN B. FAIRBANKS’
ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

On Monday, 23 June 1890, Fairbanks arose at dawn and made final preparations for his journey to study art in Paris. By 6:00 a.m. he had tenderly kissed his three youngest children while they slept, and then he bid his beloved companion of thirteen years farewell. In his journal he recorded that Lillie “was very affected by the parting,” but in practicality acknowledged that “part we must.”\(^\text{151}\) The four oldest children accompanied their father to the depot. Fairbanks recalled, “when the transe [sic] came I bid them good bye got on the train leaving the darlings standing on the platform with sorrowful faces and tears standing in their eyes.”\(^\text{152}\) A sensitive and compassionate man, the situation moved Fairbanks. Yet despite the sorrow he felt, he knew his service as an art missionary, similar to the other temporal missions called previously, would enable him to achieve his artistic potential and would benefit The Church of Jesus Christ of

\(^{151}\) John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 24 June 1890, Diaries, 1877–1914, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

\(^{152}\) Ibid.
Latter-day Saints. By noon, Fairbanks and the two artists accompanying him, John Hafen and Lorus Pratt, had boarded an eastbound train. The tears in Hafen’s eyes reflected the general feelings of the small group. Pratt, however, quickly altered the mood with his “dry jokes.”

Before studying in Paris, Fairbanks’ exposure to artistic techniques had been minimal. Although he had an affinity for fine art and displayed a natural talent for sketching and painting, his realistic creations lacked skill and refinement. With the encouragement and support of John Hafen, Fairbanks worked as an amateur artist. As he painted, he noted his inadequacies. He longed to pursue an art education, yet he lacked the financial ability. In 1890 he learned The Church of Jesus Christ had agreed to subsidize him to study art at the Académie Julian in Paris. As a student at this institution he received exposure to different styles and techniques, particularly impressionist landscape painting. Eventually this training not only influenced the quality of Mormon art depicted in the Salt Lake Temple and other church buildings, but also recast and professionalized art in Utah. In Paris, artistic training revolutionized Fairbanks’ technique and skill. When he entered the Académie Julian, he was limited in knowledge and ability, but by the end of his sojourn in Paris, he had embraced the process of becoming an artist.

**Early Utah Art**

Since the settlement of the Mormon pioneers in 1847, art had been of consequence in Utah. An article in the *Deseret Evening News* noted: “There has always

---

been an incentive to art in Utah. . . [because of] the overwhelming influence of nature’s masterpieces arrayed in perpetual exhibition at our doors.”

Although Utah citizens deemed artistic skills important, and several men had attempted to pursue careers in art, early artists lacked formal training and professional skill. Utah’s first generation of artists, including George Ottinger, Dan Weggeland, and Alfred Lambourne (1855–1926), “tended to paint quite conventional, realistic works—still lifes, landscapes, and portraits—that emphasized detail and accurate representation.”

Those they trained developed similar characteristics. For example, since Weggeland trained Hafen, “a striking similarity . . . exists between Weggeland’s Primrose Gatherers and Hafen’s Berry Pickers.”

Many works created by early Utah artists seemed rather “primitive and labored,” lacked definite skill, and had been painted in a stiff and lifeless manner. Since many of these artists received training from the same men, including Dan Weggeland, George Ottinger, Alfred Lambourne, and H.L.A. Culmer (1854–1914), most of their works appeared very similar in style, composition, color and technique. These artists almost completely overlooked historical and genre painting; romantic landscapes dominated Utah art. Favorite subjects became exaggerated versions of the mountains and


155 Thomas G. Alexander, Utah: The Right Place (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1999), 216.

156 Linda Jones Gibbs, Harvesting the Light, 7.

157 Ibid., 7.
the Great Salt Lake, painted with extreme hues and tones of color in a form typical of the Rocky Mountain School of landscape painting.\textsuperscript{158} Realism dominated everything. These artists had very little variation in the technique used in their work; they just painted objects to appear exactly as they thought they should look. Although these men had natural talent, they lacked skill. When one views their works, it becomes very apparent that their training was limited.

Early Utah artists also linked their paintings to religious faith, determined to show God’s hand in nature. Since John believed his work portrayed the magnificence of Godly creations, he used his paintbrush to display his testimony of a divine creation, and to reflect his appreciation for the natural beauty God had created for mankind. He had talent but lacked skill, which made it apparent that his training had been severely limited.

\textbf{Art Background}

Fairbanks’ aesthetic interests slowly evolved from an enjoyable hobby to an overwhelming desire to become a professional artist. As he attempted to embrace this goal, he received criticism from many family members and friends, several of whom declared him “foolish” for leaving a well paying job in pursuit of less remunerative ventures.\textsuperscript{159} Yet at the same time, others recognized that “John knows what he is about,” and sustained him with the moral support he needed as he hearkened to the desires of his

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{159} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 22 November 1891, John B. Fairbanks Collection, Springville Art Museum; hereafter, JBFC.
Although several early Utah artists had received minimal degree art training in Europe before their migration to the United States, few had acquired noteworthy skill. By the 1870s, this began to change, as American artists left their homes to study in Paris. At this time several Utah artists also realized that artistic advancement could only come to those who studied away from home, so they sought professional training, with the hope that they could eventually contribute significantly to Utah’s artistic future. Within the succeeding two decades, Lorus Pratt studied in England, Cyrus E. Dallin learned sculpting techniques in Boston, Marie Gorlinski (1861–1938) began a three-year course of study in painting in Europe, John Clawson (1858–1936) attended the National Academy of Design in New York City, and James T. Harwood completed two courses of study in San Francisco’s California School of Design.161

For the first time, Utah art portrayed a diversity of approaches and techniques; paintings no longer served as simple recreations of one another’s work. By developing their own artistic voices, many artists prepared themselves for more extensive study in the future. Although the artists who made such attempts remained in the minority at this time, professional study later became a common phenomenon.

Barbizon School

In the mid-nineteenth century, Barbizon, located southeast of Paris near Fontainbleau, became the headquarters for a new style of painting, later known as the

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{William C. Seifrit, “Letters From Paris” Utah Historical Quarterly, 180.}
Barbizon school of landscape painting. Moving away from the traditional studio approach of painting, Barbizon artists made landscape painting popular.\textsuperscript{162} Eventually, they became known for their tonal qualities, loose brush work, color, softness of form and plein air tradition (painting landscape scenes directly in nature).\textsuperscript{163} Furthermore, Barbizon artists interpreted their subjects according to their “response to that scene” rather than painting the image as it was expected to appear.\textsuperscript{164} This style of painting contributed to the formation of impressionism.

Impressionism

As Utah artists abandoned their traditional artistic approaches, and sought professional training, controversy had begun to rage within the artistic community of France, due to the introduction of impressionism by artists such as Edgar Degas (1834–1917), Claude Monet (1840–1926), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), and Camille Pissarro (1830–1903). Critics coined the term \textit{Impressionism} from an 1872 work by Claude Monet entitled “Impression: Sunrise.” Impressionists did not want to create an exact image, but rather to develop impressions of their surroundings. Thus they painted what they saw in a single moment and used light and shadow, rather than definite lines, to reflect a scene. Instead of focusing on complicated topics, impressionists used simple subjects from everyday life, and moved out of their studios and into nature in an attempt


\textsuperscript{163} Wayne Craven, \textit{American History: History and Culture} (Madison: Brown and Benchmark Publishers, 1994), 342.

\textsuperscript{164} Bouret, \textit{The Barbizon School}, 13.
to capture the world in "more dynamic and colorful poses."\textsuperscript{165} According to one art historian, impressionists had an overwhelming interest in nature and placed particular emphasis on the portrayal of light and color.\textsuperscript{166} In addition, they painted with "small brush strokes or daubs," believing that the manner in which they portrayed light was more important than the painting's subject.\textsuperscript{167} Ultimately, impressionists wanted to reject conventional detail and eliminate subjective interpretation in exchange for the creation of a specific moment.\textsuperscript{168}

By the final decade of the nineteenth century, American critics and the public at large had favorably recognized the work of impressionist painters. At this time Monet worked in Giverney, France, using impressionist techniques to paint haystacks and poplars. Degas, Renoir, Paul Cezanne (1839–1906), and Georges Seurat (1869–1891) also incorporated various forms of impressionism into their work.

Beginning in the late 1870s, Americans became slightly aware of impressionism as tourists, art critics, and students who had traveled in France reported this artistic style.\textsuperscript{169} At this time American artists who had studied abroad occasionally employed impressionist techniques. But it was not until 1886, when French dealer Paul Durand-

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{165} Pierce, \textit{The Ten, 7; New Muses}, 114. \\
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{New Muses}, 118.
\end{flushright}
Ruel mounted an exhibition of over three hundred impressionist paintings at the American Art Association in New York City, that Americans were exposed to the pervading influence of the impressionists on their own soil. Following this event, Americans began to incorporate stronger hints of impressionism into their works. However, American impressionism, although similar to the French style, displayed its own unique characteristics. For example, they dissolved form less than the French. As one scholar noted, “the impressionist tendency in America remained wedded to a realism based on studio conventions.”

European Study

American affluence after the Civil War gave the impetus to study art abroad, American artists hoping they could paint as well as the Europeans. Thus they sought training in Paris at either the Académie Julian or École des Beaux Arts so they could learn to diversify their techniques. The number of students studying in Europe escalated throughout the 1870s and into the succeeding decades. By 1890, at least 1500 American artists attended French académies.

In 1888, Utah artists James Taylor Harwood, Harriet Richards (1870–1922), Cyrus E. Dallin and John Willard Clawson enrolled in art academies in France. Their

---


171 New Muses, 122.

172 Hiesinger, Impressionism in America, 73.

173 Gibbs, Harvesting the Light, 2.
migration across the Atlantic fit the trend of Parisian study common among American artists at this time. As an art student, Fairbanks himself noted, “most of the men in our room are Americans, there are more americans [sic] and englishman [sic] in the school than Frenchmen,”174

Aware of the need to receive art instruction abroad, Ottinger and Weggeland encouraged young Utah artists to study in Paris.175 During this period of evolving artistic style Fairbanks, Hafen, and Pratt applied to serve a unique mission for the LDS Church: studying art at the Académie Julian. Although Fairbanks had begun with simple attempts to paint in Payson, Utah, he eventually received professional training that refined and enhanced his artistic skills.

Notwithstanding Fairbanks’ passion for art, and his intense desire to continue painting, he often doubted his financial ability to pursue such a career. In addition to providing for Lille and their large family of seven children, he also helped support his widowed mother. Although the young husband and father always painted, he often had to follow other avenues, such as varnishing furniture, working in a photography studio, and peddling newspapers.176 These obligations limited the time that could be devoted to art and as a result stifled opportunities. While advancing in years, Fairbanks could not see his talent accelerating at a similar rate. He had the desire but lacked the opportunity.

174 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 12 October 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

175 Ibid.

176 Florence Fairbanks, “The Life of John B. Fairbanks,” 63; Vern G. Swanson et al., Utah Painting and Sculpture (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1997), 43.
The Goal to Study in Paris

Hoping to study in Paris, Fairbanks worked quietly towards achieving this goal for over one year, fervently praying that “if it were the will of the Lord, He would show [him] the way to accomplish it,” but he began to fear that his efforts were futile.177 While he searched for a solution, Hafen and Pratt developed an idea.178 The two men hoped the LDS Church might be willing to subsidize art training in Europe, if they agreed to create artwork for church buildings, particularly murals for the Salt Lake Temple, upon their return to Utah. After careful contemplation, they approached George Q. Cannon, first counselor in the First Presidency, and introduced their plan.179 As a member of the leading quorum of the Church, President Cannon had been involved in the dedication of all three Utah temples that existed at the time: St. George, Manti, and Logan. Considering this point, author Linda Jones Gibbs notes that he had a special interest in the completion of the Salt Lake Temple, since he had witnessed its construction for almost forty years.180 Hence, President Cannon became intrigued by the artists’ suggestion and asked them to conduct further research and propose a plan for the cost and length of study. Hafen and Pratt readily agreed.

177 John Fairbanks to Joseph F. Smith, no date, JBFC, Perry Special Collections.

178 Lorus Pratt was the son of LDS Church apostle, Orson Pratt.

179 The First Presidency is the leading council of the LDS Church. It consists of the prophet and his two counselors.

180 Gibbs, Harvesting the Light, 16-17.
Following the meeting with President Cannon, Hafen contacted Utah artist James
Taylor Harwood, who had studied in Paris. Through Harwood he learned of the
conditions and cost of receiving an art education. In a letter dated 25 March 1890, Hafen
wrote to President Cannon and presented the information he had learned from his former
teacher. He described Harwood's expenses and then offered an analysis of his own
financial situation and of the assistance he would need. Hafen also noted his belief that
he had been inspired to implement such a plan. He related, "For many years past I have
been prompted to write to you on the subject of Art, even commencing to write letters,
but my timidity would overcome me. I since realize the necessity of cultivating any talent
God has bestowed upon His children from the very fact that he is the giver of all gifts and
it remains for us to put them to good and legitimate use."181 Including an analysis for the
need of well-trained artists within the church, Hafen continued:

Sometimes I felt like reproving myself for not taking some active step of some kind
to further my interest in art education. What are we going to do, brother Cannon,
when one beautifull [sic] Temple in Salt Lake City is ready to receive inside
decorations? Who is there amongst all our people capable to do . . . justice to art
work that should be executed therein? I must confess that it is impossible for me to
see any other or more consistent course to pursue in this matter than to give two or
three young men who possess talent in this direction a chance to develop in the
same way Bro Pratt suggested in our conversation with you.182

Then, unbeknownst to Fairbanks, Hafen suggested that he be included in the Paris study:

I wish to introduce to your notice and consideration Bro J. B. Fairbanks of Payson:
who is also earnestly devoted to art. He is not as well known as a disciple of the
brush yet, having only followed the calling since he returned from his mission a few

181 John Hafen to George Q. Cannon, 25 March 1890, John Hafen Collection, Perry
Special Collections.

182 Ibid.
years ago but he is talented earnest and industrious; and above all a devoted servant of the cause of God. Why I bring him to your notice, is, if I should be one of the honored ones selected to enjoy the privileges of an education and Bro Fairbanks would be barred out, I should look upon it as a calamity. The bonds of brotherly love are such, and our aims and desires are so closely connected that I would rather share one year with him and divide it between us, so that each could have a six month chance than to leave him home behind.183

Not wanting to compel the judgment of Church leadership, Hafen concluded, “However I don’t wish to dictate in this matter. I know that God will inspire you brethren to do that which will be for the best of all.”184 Due to the selfless consideration of Hafen, Church leadership became aware of the young artist from Payson, Utah.

Shortly after completing this letter to President Cannon, Hafen approached Fairbanks and excitedly exclaimed, “I want to break it gently. But it is too good, I must tell you now. My prospects for going to France have never been better.”185 Fairbanks cheerfully congratulated his dear friend, but at the same time his “heart sank,” for he had hoped to accompany him.186 Noting the disappointment carefully hidden behind his enthusiasm, Hafen explained, “but you are going with me.”187 Fairbanks simply reported, “this news was almost too much for me.”188

As Church apostle Heber J. Grant, along with First Presidency counselors George

183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 John Fairbanks to Joseph F. Smith, no date, JBFC, Perry Special Collections.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, discussed the possibility of an art mission, they requested that the three men develop a budget of approximate costs.\footnote{189} Anticipating the decision of the brethren, the artists found a place of solitude on Ensign Peak, where they contemplated their situation.\footnote{190} Enveloped with feelings of hope, they “knelt in humble supplication to the Lord” and asked “that if [their] plan were right, it might be approved.” Furthermore, the artists “promised that [they] would do all in [their] power to further art in Utah if [they] had such an opportunity.”\footnote{191} Upon closing their prayer, they knew the correct decision would be made. In a letter to George Q. Cannon, Hafen later admitted, “I tried to approach this question to my brethren in a way that was calculated not to inspire my hope in them, as per your instructions, but, my dear brother, these young men:/your humble servant included/have [sic] united their faith and prayers on the subject and have received a testimony of what is coming.”\footnote{192} That the trip to Paris would be made, they had no doubt.

Apostles Anthon H. Lund and Heber J. Grant, along with Seymour B. Young of

\footnote{189} In 1835, Joseph Smith established a Quorum of Twelve Apostles; Fairbanks, Pratt, and Hafen concluded that the combined cost would be $1800 for one year. Additionally, Hafen needed $360 to support his family. The total cost was $2160.

\footnote{190} A mountain peak which stands above the Salt Lake Valley. On 26 July 1847, Brigham Young and others ascended the peak to overlook the valley. While there, the men raised an ensign of liberty to the world.

\footnote{191} John Fairbanks to Joseph F. Smith, no date, John B. Fairbanks, Papers, Biographies, and Correspondence, Perry Special Collections; Florence Fairbanks, “The Life of John B. Fairbanks,” 65.

\footnote{192} John Hafen to George Q. Cannon, 25 April 1890, John Hafen Collection, Perry Special Collections.
the First Council of the Seventy, set Fairbanks, Hafen, and Pratt apart as official
missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 3 June 1890. At
this time, an official French mission did not exist; it remained officially closed from 1864
to 1912. Thus, in addition to his responsibilities as a missionary, Church leaders
assigned Pratt to preside over the Paris mission. Following the reception of priesthood
blessings and words of wisdom from the apostles, including counsel to enhance their
talents and avoid locations of a questionable nature, the artists had three weeks to prepare
for an event that would not only enhance the quality of their painting, but would also
introduce them to impressionism and enable them to encourage a further appreciation for
the aesthetic among Church members and Utah citizens.

On Monday, 23 June 1890, Fairbanks, Hafen, and Pratt bade their families
farewell and left for Paris on an eastbound train. Observing his surroundings in
fascination, Fairbanks felt overcome with awe. The Payson farm boy described

193 The presidency of the third presiding quorum of the Church.

194 In 1844, Almon Babbitt was charged with inaugurating Mormon missionary work in
France. For an unknown reason, he never served in France. By 1847, a plea for elders to
volunteer as missionaries in France was cited in the Millennial Star (a Mormon newspaper) in
England. Shortly thereafter, leaders at a general conference in the British Mission called William
Howell to serve as a missionary in France. Due to political turmoil, and the outlawing of all
Protestant sects, the mission closed from 1864–1912. The French mission was reformed, with

195 Journal History, 12 July 1890.

196 A blessing is a priesthood ordinance in which one believes that he is acting in the
name of God to provide blessings for another individual; John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 3 June
1890, Perry Special Collections.
everything along the journey as “grand beyond description,” “grand and majestic,” and “striking.” John’s trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City also intrigued him, where he became enthralled with the “fine statuary” and paintings by renowned artists such as Rosa Bonheur. He explained, “I there had the greatest treat that I ever had in art.”

After viewing New York and its suburbs, the artists set sail for Europe. During their eleven-day voyage on the Steamship Nevada, they made a pact to complete at least one sketch a day. This activity entertained them during the long and monotonous voyage. Anyone who failed to meet this goal had to pay the others ten cents each. Fairbanks recalled drawing pictures of numerous passengers on board “when a sleep or reading or any other position that we could catch them long enough to sketch them.”

The Nevada docked at Liverpool, England, on a typical day for the region—rainy. Of his journey, John later wrote in a humorous vein, “I have enjoyed the voyage tolerable [sic] well but can say I am not in love with trailing on the ocean[.] 11 days at a time is all

---

197 John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 30 September 1890 and 25 June 1890, Perry Special Collections.

198 Ibid., 27 June 1890.

199 Ibid.

I want and if about 9 was taken from the 1[.] I would like it a great deal better. 201 After exploring Liverpool and viewing the city's artwork, Fairbanks recorded his impressions:

"I have already seen enough of Liverpool and to see that so far as the appreciation of art is concerned it is far ahead of N.Y. on the outsides of the building you see statuary and busts and fine ornamental work which I did not see in N.Y." 202 The artists then traveled to London, where they remained for over a week. While visiting this metropolis, Fairbanks and the others purchased art supplies and visited museums. Again, Fairbanks became fascinated by the numerous examples of art and demonstrated an adept ability to analyze the paintings he saw. He kept personal notes on art history and described in letters the images he viewed. Hence, he became familiar with a variety of artists and their styles, which enhanced his appreciation for professional work.

After touring London, these pioneers artists traveled to Paris, arriving on 24 July 1890. As they entered the city renowned for artistic beauty, their thoughts traveled back to Utah, where the Saints were celebrating the forty-third anniversary of Brigham Young's arrival in Salt Lake City. The following day, Utah sculptor Cyrus E. Dallin welcomed them to Paris. Thrilled with his surroundings, Fairbanks explained to his wife, "Paris is art on every side." 203

Académie Julian

The day after arriving in Paris, Fairbanks and his colleagues traveled to the

201 Ibid.
202 Ibid., 12 July 1890.
Académie Julian to become acquainted with the professors and students. As the art missionaries arrived at the school, they were surprised by the sight that greeted them.

Hafen recalled:

Leaving those grand boulevards we entered Rue St. Denis, a narrow street. With quick steps we pass grocery shops, shoe, drug, dry goods, vegetable and every other kind of shops that modern Shylock has ever thought of; expecting every moment to behold the magnificent academy building my fancy had pictured. When, all at once, here we are! Yes, we were here in a narrow court or yard of a feather cleaning and pillow factory; a few packing boxes and bales of feathers lying about. In front of us, on a two story rickety old building was the sign, sure enough, Académie Julia Peinture. 204

Fairbanks further explained, “Anyone would not be struck with the beauty of the outside appearance of the building, a person never would stop and ask what place is that unless he was looking for a workshop of some sort.” 205

Although unimpressive in its appearance, the school, largely attended by American artists, cultivated skills of a superior quality in its students. Founded by Italian bookshop assistant Rodolphe Julian (1839–1907) in 1868, the institution continually thrived and expanded. By 1890, Julian had organized nine different ateliers, five for men and four for women. 206 Beginning students drew from plaster casts, but later moved to the life-room where they sketched from nude models. 207 Those trained at the institution


205 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 12 October 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.


were exposed to the critique of professors on Wednesdays and Saturdays.\textsuperscript{208} Since students had a limited amount of direct contact with their teachers, John noted, "where [sic] it not from the instruction we get from the advanced scholars, and what we can pick up by looking around, we would not gain much by going to school, but as it is we can get what we want from those who have studied for years."\textsuperscript{209} Such an approach was typical of academic art schools at this time period; drawing had to be mastered before artists attempted to paint. Therefore, students spent long hours in the classroom, often working on the same drawing for three to four weeks.\textsuperscript{210} This endeavor served the Utah artists well, since they needed to be taught basic drawing skills.\textsuperscript{211} Yet despite the traditional emphasis on academic figure studies, many Julian students later embraced radical techniques.\textsuperscript{212} Thus, as one scholar noted, "the effect of study at Julian’s is also evident in the work of those who painted landscapes and who espoused styles, such as Impressionism, that were antithetical to academic ideals."\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{208} "Julian recruited an illustrious group of artists to criticize the students’ work. Among his earliest professors were Jules Lefebvre and Tony Robert-Fleury, and later Jean-Paul Laurens, who, like Julian, had all studied with Leon Cogniet at the École des Beaux-Arts. Benjamin Constant, who teamed with Jean-Paul Laurens, and Francois Flameng had, like Julian, studied under Cabanel. Gustave Boulanger who teamed with Lefebvre had been a student of Delaroche.” Catherine Fehrer, “New Light on the Académie Julian and Its Founder, Rodolphe Julian,” 126; \textit{Gazette de Beaux Arts} (1984): 208.

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{210} Gibbs, \textit{Harvesting the Light}, 21.

\textsuperscript{211} Fehrer, \textit{New Light on the Académie Julian}, 213.

\textsuperscript{212} Weisberg, \textit{Overcoming All Obstacles}, 5.

\textsuperscript{213} Kirk, \textit{Fairbanks Family in the West}, 228.
In an effort to prepare his students for the difficulties of displaying a work in the Salon or other exhibitions, Julian developed a system known as *concours*. Each week, a *concours* of design was held, in which the masters selected the best drawing.\(^{214}\) At the end of the month, the masters judged each of these pictures, and the best one received a cash prize.\(^{215}\)

Although pleased with the training available at the Julian, Fairbanks often reacted in shock as he witnessed the loose morals and general lack of manners among his fellow students.\(^{216}\) Crude speech, loud laughter, excessive noise, conflict and harsh competition dominated the area. Furthermore, a thick vapor of cigarette smoke encompassed the unventilated air, making it difficult to breathe. Yet overall, John felt pleased with the institution in which he had the privilege to study and found the training he received invaluable. But he admitted, “In fact, taking the Julian school as a whole it is not a desirable place to go to only for the purpose of learning and yet it is one of the best schools of art in the world so considered I believe.”\(^{217}\) Although its exterior was unimpressive, the school was of immense artistic value to a man of Fairbanks’ limited professional background.

---


\(^{215}\) As noted earlier, there was a concours for a prize of 100 francs every month at Julian’s.

\(^{216}\) John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 27 July 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

\(^{217}\) John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 12 October 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
Purpose of the Art Mission

The Paris Art Mission was more than an educational experience.\textsuperscript{218} Like other Mormon missions, Church leaders viewed it as a divinely sanctioned call: a request for artists to prepare to paint murals in an edifice considered most sacred. Due to the willingness of the Church to offer financial support for the art missionaries, particularly during a time when it was undergoing extreme financial duress, the First Presidency demonstrated a sense of confidence in the selected men.\textsuperscript{219} Furthermore, the leaders viewed the mission as a means to produce works for the Church, spread the gospel message through future artwork, and enhance artistic skills in Utah. Upon returning to their home, the missionaries would be expected to share their skills through the works they created and the students they taught. Elder George Q. Cannon expressed this view in a letter written to John Hafen: “You will become very useful and be the means of doing much good at home in imparting to others some of the knowledge and skill that you are

\textsuperscript{218} It was not just artists sent as missionaries to prepare for the completion of the Salt Lake Temple. For example, on 13 July 1891, the missionary committee of the Church set James F. Woods apart for a mission to England to gather genealogical records. Holzapfel, \textit{Every Stone a Sermon}, 37.

\textsuperscript{219} The Church went into debt about $300,000 as a result of the Edmunds-Tucker Act and other forms of anti-polygamy legislation. And since the government received all Church funds, tithing receipts dropped from an average of more than $500,000 per year during the 1880s to a little more than $300,000 in 1890. Ultimately, the Edmund’s-Tucker law caused the Church to move from creditor status into a debt of over half a million dollars. Leonard Arrington, \textit{Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900}. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959; reprint, University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 400–401.
obtaining, and also in giving pleasure to those who have a taste for art.”\textsuperscript{220} Therefore, while residing in Paris, Church leaders did not encourage the art missionaries to proselytize or preach. Rather, they asked them to develop their artistic skills so they could subsequently enhance the cultural atmosphere of Utah and the Church. Explaining the purpose of the mission to his wife, Fairbanks wrote, “You ask if we preach the gospel to the students. No, that is not our mission. . . . Our mission is to get acquainted with art as much as we possibly can.”\textsuperscript{221} On another occasion he explained, “This is as much a mission as any man was ever on, J.H. Young and many other men in high authority have said that they consider it one of the most important missions that has been given to men to fulfill.”\textsuperscript{222} Most important, Church leaders believed that everything relating to the temple needed to be of a superior quality. This explains their willingness to spend money they could not spare to support artistic training. Certainly they believed the art mission was not “an individual affair, but a church matter.”\textsuperscript{223} Furthermore, the art missionaries believed that painting in the temple was the greatest honor to come from this, more than if “I had conferred upon me all the kingly crowns of this earth.”\textsuperscript{224} The Church wanted

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{220} George Q. Cannon to John Hafen, 7 March 1891, John Hafen Collection, Perry Special Collections.
\item \textsuperscript{221} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 2 February 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
\item \textsuperscript{222} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 5 January 1892, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
\item \textsuperscript{223} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 31 September 1890 [sic], JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
\item \textsuperscript{224} John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 13 September 1890, JHC, Springville Museum of Art.
\end{itemize}
the murals to be of the highest possible quality, for they would be decorating sacred ordinance rooms in temples of God. Second best would not suffice, and thus the missionaries wanted the “Lord’s name to be glorified through . . . the arts.”

Certainly leading authorities considered developing artistic skills so they could paint murals in the Salt Lake Temple a crucial undertaking, since the work of these artists would affect generations of Saints.

Although financed by the Church to study art in Paris, the Mormon missionaries were not asked to create religious art. Instead, they cultivated a religious attitude as they approached their work, and identified the influence of God in their surroundings. Fairbanks and the other missionaries did not view the world as a temporal sphere; they saw it as God’s creation. Hence they viewed landscapes and natural scenes as reflections of Deity that needed to be captured on canvas. Since the artists would be painting murals in the Salt Lake Temple, it was particularly important that they learned to paint scenery in a manner that not only reflected explicit detail, but also a sense of the Divine origins of the world. For this reason landscape painting became their focus, and according to Hafen they ceased to “look for mechanical effect of minute finish, for individual leaves, blades of grass, or aped imitation of things.” Instead, they looked for “smell, for soul, for feeling, for the beautiful in line and color.” Because they had a unity of purpose, the

---

225 John B. Fairbanks, Journal, Perry Special Collections.


227 Ibid.
men not only viewed the experience as a personal privilege, but also as a collective opportunity to consecrate their talents to God. As two LDS historians have noted, "the art mission was not just a financial arrangement; rather it reflected a true sense of divine purpose." 228

While providing the opportunity for Fairbanks and his colleagues to study art, Mormon leaders also offered substantial encouragement and support. The First Presidency wrote letters to the missionaries, and the Church met their financial obligations, even while making comments such as "money is exceedingly close with us now. We have had the most stringent times for three months past." 229 Notwithstanding the general lack of resources, they always provided money for the missionaries. When reflecting on the aid received, Fairbanks noted in gratitude, "The authorities of the Church look upon it as being a great and important mission, and so do I. I think the Spirit of our mission is resting upon us very much and I think God will bless us inasmuch as we put our trust in him which we are striving to do." 230 Fairbanks was aware of the importance of his work, and he took the opportunity seriously. He not only wanted to improve his art, he also wanted to assist his church. Therefore, he had to immerse himself in his environment and develop artistic skill.

Early Feelings About Art in Paris

228 Bradley and Durham, 104–105.

229 George Q. Cannon to John Hafen, 7 March 1891, John Hafen Collection, Perry Special Collections.

Initially, Fairbanks had a very primitive perspective of art. Although he knew that professional training would prove invaluable, and he understood the benefits of education, he did not understand that becoming an artist would be a continuous journey rather than an immediate destination. Thus he entered the Académie Julian believing he could become a proficient artist within one year.\textsuperscript{231} Since Fairbanks was a thirty-four-year-old husband and father who felt deeply concerned about the financial status and well-being of his family, he developed a determination to learn as much as he could in a limited time period. Already, he felt behind in his achievements and thus he became anxious to overcome the weaknesses he feared permeated his work. Furthermore, since he was aware of the relative brevity of the period, he understood his time constraint. These reasons, coupled with his naivete, led to the hope that he could perfect his work immediately.

To utilize his time, Fairbanks developed an intense schedule. He arose at 5:30 a.m., and after getting ready for the day, devoted half an hour to the study of anatomy or French.\textsuperscript{232} Then, after arriving at school, he drew for several hours. During lunch, he continued his study of anatomy, followed by another four hours of sketching. After arriving home and completing chores, Fairbanks returned to night classes for three hours. Returning to the apartment, he went to bed. Notwithstanding the intense pressure and

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{231} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 18 August 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

\textsuperscript{232} A study of anatomy enables artists to create more accurate representations of the human body as they come to understand its physical structure. John's son, sculpture Avard Fairbanks, attended medical school so he could have a more complete knowledge of how the human body is formed, and he received a degree in anatomy.
\end{footnotesize}
endless requirements he faced, he would make remarks such as “I can see the hand of the Lord in opening the way for me all the way through and I trust that now I am here he will not leave me to myself but that he will help me in my studies as he helped me to get here. . . I rejoice and thank God every day of my life for this privilege.”

Besides obtaining knowledge in school, the artist also sought to learn from his surroundings. In letters to his wife he described scenes, people, events, and professional works of art. By viewing sculptures, paintings, architecture, and other artistic renditions, Fairbanks furthered his appreciation of artists’ creations. His exposure to renowned works allowed him to envision what artists could produce. These original paintings left a lasting impression on Fairbanks and served as the foundation upon which he constructed his professional understanding of art. Reflecting the general feelings of the missionaries concerning the sites they viewed, Hafen noted,

Language is feeble to explain the benefit a sojourn in the city of Paris imparts to an aspirant for knowledge; for it is not only within the walls of a school room that one learns lessons, but from the monuments of architectural skill and taste which adorn its boulevards. The combined skill of centuries of sculptor’s art which have enriched its galleries and magnificent parks; likewise the inspirations of the artist thrown upon canvas, of which this city is a veritable storehouse, spanning art history from its earliest period to this progressive nineteenth century.

Just residing in Paris served as an educational experience for the Utah artists.

In addition to benefitting from the cultural value of Paris, Fairbanks also learned the basic fundamentals of the craft. Like other art schools of the time, the Académie

\[^{233}\text{John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 18 August 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.}\]

\[^{234}\text{John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 22 July 1890, JHC, Springville Museum of Art.}\]
Julian focused on drawing the human figure. Since such work taught the students a sense of human form and shape, developing this skill became essential. This work particularly benefitted Fairbanks, who had never considered developing the technique. Although he feared he was making little progress as he sketched, he later realized that this daily exercise enhanced his ability to paint.\textsuperscript{235}

While pleased with the opportunity to associate with other artists, the general lack of progress among a majority of the student body at the Julian disappointed Fairbanks. Many of his associates admitted that they had been attending the institution for years and were still far from completing their education. Although slightly discouraged by such statements, Fairbanks consoled himself with the teachings of his youth, recognizing that if he did "not excel it [would] not be for lack of study."\textsuperscript{236} For he knew his training had a significant purpose. Recalling his desire to study in Paris, he wrote to his wife Lillie, "How I do appreciate this great privilege. It is really wonderful and miraculous when I think of it. How plainly, Lillie, do we see the answer to my continuous prayers, for this opportunity, you remember how I used to pray for it every morning and evening, do you not?"\textsuperscript{237}

\textbf{Relying on Faith}

\textsuperscript{235} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 31 September 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

\textsuperscript{236} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 28 September 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

\textsuperscript{237} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 16 November 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
After settling into his daily routine and becoming familiar with other students, John saw minimal progress in his work. Although aware of his limited knowledge, he believed diligence would allow him to overcome anything he lacked. At one point he discussed the possibilities of improvement with James Taylor Harwood, who had studied at the Académie Julian and the École de Beaux Arts. Harwood implied that little change could be seen in an artist’s work within the first six months of study. When recounting this conversation, Fairbanks remarked “But he does not know what the Lord can do through faith and prayers.” A month later the artist noted, “I can see the hand of the Lord in opening the way for me all the way through and I trust that now I am here he will not leave me to myself but that he will help me in my studies.” By exercising such faith and working constantly, Fairbanks progressed, although he admitted, “the more I study the less I know, or rather the more I see there is to learn.”

As a student at the Académie Julian, Fairbanks credited every accomplishment to the help of God. The letters he wrote to his wife Lillie reflect his experiences and thoughts about his work. Since he shared his innermost feelings with his spouse, one can conclude that he was not only explaining an outward commitment, but also an inward

---

238 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 18 August 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.


241 Ibid.
belief; Fairbanks knew God would support and strengthen him. However, despite the improvements reflected in his skill, he noted that he could “still see an awful mountain before me.”

Fairbanks’ comments often display discouragement, yet intertwined throughout such statements are phrases of determination. He prayed that the Lord would bless him in his efforts, and then he worked in diligence. Even when successful, he did not consider the achievement his alone. On one occasion he wrote, “My drawing last week the professor said was very good especially the head. Quite a number of the students complimented me on it that is they told me it was by far the best that they had seen me do. Of course this made me feel well but I see that I have a very very great deal to learn yet, I [fear that I] fail to acknowledge the hand of the Lord in my success thus far and I pray for his assistance in future.”

His unwavering faith gave him the strength to bear his trials and develop skills.

Fairbanks did not go to Paris with selfish motives and did not seek prestigious honors or wealth. He had left his home, family, and familiar surroundings to follow a path of which he had formerly been unaware. But the Utah artist felt frightened, lonely, homesick, and often discouraged. He feared failure, yet anticipated success. Fairbanks noted progress in others while questioning his own lack of improvement. He had hopes for his future, while wondering what tomorrow would bring. Although one cannot

242 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 16 November 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

recreate his personal moments of reflection, an analysis of his personality leads to the possibility, and even the probability, that he often shed tears of frustration. The missionary knew what he was, but he consistently questioned who he would become. It was during this time that John B. Fairbanks learned to see the reflection of an artist within himself.

Despite his insecurity and discouragement, Fairbanks continued to place his trust in a higher source and attempted to remain optimistic. Noting that it would be easy to become overwhelmed and discouraged, he wrote, "If I would I could look upon the dark side of things and make myself miserable and the world seem gloomy, and my mission to be a failure but life is too short to make half of it gloomy and sad therefore I have resolved to make it all as bright as possible."\(^{244}\) This goal shaped his personality, and he adhered to it even when facing the most discouraging moments, such as when he felt incompetent for his task.

**A Period of Frustration**

In April 1891, Fairbanks faced the most difficult period of his mission. During this time students at the Académie were submitting their works to be considered for display on the wall of the concours or in the Salon. Although he became determined to see his work "on the wall," the judges rejected them.\(^{245}\) When explaining the process of selection to Lillie, he wrote in sincerity, "I want one of mine to get on the wall, if it is the will of God. But if it is not his will then I desire not to get one on the wall, I am very...

\(^{244}\) John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, January 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

\(^{245}\) John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 2 April 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
much pleased with the progress I have made and I feel to praise the Lord for his blessings." For the remainder of the month, Fairbanks felt discouraged with what he viewed to be a lack of success. Although his letters seem to reflect a relaxed attitude, one can sense the internal struggles and feelings of failure that he experienced. Eventually, each of the art missionaries, with the exception of Fairbanks, had a piece chosen for display. He stated simply: "I alone remain now." Initially he ignored the pain he felt, but then admitted, "Since I have had time to reflect that all of the boys have got into the concours but me [it] almost breaks me up."

Overwhelming feelings of discouragement and frustration limited Fairbanks' ability to produce a substantial work the following week. He tried to create a piece worthy of display, but instead discovered "it was with the greatest difficulty that I was able to make a drawing last week that was at all satisfactory in fact I was not able to make one satisfactory." Again, he tried to respond with an optimistic view and suggested that his lack of success would strengthen his determination. However, he later admitted,

I think if others win prizes why not I, but when I consider where I started I feel I have no reason to be discouraged and yet at times in spite of myself I can not [sic] but feel a little peculiar to think I am the only one from Utah who has failed to get a

---

246 Ibid.
248 Ibid.
250 Ibid.
drawing in the concour, still I could not help it I did my best, it is not because they have studdied [sic] harder than I for I have studdied [sic] as hard as I could.\textsuperscript{251}

These heartrending statements reflect the struggles of a man who tried and thought he failed. Being surrounded by those who received recognition added to his agony. Perhaps he began to question his own ability and doubted the probability of success in future training. When Lillie responded to the letter, she concluded that his anxiety affected his work. With compassion she stated, “I do not believe that you are much behind the rest but you got so nervous and too anxious[.] when I got the letter before this last one I was washing. I felt so bad that my tears mixed with the suds. . . . I tell you it gave me the blues.”\textsuperscript{252} Although the couple lamented this experience at the time, they later recognized its positive consequences.

**An Extended Call**

The art missionaries originally planned to study at the Académie Julian for one year; they later received permission from Elder George Q. Cannon to remain longer, though Hafen left after a year because of financial difficulty at home. After several months of study Fairbanks told his wife that he hoped “I may be permitted to stay untił [sic] I can accomplish something both painting and drawing.”\textsuperscript{253} Then, after experiencing feelings of failure in April, he developed a determination to receive more training. Fairbanks related the following moment of insight to his companion:

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{252} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 10 May 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

\textsuperscript{253} John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 21 December 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
I was working so hard to get a drawing on the wall two weeks before the time came I felt that I would not be able to get one there, I asked the Lord if it was his will that such might be the case, if I had succeeded I presume I would have gone home this summer but as it is I feel that it is the will of the Lord that I should stay until [sic] I am better qualified for the work that will be expected of us when we return home, and although I felt rather bad at the time when this feeling came over me it was very consoling.254

He knew leaving would be a mistake.255

Lillie accepted this announcement without complaint. She said, "John I want you to stay until you are satisfied[,] if it requires 2 years, all right."256 Hence, periods of discouragement motivated him to further pursue his studies, and he eventually developed skills and gained an understanding of art that proved invaluable to his future work. It was through studying a second year that Fairbanks started to become an artist.

A Defining Period of Study

At one point Fairbanks admitted, "I never knew what an artist was till I came out here but I can see now."257 With time, the missionary understood the importance of professional training, the need for constant improvement, and the need to dedicate one's life to the work. As he realized results would not be immediate, he stopped comparing himself to others and began to focus upon his own improvement. Thus he sought means to strengthen his technique and to further his understanding of art.

255 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 7 June 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
Besides sketching in school, Fairbanks and the other missionaries traveled and painted numerous scenes, following the plein air tradition of the Barbizon and Impressionist artists.²⁵⁸ In the summer of 1891, he spent his time in the small village of Chilleurs under the tutelage of his mentor, Mr. Adolph Schultz.²⁵⁹ Initially, Fairbanks' instructor informed him that his skills as a painter needed to improve. Unwilling to allow discouragement to prevail again, he became determined to progress.²⁶⁰ Inspired by the simple beauty of his surroundings, and relieved to be away from the corruption of Paris, the art missionary painted from dawn to dusk, even when drops of rain splattered onto his canvas.²⁶¹ By the end of the summer, he had created over two hundred sketches and paintings. This experience became helpful in his landscape renderings later on.

The longer Fairbanks painted and sketched in the countryside, and the further his skills developed, the more relaxed his letters became. Eventually, the despair that had permeated his previous accounts dwindled to nothing. Fairbanks consistently described his favorable situation to his wife and recorded moments of success. He centered his

²⁵⁸ It was common for art students to create academic sketches in the académies during the school year, but then to spend the summers painting in the country. As one author noted, “But summer excursions were more than vocations. These times permitted students to paint outdoors and to accumulate studies for later finishing in the studio. The range of subject matter expanded. The work emphasized individualism rather than conformity to school conventions and rules, and was a significant transitional stage between being a student and a practicing artist.” “An American Art Student in Paris,” 25.

²⁵⁹ A friend of the art missionaries.


focus on landscape work and by the end of the summer, he began taking lessons in landscape painting. As a result, Fairbanks’ creations displayed vast improvements. He felt particularly pleased when his teacher informed him that he used color well. This art missionary deserved this compliment, since he had advanced from creating works with dull and subdued tones to using bright and vibrant colors in his paintings.

By the end of the summer Fairbanks’ perspective of art had evolved, and he realized that one year of training would not be sufficient. For the first time he understood that his profession was a continual process and that he would always be working to improve his style and technique. Fairbanks explained to his wife, “artists are not so easily made.” However, this did not dampen his enthusiasm for the profession. Rather, he recorded, “I have been so much interested in my work that I could hardly think of anything else I never was more interested in art than now.” He saw beauty everywhere, and as the summer progressed his confidence returned and he enhanced his skills.

**Recommencing School**

“Prepared for another winter of hard work in school,” Fairbanks recommenced

---

262 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 15 September 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

263 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 3 September 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.


study at the Académie Julian in October 1891. During the fall he resumed his hectic schedule at the institution, working from early in the morning until late in the evening. The more he worked, the better he understood how an artist can improve. Eventually, he knew diligence served as the key to success:

It is hard solid work that is going to make the Artist rather than talent[,] the man who has the ambition to work whether he has much talent or not is likely to get there while the man who has talent never will go there without work, I have therefore concluded to depend upon work and the help of the Lord. I work all day and at night many of the boys ask me how I stand it[,] well I can say thus far all right and I hope I may all winter. The great artists are men who have worked, and who still work, the strongest students in school are those who work work work, but to me there is pleasure in the work[,] I love it[,] I feel happy while doing it.

For Fairbanks, art became a “pleasure rather than a task.” Painting brought great joy to him and he longed to share his perceptions of the world with others. Although strenuous work, he knew he must maintain his pace and learn all he could. Eventually he understood that his “failures last spring and winter I think is my proffit [sic] this winter.”

As time passed, Fairbanks recognized the value of his education. This caused his definition of an artist to change. He explained to his wife, “I had an idea before I left

---


268 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 8 November 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

269 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 6 December 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
home that if I could get two solid years of study that would be all I would want but that idea has been exploded a long time now, and if you and the children were here and I had money enough to carry me through I would spend five years here.”

Yet more than realizing time affected an artist’s progression, he also realized that “drawing is the foundation” of painting and that works he would have been content with two years earlier no longer impressed him.

Soon, Fairbanks’ professors and associates noticed his progress. During the fall of his second year of study, he reported to Lillie that one of his drawings had been highly considered for the concours. In addition, Professor Lewis Cass Lutz (1855–1893) from the Cincinnati School of Art informed him that he had never seen such rapid development in an artist. And when he asked renowned artist and instructor at the Julian, Benjamin Constant (1845–1902), for criticism, Constant merely informed him that if he wanted to

---

270 Ibid.


272 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 15 November 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

273 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 6 December 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
be a landscape painter he had progressed sufficiently and that he needed to go into nature so he could start painting. Such a comment reflects the growing influence of the Barbizon school and impressionism, for both groups of painters moved out of the studio and into their natural environment when creating landscapes. Although the art missionaries never mentioned the Barbizon school or impressionism specifically, they became aware of their influences. At the beginning of his study, John Hafen informed his wife that “some of their paintings are daubed in such a way that one is puzzled [sic] when they are rightside up and when not.” Although unimpressed at first, by the end of their Parisian study, the missionaries began incorporating these techniques.

With the permission of his professors, Fairbanks also spent much time copying paintings in the Louvre, a common practice in Parisian art education. He wanted to duplicate these masterpieces for his own family, but he also hoped copies could be used to expose Utahns to classical works. While engaged in this endeavor, he copied some of his favorite paintings, several of which have survived. Included among these is a reproduction of *Autumn Oaks* by Barbizon trained, American tonalist George Innes (1825–1894).

**Summer with Rigolot**

274 Kirk, *Fairbanks Family in the West*, 232.

275 John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 13 September 1890, JHC, Springville Museum of Art.

276 Milner, 6.

The summer before his departure, John worked under the personal direction of landscape artist Albert Gabriel Rigolot (1862–1932). Like the Barbizon painters, Rigolot had a naturalistic approach to art and often concentrated on the effects of light as it penetrates trees near bodies of water. Fairbanks was so impressed with the skill of his teacher that he became determined to own one of his paintings. Hence he developed a plan. Noting that the professor had the habit of altering his students’ creations, he kept a special canvas for moments when his mentor came to inspect his painting. Each time Rigolot viewed his work, Fairbanks replaced his painting with this “special project.” As hoped, the teacher added to the image. By the time of its completion, the painting was essentially an unsigned work of Rigolot (fig. 2).

Fairbanks’ teacher had a definite impact on his artistic style and further developed his love of landscape painting. One art historian noted that Rigolot’s “sometimes bright and sometimes tonal naturalism blended naturalist and impressionist painting methods.”

278 The painting Summer in the Vale of Chevreuse by Rigolot uses simple impressionist-like strokes to portray the greenery of a bucolic scene (fig. 3). However, the clouds in the pale blue sky and the overall form of the trees are painted with the definite lines of a naturalist artist. Since his professor created landscape paintings that reflected the influence of the Barbizon painters as well as the technique of impressionism, Fairbanks developed similar skills. Fairbanks’ son Avard noted that this stylistic influence “came down in landscapes from [Jean-Baptiste-Camille] Corot [1796–1875] to

---

278 Vern G. Swanson, et al., Utah Art, Utah Artists (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2001), 40.
Palou to Rigolot and then to my father in its succession." He continued, "Father was a man of profound spirit and gentle feeling, and so he was influenced by this sensitivity and the atmosphere and all the fine quality that one would understand and sense in the works of Corot. Therefore, Father's work had this same sensitiveness and feeling of solemnity of his influence." This sensitivity is evident in Fairbanks' paintings that depict different aspects of nature, such as hay fields and clusters of trees. For instance, *Aspen Grove* reveals a tranquil and shady wood (fig. 4). While the tall and stately trunks are extremely realistic, the leaves on the trees and the undergrowth appear impressionistic in style.

One stormy day Fairbanks decided he would not allow poor weather to hinder his work. He ignored the rain and sought a place to paint. After some searching he discovered the perfect image: an old French home. The artist set up his umbrella and began to work. As he painted he was greeted by Rigolot, who exclaimed, "Fairbanks all the time work, all the time work." Fairbanks titled this skillful image *Backyard in France* (fig. 5). The main focus of the painting is an old country home portrayed in soft hues of brown and white and is surrounded by trees and shrubbery. Although portions of the house are painted with definite lines, this image portrays hints of impressionism rather than the complete realism of his earlier works. The small strokes used to paint the trees and the simplicity and peacefulness of the scenery, typical of Fairbanks, reflect Barbizon

---

279 Eugene Fairbanks interview.

280 Ibid.

influence.

As Fairbanks developed an intense passion for this work, his perceptions, style, and ability improved. By reflecting impressionism in his paintings, he learned to capture a single moment on canvas. This is often demonstrated in his harvest scenes, a recurring subject in impressionist paintings. When creating such images, Fairbanks lost concern for topography and specific details. He simply displayed the beauty of fields and conveyed the message of the “continuing abundance of the earth as well as man’s civilizing influence.”

Fairbanks titled one of his first landscape paintings in Paris *Grain Stack in France* (fig. 6). Although painted within months of his arrival, this work appears heavily impressionistic. The three hay stacks depicted in the painting are light brown; the ground is the same color although there are also some soft green, yellow, blue, and orange strokes. The sky is a muted mixture of white and pale yellow. Hence this work lacks specific detail and color. When Fairbanks painted this image, he was yet to develop a distinct sense of style and to become adept in his use of new techniques. His later works reflect the unification of the Barbizon school, impressionism, and naturalism, thus demonstrating the influence of Rigolot on his style. *Harvesting in Utah Valley* is painted in shades of gold, green, and blue and reveals some “French impressionist influence in the broken brush strokes, brilliant sunlight, and shadows painted in subdued but rich color” (fig. 7). However, the scenery in the painting contains more definite form than the latter work. Like Rigolot’s harvest scenes, the men working in the field are


283 Ibid., 46.
background subjects rather than the dominant focus. In painting this image, Fairbanks emphasized the beauty of landscape because he attempted to capture a distinct site.\textsuperscript{284}

With time, Fairbanks further improved his technique. In his painting \textit{Harvest}, the field is emanating light. The golden hay stacks contrast with the dark mountains and the cluster of gray clouds gathering in the sky. In this work he used light and shadow to enhance the vibrancy of the field. Another picture, \textit{Fairbanks Home}, captures perfectly the tranquil serenity of a full moon reflecting its light on a soft white blanket of snow (fig. 8). The use of muted tones and shades of blue, black, and gray evoke the stillness of the night, while the brightness of the moon illuminates a cozy dwelling. As Fairbanks subtly contrasted light, darkness, and shadow in his paintings, his works began to reveal more depth.

\textbf{Last Months In Paris}

After completing a second year of training, the missionaries received a letter from George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, encouraging them to begin thinking about artwork for the Salt Lake Temple, although they gave artists the option of remaining in Paris longer if they felt their training was incomplete. Nonetheless, the letter ended with the following request: “We would like to get the benefit of the best artistic skill now in the Church in the decoration of this grand building.”\textsuperscript{285} Church leaders later sent “plans

\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{285} Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith to J.W. Clawson, Lorus Pratt, John Fairbanks, Henry Evans, Herman Haag, 18 April 1892, Lorus Pratt Collection, Springville Museum of Art.
and dimensions [sic] for the temple decorations so the artists could begin sketching. Their thoughts drifted in the direction of the temple murals, and by the end of 1892, two years following their arrival in Paris, each had returned home.

**Conclusion**

The murals in the Salt Lake Temple and Fairbanks’ post-Paris art symbolize the profound impact the Paris Art Mission had on his works. In 1890 he entered the city of Paris with a limited understanding of art. Two years later, when he returned to Utah, Fairbanks captured the essence of his surroundings and placed his impressions of nature on canvas. The paintings he produced not only reflected professional training and the influences of the Barbizon school, impressionism, and naturalism, they also displayed an appreciation for God’s creations. Fairbanks’ studies at the Académie Julian enhanced his confidence, skill, and vision as an artist. He also developed a deep determination to pursue his talent and to use it to aid the LDS Church. Fairbanks’ experiences in Paris not only influenced his career, they also enhanced the cultural atmosphere of the Mormon Church and of Utah. Truly, John B. Fairbanks became an artist while studying in Paris.

---

286 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 23 May 1892, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.
CHAPTER 4

"A DISPOSITION AND DESIRE TO STUDY":

THE ARTISTIC LEGACY OF

JOHN B. FAIRBANKS

As an art missionary, Fairbanks shared the following comment with his wife, "I take a great deal of pleasure in my work and I hope to be able to do something good someday. I have come to the conclusion that my only chance lies in the amount of good hard work that I do and not in the great talent I possess, I feel that the Lord has given me some talent, but better still a disposition and desire to study."287

Fairbanks’ "disposition and desire to study" dominated his artistic career, even when public recognition eluded him. Despite the difficulties he encountered as an artist, he remained optimistic and continued to pursue his professional dreams. Although the degree of his success may seem minimal in explicit terms, his implicit effects on Utah and Mormon art become evident in light of his post-Paris art experiences. The murals of Fairbanks helped paint in the Salt Lake Temple beautified rooms that would be used for the sacred ordinance of the endowment. Moreover, he worked to further artistic appreciation and awareness in Utah as a teacher and as a painter. Fairbanks also served as

the official painter/photographer of the Benjamin Cluff Expedition. Most important, he left a grand artistic legacy by training his sons, J. Leo and Avard Fairbanks, to work as professional artists.

**Construction of Early Temples**

Shortly following the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith announced the need to construct temples. Through the selfless sacrifices and diligent efforts of Church members, a beautiful yet simple edifice was constructed on the hill overlooking the small town of Kirtland, Ohio. Completed and dedicated on 27 March 1836, the Kirtland Temple served as a temple of restoration, in which Moses, Elias and Elijah appeared in vision, and the sacred ordinances of washing and anointing were restored.\(^{288}\) Later, as enemies forced The Latter-day Saints to move from Ohio and into Missouri, Church members had to abandon the sacred structure. On 26 April 1839, the Saints began laying the foundation for another temple in Far West, Missouri. Again, ruthless mobs forced the Mormons to leave a temple site, and thus they did not complete and dedicate a similar edifice until 30 April 1846, in Nauvoo, Illinois. Patterns of persecution continued, and after being forced to begin their migration westward, the Mormons had to desert yet another temple.

As early as 1834, Smith had prophesied that the Saints would build temples in the

\(^{288}\) Doctrine and Covenants 110.
Rocky Mountains. Later, Apostles Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff also saw the Salt Lake Temple in vision. On one occasion, Brigham Young explained, “five years ago last July I was here, and saw in the Spirit the Temple not ten feet from where we have laid the Chief Corner Stone. . . . it was laid before me. I have never looked upon that ground, but the vision of it was there. I see it as plainly as if it was in reality before me.”

Wilford Woodruff shared a similar experience: “When in the western country, many years ago, before we came to the Rocky Mountains, I had a dream. I dreamed of being in these mountains, and of seeing a large fine looking temple erected in one of these valleys which was built of cut granite stone, I saw that temple dedicated, and I attended the dedicatory services.” The importance of the Salt Lake Temple to these Church leaders cannot be denied.

Only four days after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young announced the location for the next house of God. Noting the significance of this sacred structure, he declared, “I want to see the temple built in a manner that it will endure through the Millennium. . . . I want that temple to stand as a proud monument of the faith, perseverance and industry of the Saints of God in the mountains, in the nineteenth

---

289 Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report, 8 April 1898 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints): 57.


291 Watt, JD, vol 21, 299.

292 Raynor, Everlasting Spires, 11.
century.”293 Perhaps this statement partially explains why Church leaders sent official church architect Truman O. Angell on a short mission to Europe to study architectural influences, why five men served as art missionaries in Paris, and why a genealogical missionary searched for historical records in Europe in preparation for the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. Unlike past temples, this edifice was endure.

Notwithstanding the anticipation of the Saints as they longed for the completion of the temple, construction of this structure proved to be a slow and cumbersome process. While the Salt Lake Temple was still under construction, the St. George, Manti, and Logan temples were completed. Finally, following approximately forty years of construction, on 4 August 1892, President Wilford Woodruff announced that the Salt Lake temple would be dedicated on 6 April 1893.

Mural Painting in America

During the eighteenth century, wall paintings, similar to decorative wallpaper, could be found in the homes of wealthy Americans.294 Over a century later, in the 1850s, Constatino Brumidi received the first large public mural commission for the capitol in Washington DC. Occasionally, similar commissions for murals in civic and religious buildings followed throughout the succeeding decades; John La Farge’s (1835–1910) 1876 murals in the Trinity Church in Boston served as a noteworthy example. Yet despite the importance of such works, “those few murals . . . fostered no distinguished

293 Watt, JD, vol. 17, 254.

nor sustained beginning for that form of art in America" at that time.\textsuperscript{295} It was not until the late-nineteenth century that the demand for murals in American public buildings grew.\textsuperscript{296} This occurred as a post-Civil War building boom created a need for decoration, increased wealth led to patronage, and American artists adopted French mural-painting techniques.\textsuperscript{297} By the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, the boom in American mural painting developed strongly and this genre of painting provided decoration for public buildings such as court houses, state capitols, banks, hotels and churches.\textsuperscript{298} Ironically, the art missionaries began painting murals in the Salt Lake Temple early that same year. As a result of European academic training in figure painting, most murals created in public buildings at this time represented allegorical figures. The murals painted in the temple, however, were landscapes. The landscape subject matter may have resulted from mural traditions in earlier temples and the artists’ exposure to Barbizon and Impressionist influences, but the impetus to decorate walls with murals was clearly a trend of the day.

\textbf{Early Utah Murals}

Not long after the Mormons settled in Utah, the Endowment House, a temporary structure in which individuals could receive sacred temple ordinances prior to the


\textsuperscript{296} New Muses, 50.

\textsuperscript{297} Wardle, 1.

\textsuperscript{298} New Muses, 50.
completion of the temples, was constructed on the northwest corner of the Salt Lake temple grounds. The First Presidency dedicated this simple structure on 5 May 1855. These simple scenes were likely similar to the wall paintings that began in Colonial times and that they served as a forerunner for later temple murals. Later, immigrant artists were commissioned to paint scenery in the newly constructed Salt Lake Theater. Following their early precedents, as temples were completed, Church leaders asked artists to enhance the beauty of these sacred structures with mural paintings. In 1878, Dan Weggeland and C.C.A. Christensen decorated the ceiling and cornice of the Logan Temple. Later, they, along with William Armitage (1817–1890) and Reuben Kirkham (1845–1886) painted murals in this temple. Then, in 1881, Christensen, Weggeland, and Samuel Jepperson (1855–1931), painted murals in the St. George Temple (Fairbanks was commissioned to paint the World Room in this temple from 1917–1918), then later collaborated on murals in the creation room and the telestial room


300 O'Brien, 13.

301 Ibid.


303 Jensen and Oman, C.C.A. Christensen, 18.

304 Journal History, 2 April 1892.
of the Manti Temple.\textsuperscript{305} The creation room murals included scenes of volcanoes, dinosaurs, and a variety of wild and domesticated animals. The tradition of including mural paintings in temple ordinance rooms continued until the completion of the Los Angeles Temple in 1956.\textsuperscript{306}

**Creating Murals in the Salt Lake Temple**

In 1892, Wilford Woodruff announced that the individuals working on the Salt Lake Temple had been foreordained to do so.\textsuperscript{307} This comment provides further insight into why Church leaders organized an art mission during a time of financial duress. They believed that only the best skills should be used to adorn the sacred edifice in Salt Lake City. Since the art missionaries had experience in plein air landscape painting, had been exposed to Barbizon and Impressionist painters, and had received academic training, they were adequately prepared for the task. Following their return from Paris to Utah, Church leaders discussed the interior design of the temple.\textsuperscript{308} They likely requested landscape scenes similar to those in previous temples.

Church leaders later met with the artists, who requested $17,000 remuneration for


\textsuperscript{306} Talmage, \textit{House of the Lord}, 226.

\textsuperscript{307} Foreordination is the belief that an individual was called to do something before his or her birth; Scott Kenney, \textit{Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898}, vol. 9 (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–1984).

\textsuperscript{308} Kenney, \textit{Wilford Woodruff Journal} vol. 9, (5 January 1893), 236.
painting two rooms.\textsuperscript{309} Although the Church could not afford to provide such a substantial sum, it agreed to pay the artists $300 a month.\textsuperscript{310} As the artists were creating the temple murals, the American economy was experiencing a severe financial depression. Furthermore, years of anti-polygamy legislation had restricted tithing contributions and severely limited church funds. Thus, once again, the willingness of Church leaders to provide financial support for the artists indicates the importance of these murals to the completion of the Salt Lake Temple. Ultimately, the decision to sponsor training for the “best of the new generation of Latter-day Saint artists” not only affected the quality of mural paintings in Salt Lake, but also in future temples such as those located in Hawaii, Alberta, and Arizona, as well as influencing the decision to “require the finest contributions of . . . artists” in every aspect of temple construction.\textsuperscript{311}

In January 1893, Fairbanks, Hafen, Pratt, Evans and Weggeland began painting in the Salt Lake Temple.\textsuperscript{312} While embracing this sacred privilege, Fairbanks lived in the

\textsuperscript{309} One scholar noted, “According to LDS church financial records, based on the amounts of money paid to each participating artist, Hafen did the greatest amount of work, followed by Pratt and Fairbanks, with Evans and Dan Weggeland receiving equal amounts. A minimal amount was paid to Alfred Lambourne for several paintings which were hung in the temple.” Swanson, \textit{Utah Painting and Sculpture}, 42.

\textsuperscript{310} Kenney, \textit{Wilford Woodruff Journal}, vol. 9 (12 January 1893), 236.

\textsuperscript{311} Oman, \textit{Images of Faith}, 44.

\textsuperscript{312} Since Hafen returned from the art missionary a year earlier than the other artists, he likely started painting in the temple prior to their return. Fairbanks later painted replacement murals in the St. George Temple and assisted in the restoration of damaged sections in the Salt Lake Temple, as well as painting in the Mesa, Arizona Temple. Images of Faith, 53; Haseltine, 23; and Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

Following John’s death, the following was announced in General Conference: “John B. Fairbanks, widely known Utah artist, whose murals adorn the interior of the Salt Lake, St.
home of apostle Joseph F. Smith. At this time, one of Smith’s daughters took art lessons from the former art missionary.\textsuperscript{313}

Although Church leaders asked the artists to paint specific themes depicting “faithful reproductions of nature,” they provided few other instructions.\textsuperscript{314} They simply wanted the artists to use the murals to “enhance the religious impact of the temple” and the endowment ceremony. An unpublished study by historian Richard Bennett implies that church leaders supported the art mission because they hoped Paris training would prepare the artists to paint superior murals in sacred ordinance.\textsuperscript{315} Before 1877, endowments were a sacred ritual conducted for the living only. They had not been practiced for the dead as well as the living, as in other temple ordinances.

For many years, Wilford Woodruff officiated in the Endowment House to perform sacred ordinances. He also participated actively in vicarious ordinances for the dead.\textsuperscript{316} In 1877, Woodruff was called to preside over the newly completed St. George Temple. At this time he encouraged the Saints to perform work for their deceased ancestors. Yet he also inaugurated vicarious temple ordinance work for those unrelated to living church

\textsuperscript{313} John B. Fairbanks, Collection of John B. Fairbanks, 1855–1940. Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

\textsuperscript{314} DeGraw, 35.

\textsuperscript{315} Richard Bennett, “‘Line Upon Line, Precept Upon Precept:’ An Exploratory Study Into the Beginnings of Endowments for the Dead, 1877,” 1, Unpublished Manuscript.

\textsuperscript{316} Thomas G. Alexander, Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 201.
members. On 9 January 1877, Woodruff noted that endowment work began to be performed vicariously for the dead in the St. George Temple. Thus, temple attendance increased, as people began performing vicarious endowment work. With the completion of the St. George Temple, church leaders knew that a much larger number of Saints would regularly enter the sacred edifice to participate in endowment ceremonies for their ancestors and others, and thus they understood the need for rooms that reflected the appropriate atmosphere and enhanced the sacred nature of this work. This knowledge most likely contributed to the church’s willingness to support a group of art missionaries at such a financially destitute time for the Church, so they wanted to receive substantial artistic training that would affect the temple murals so they could be aesthetically appealing and reflect the importance of the temple ordinances.

The sacred endowment ritual required that rooms be decorated as the Garden of Eden, the fallen world into which Adam and Eve were cast after partaking of the forbidden fruit, and the three degrees of glory, or spiritual progression, available after temporal death. In his thesis, Monte B. DeGraw explains, “The ‘Creation Room’ shows the treatment of subjects as they actually are. Water, rocks, and atmospheric conditions are represented in naturalistic detail to give a visual effect of the creation of the world. The ‘Garden Room’ treats the natural subjects of trees, mountains, water and

317 Ibid., 215.


319 Richard Bennett, “‘Line Upon Line,’” 1.

320 Gibbs, Harvesting the Light, 36.
animals according to the doctrine of reality. The "World Room" depicts animal life with an emphasis on the 'struggle for survival' among the animals of the world."321 Since the rooms in the Salt Lake Temple reflect bucolic scenes John's experience as a landscape artist proved beneficial to the work he produced in the temple.

Explaining the details of the Garden of Eden room in the Salt Lake Temple, Elder James E. Talmage explained:

Ceiling and walls are embellished with oil paintings—the former to represent clouds and sky, with sun and moon and stars; the latter showing landscape scenes of rare beauty. There are sylvan grottoes and mossy dells, lakelets and brooks, waterfalls and rivulets, trees, vines and flowers, insects, birds and beasts, in short, the earth beautiful—as it was before the Fall. It may be called the Garden of Eden Room, for in every part and appurtenance it speaks of sweet content and blessed repose. There is no suggestion of disturbance, enmity or hostility; the beasts are at peace and the birds live in amity.322

He continued with a description of the World Room:

The walls are entirely covered with scenic paintings and the ceiling is pictured to represent sky and cloud. The earth scenes are in strong contrast with those in the Garden Room below. Here the rocks are rent and riven; the earth-story is that of mountain uplift and seismic disruption. Beasts are contending in deadly strife, or engaged in murderous attack, or already rending their prey. The more timorous creatures are fleeing from their ravenous foes or cowering in half-concealed retreats. There are lions in combat, a tiger gloating over a fallen deer, wolves and foxes in hungry search. On the summit of a rugged cliff is an eagle's eyrie, the mother and her brood watching the approach of the male bird holding a lambkin in his claws. All the forest folk and the wild things of the mountain are living under the ever-present menace of death, and it is by death they live. The trees are gnarled, misshapen, and blasted; shrubs maintain a precarious root-hold in rocky clefts; thorns, thistles, cacti, and noxious weeds abound; and in one quarter a destructive storm is raging.323

321 DeGraw, 35.


323 Talmage, House of the Lord, 158.
Since the artists had not been assigned specific tasks in the temple, more than one individual usually painted a single scene, often starting at opposite ends of the wall and meeting in the middle.\textsuperscript{324} Although Hafen painted more than the others, Fairbanks came second. During the vast majority of the project, Hafen and Evans depicted scenes in the Garden of Eden room. While Pratt painted foliage and Weggeland painted animals, Fairbanks spent his time creating much of the background scenery for this mural.\textsuperscript{325} Later, Fairbanks, Weggeland and Evans worked together in an effort to create an accurate portrayal of the “Lone and Dreary” world. Fairbanks held the prime responsibility for the work completed on the ceiling in this room.\textsuperscript{326}

When recalling the time spent painting in the Salt Lake Temple, Fairbanks merely recorded, “Jan Feb and March of 1893 was spent in decorating the great Salt Lake Temple. Artists who saw the work said the work far surpassed their expectation.”\textsuperscript{327} Perhaps his lack of documentation concerning this event not only reflects the time constraints he faced, but also the sacred nature of the work he performed.

Of the rooms being decorated with murals, two, the garden room and the telestial

\textsuperscript{324} Haseltine, 23.

\textsuperscript{325} Swanson, Utah Painting and Sculpture, 98; Gibbs, 36.

\textsuperscript{326} Swanson, Utah Painting and Sculpture, 98.

\textsuperscript{327} John B. Fairbanks, “Sketch of the Life of John Hafen,” John B. Fairbanks Collection, Perry Special Collections.
(world) room were completed in time for the 6 April 1893 dedication.\textsuperscript{328} Recalling the events of this sacred Thursday, Talmage explained in his journal:

The temple is a noble structure, grandly arranged and appointed. Cost has not been an obstacle in fitting up this house of God. No superfluous or showy decoration has been allowed, but everything is rich, beautiful, and above all, appropriate. During the entire service a fierce wind raged, approaching at times the fury of a hurricane. The dedicatory service was simple and impressive. Excellent music, most of the pieces being specially composed for the occasion, was rendered, and the dedicatory prayer was offered by President Wilford Woodruff. . . . There were no strange or bewildering manifestations of ‘supernatural’ agencies during the service, but the power of God was there, and the entire assembly felt it. It was a holy place and occasion.\textsuperscript{329}

Certainly Fairbanks considered it a sacred privilege to contribute to such a fundamental event in the history of Mormonism.

\textbf{Contributions to Utah Art}

The art missionaries created beautiful, scenic murals in the Salt Lake Temple. Yet their influence did not end on the walls of this sacred structure; the results of the Paris Art Mission endured. As one scholar explains, this small group of artists served as the “nucleus of Utah’s art circle for years to come” because they used their training to teach art, create and participate in art organizations, and to paint and exhibit beautiful works.\textsuperscript{330} Like his colleagues, Fairbanks committed himself to serving the Saints by “bringing the

\textsuperscript{328} Dedicatory sessions began on 6 April 1893, with the closing session held on 24 April 1893. Over 82,000 people participated in this sacred event. Raynor, 158–159.

\textsuperscript{329} James Edward Talmage, Journal, 6 April 1893, James Edward Talmage Collection, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{330} Gibbs, \textit{Harvesting the Light}, 3.
refining influence of art to Zion.”

He did not forget the promises he had made as an art missionary—to educate the Saints by exposing them to artistic works.

Immediately following the completion of the temple murals, Fairbanks returned to Payson and rented a studio in which he offered art lessons. Thus he entered the next phase of his artistic career, sharing with others the skills he had developed in Paris so they could cultivate similar abilities in their own artistic attempts. The Fairbanks family later moved to Provo so their children could attend high school without living away from home. While residing in this town, Fairbanks initially worked in the photography studio of Tom Daniels. Later, his son J. Leo and he set up their own studio, called Fairbanks’ Art Studio, on Union Block.

Art Societies

As noted, the art missionaries contributed to art advancement and education in Utah. Just two years following their return from Paris, they organized the Society of Utah Artists, one of the main promoters of art in Salt Lake City at the time. In conjunction with the other art missionaries, Fairbanks served as a charter member of this organization. The society thrived and ultimately led to the founding of the Utah Art Institute in 1899. Alice Merrill Horne introduced the legislation which allowed the Utah Art Institute to

---

331 Gibbs, Harvesting the Light, 3.


333 Kirk, Fairbanks Family in the West, 233.

become the first state-supported institute of fine arts. As vice president of this organization, Fairbanks became highly involved in its development. After donating a copy of Robin's *The Holy Family*, which he had painted, John worked in a successful effort to double the state appropriations for the Utah Art Institute.

**Art Education**

In addition to establishing art organizations, the art missionaries contributed to artistic training throughout the state. Shortly following the completion of the temple murals, Hafen began teaching at Brigham Young Academy. He later invited Fairbanks and Evans to share his salary and teach some of the classes. Together, the three men succeeded in establishing the art department at this institution. Later, Hafen served as the first art supervisor in the public school system of Ogden, Utah. He eventually resigned his position to Fairbanks who remained in that capacity for the remainder of the 1898 school year. Shortly thereafter, Fairbanks received a teaching appointment at the LDS College in Salt Lake City.

As an artist, Fairbanks felt the responsibility to teach and train others so they could cultivate their own techniques. He did not expect his students to imitate his work;

---

335 Leek, 4.
336 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.
337 John Fairbanks to B.F. Larson, 4 December 1937, John B. Fairbanks File, Museum of Art, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
338 Ibid.
339 Swanson, 43.
rather he sought to instill within them an enthusiasm for art and a determination to pursue a career in this field. To accomplish such goals, he encouraged young artists, particularly his sons J. Leo and Avard, to understand the significance of their work and to seek opportunities for further training.

Before serving as an art missionary, Fairbanks noticed his son, J. Leo’s artistic skill. While working in Paris, he encouraged the young boy to pursue his passion, hoping fervently that he would not “lose his interest in drawing.”

Affected by his father’s enthusiasm and his own passion for art, young Leo excitedly reported his artistic advancement in the letters he wrote to his father while he studied in Paris. On learning that J. Leo had won an art contest, Fairbanks was overjoyed. On one occasion, he even reminded his wife, “I said I wanted to get an education so I could teach Leo [...] Well [sic] I feel more that way now than ever.” After returning home from Paris, Fairbanks involved his sons in his own career, encouraged them to pursue Parisian study, and provided them with the educational opportunities he had lacked as a young man.

Commenting on his father’s willingness to guide him, J. Leo once said, “My father’s attitude, his willingness to sacrifice everything to his art, has been an inspiration to me and I firmly believe has changed my whole career. Without his example I would have undoubtedly followed a more lucrative career.”

Avard, too, noted his father’s

---


341 John Fairbanks to Leo Fairbanks, 2 February 1891, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

342 John Fairbanks to Lillie Fairbanks, 8 August 1890, JBFC, Springville Museum of Art.

343 Bradley and Durham, 103.
determination to see his sons succeed. As an adult he reflected on the trip his father and he had made to Paris and commented that it “was a well thought out plan and one which my father had envisioned and had well calculated to carry forth a very fine and thorough training for myself looking for a rather brilliant future. I have now great admiration for my father in this matter.” Fairbanks’ sons knew that his encouragement and support led to their ultimate success as artists.

Even though Fairbanks taught in art schools periodically, such work never became a permanent career for him. While he enjoyed teaching at Brigham Young Academy and LDS College, and worked diligently as the art supervisor in Ogden, Utah, he did not remain employed by any of these institutions for extended periods of time. Since permanent jobs in the field of art rarely existed, John usually received temporary positions. But despite his hope that he could sustain his family through landscape sales, he often had to turn to other forms of employment when finances became tight.

Paintings

The easel as well as mural paintings the art missionaries created on their return home proved to be some of the most significant contributions they made to the development of artistic skill and aesthetic appreciation in Utah. Like many other American artists at the time, the Utah painters embraced landscape painting and often reflected hints of Barbizon influence and impressionism in their work, and moved away from the overly romantic and dramatic creations of earlier artists. In addition to

344 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

improving their general technique, author Linda Jones Gibbs explains that the artists also created a regional form of American impressionism.\footnote{Gibbs, \textit{Harvesting the Light}, 43.} Avard Fairbanks further implied that the work of the art missionaries initiated an interest in culture in the American west and that "their coming back and their work was the beginning of what we should call 'The Western School of Painting' in the United States."\footnote{Eugene Fairbanks Interview.}

In many ways, Fairbanks' artistic creations fit within his cultural environment. Like his colleagues, his work emphasized Utah landscape, particularly focusing on hay fields and other scenery most familiar to him. Noting the significance of such images to John's work, one author explains, "there are obvious [depictions of his] love of the land and a tender treatment of it," as in \textit{Harvest in Utah Valley}, or in the State Collection's \textit{Moonlight} or BYU's \textit{Farm House and Barn}.\footnote{Swanson, \textit{Utah Painting and Sculptor}, 98.} Thus his paintings not only reflect the beauty of his surroundings, but also the exterior appeals of the Mormon community, and a glimpse into his own physical surroundings. By painting rural farm scenes, Fairbanks approached the topic he knew best and as a result created several outstanding works.

Despite the lack of recognition Fairbanks received for his paintings, he displayed works at exhibitions held by various art organizations, as well several small, private shows. Although many of his works were overlooked and criticized, he occasionally received praise for his creations. For example, in 1899 he received forty dollars for his oil painting \textit{Evening at Harvest Time}, and he later earned an honorable mention for his
painting *Indian Summer.* Eventually, time and practice led to further improvement of Fairbanks' skill. The works he created in the twentieth century, in comparison to his paintings of the previous century, display improved technique and skill.

Notwithstanding moments of success, Fairbanks still struggled to receive recognition as an artist. Even when he appeared content on the surface, he often struggled internally, uncertain about which direction to follow to provide for his family. Though he knew what he wanted to be, he seemed unable to discover the path that led there. In many ways, his success can be found in his search for a career, more than in his career itself, for it was his quest for success that encouraged him to pursue various avenues and pushed him to train and prepare two of his sons to embrace art careers.

**Death of Lillie**

For several years, the Fairbanks family continued to reside in Provo, Utah. One day, Lillie stumbled while carrying fourteen-month-old Avard in one arm and an oil lamp in the other. In her attempt to save her baby from injury, and her home from being consumed by fire, she twisted her body as she fell, and as a result sustained serious injury. Following a period of extreme suffering, she passed away on 8 May 1898. Shortly after his beloved companion’s death, Fairbanks accepted Hafen’s job as the art supervisor for the public school system of Ogden, Utah (as mentioned earlier). Later, as Fairbanks taught at the LDS College, Benjamin Cluff approached him and asked him to join an

---

349 Swanson, *Utah Painting and Sculpture,* 44.


351 Kirk, *Fairbanks Family in the West,* 233.
expedition in search of Book of Mormon lands in South and Central America.

**Benjamin Cluff Expedition to South America**

Benjamin Cluff, successor to Karl G. Maeser, served as the principal of Brigham Young Academy from 1892 to 1900.\(^{352}\) Even before his appointment to this position, Cluff had dreamed of conducting an extensive expedition to Central and South America to scientifically prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.\(^ {353}\) In December 1899, he proposed this plan to George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, counselors in the First Presidency to Lorenzo Snow. After receiving permission to conduct the expedition, Cluff began to select men to accompany him on this “Brigham Young Academy project.”\(^ {354}\)

Cluff searched for individuals who had skills that would prove conducive to his grand expedition. When contemplating about who could serve as the official photographer and artist of the trip, Fairbanks came to Cluff’s mind. Although Fairbanks felt intrigued with the thought of this Book of Mormon expedition, he did not want to leave his children fatherless as well as motherless.\(^ {355}\) Uncertain if he should accept Cluff’s request, he approached the president of The Church, Lorenzo Snow, and

---

\(^{352}\) This institution, now known as Brigham Young University, was organized by Brigham Young in 1875 with a deed of trust. Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen. *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny.* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), ix; Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed. *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years.* Vol. 1. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 211.

\(^{353}\) Ibid., 289.

\(^{354}\) Ibid., 291.

\(^{355}\) Florence Fairbanks, "The Life of John B. Fairbanks,
explained his complicated circumstances to him. Following careful reflection, President Snow informed Fairbanks that he should consider this expedition a mission call. Upon hearing this, Fairbanks knew that he must overcome difficulties and accept the appointment.

After learning that their father would be leaving for a third mission, the Fairbanks children agreed to cooperate so he could fulfill his duties. Leo, Vernon and Ervon informed him that they would provide financial support for the family, while Nettie served as the homemaker. They carefully planned for this change in their lifestyle, so when their father departed, they had adequately prepared both individually and collectively.

Although a small amount of funding had been donated to help Cluff purchase supplies for the expedition, the men involved had to provide most items themselves, such as two horses, guns and ammunition, sleeping gear, cooking utensils and other personal items. On 7 April 1900, John W. Taylor and Francis M. Lyman set the expedition members apart. Shortly thereafter, President Lorenzo Snow “reminded them of the fact that they were participating in a great adventure which had become a church mission, and that their conduct should always be that expected of missionaries,” thus reinforcing what

---


357 Ibid., 292.

358 Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed. Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 293.
the prophet had told Fairbanks privately.\textsuperscript{359}

Following a farewell party held on 17 April 1900, the expedition members departed from their homes and were greeted by a grand parade being held in their honor throughout Utah County.\textsuperscript{360} Anxious to bid her father farewell, Nettie followed the group as far as Spanish Fork with her baby brother Avard. At the dance, Fairbanks tenderly took his youngest child to his tent and lulled him to sleep.\textsuperscript{361} This incident reinforced the difficulty of this departure in Fairbanks’ mind and heart. Yet even though he longed to remain home with his children, he felt he had to heed the advice of his Church leaders. Thus, while preparing to embark on another artistic adventure, he relied on the faith and experiences he had gained from his former two missions to sustain him.

By 5 May 1900, the expedition members left Utah and entered Arizona. For a short time, however, John Fairbanks remained in Kanab for a week of painting and photography work.\textsuperscript{362} As the group continued to travel, many of the participants became unruly and disobedient.\textsuperscript{363} Furthermore, it became apparent that part of Cluff’s desire to be in Central America was his relationship with Florence Reynolds, a woman who taught

\textsuperscript{359} Eugene L. Roberts and Mrs. Eldon Reed Cluff, “Benjamin Cluff, Jr.,” typescript biography, Perry Special Collections, 14.

\textsuperscript{360} Wilkinson, Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, vol. 1, 294.

\textsuperscript{361} Florence Fairbanks, “The Life of John B. Fairbanks, 77.

\textsuperscript{362} Wilkinson, Brigham Young University, vol. 1, 299.

\textsuperscript{363} Wilkinson, Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, Vol. 1, 307.
at Juarez Academy in the Mormon Colonies.\textsuperscript{364} Although the Polygamy Manifesto—which had ended the Mormon practice of plural marriage—had been issued in 1890, several individuals believed this revelation applied only to the United States and that plurals marriages were still sanctioned by the Church if performed elsewhere.\textsuperscript{365} Acting under this incorrect interpretation, Cluff married Reynolds as his third wife.\textsuperscript{366}

Upon reaching the city of Nogales, the group learned they had to provide a cash bond of $2367 to customs officials to pass the Mexican/American border. While waiting, they became overly argumentive and lazy. Since Fairbanks felt disgusted with the prevailing attitude of the group, one individual recalls that he “spoke of the punishment of the Israelites when they were led out of bondage by Moses. . . . He also spoke of Zion’s Camp which was led by the Prophet Joseph Smith and the plague sent upon them for their want of unity and fault finding.”\textsuperscript{367} Such a comment reflects Fairbanks’ determination to fulfill his mission as directed by his leaders.

At one point, Heber J. Grant visited and observed the company. After returning to Utah, in meeting with the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles, he seriously suggested that the expedition be disbanded, because of the lack of experience and

\textsuperscript{364} Wilkinson, \textit{Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years}, Vol. 1, 309.

\textsuperscript{365} After 1890, the Church did not sanction plural marriages anywhere. In 1904, Joseph F. Smith issued a second manifest to clarify this issue.

\textsuperscript{366} Wilkinson, \textit{Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years}, vol. 1, 304.

\textsuperscript{367} Chester Van Buren, Diary, 22 July 1900, Perry Special Collections.
preparation of the participants. Later, as the brethren learned of Cluff’s relationship with Reynolds, they became angry with him and feared he had ulterior motives in conducting the expedition. George Q. Cannon, who had previously supported the journey, then explained that “if he had known what he had heard today, before Cluff left he certainly would have opposed the expedition.” Later, President Snow decided the group should return. Near 1 August 1900, President Joseph F. Smith met with Cluff and proposed that he forgo his journey, but Cluff refused. The Brethren eventually decided that the expedition could continue, but without official Church sanction. They later lost the support of Brigham Young Academy as well.

After learning that the brethren no longer supported the expedition, Cluff returned to camp, and according to Fairbanks, told the travelers that President Smith “had informed him that the company was too large and must be reduced.” Cluff appears to have limited his discussion of the reasons for limiting their numbers. Perhaps his lack of explanation indicates why the group member continued to support him and began “to feel

---

368 Journal History, 19 July 1900.
370 Journal History, 9 August 1900.
371 Journal History, 9 August 1900.
372 Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, vol. 1, 308.
373 Ibid., 309.
374 John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 13 August 1900, Perry Special Collections.
rather blue.\textsuperscript{375} Initially, they may not have realized the complications associated with the Brethren’s decisions; they merely thought it was a financial problem. Fairbanks’ journal entries support this conclusion; his comments indicate a vague understanding of the situation. This confusion can be explained by his frequent absences from the group since he often separated from them while searching for scenes to paint. Yet others were suspicious of this change of plans. Walter Wolfe explained, “I fear the worst has not been told.”\textsuperscript{376} He was aware of the time Cluff spent with Reynolds.

President Cluff continued to encourage the expedition members, and asked them to use their “influence with the Lord that we may still persue [sic] our journey.”\textsuperscript{377} Respecting his authority, the men prayed, although many of them were eager to return home.\textsuperscript{378} Later, when President Smith came to visit the group, he decided that a small number could continue.\textsuperscript{379} Fairbanks, Joseph Adams, Paul Hennings, Asa Kienke, Walter Tolton, Heber Magelby, Chester Van Buren, and Walter Wolfe were chosen to remain with Cluff, John B. Fairbanks was sustained as the second counselor of the group.\textsuperscript{380} President Smith set him apart for this calling, thus reinforcing his need to continue to

\textsuperscript{375} John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 13 August 1900, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{376} Walter M. Wolfe, Journal, 9 August 1900, Walter M. Wolfe Collection, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{377} John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 16 August 1900, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{378} Walter M. Wolfe Journal, 12 August 1900, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{379} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{380} Ibid., 311.
participate in the expedition.

Due to poor planning and a lack of adequate resources, members of the Cluff Expedition suffered extensively. Despite the illness, deprivation, loneliness, and starvation Fairbanks endured while serving as a member of this group, he continually placed his focus on art and refused to allow his perceptions of the Church to be colored by the problems associated with the trip. Although his journal accounts are filled with descriptions of the difficult situations he encountered, he consistently noted when he created another picture, thus making the most of a trying experience. He took photographs of ancient ruins, sketched intriguing sites, and painted beautiful scenes. Eventually, he separated from his associates, believing his time could be better spent painting in Columbia than "trudging" through the jungles of Central America.\footnote{Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, Vol. 1, 323.} He later rode a steamship up the Magdalena River.\footnote{John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 31 July 1901, Perry Special Collections.} As he observed the magnificent foliage of his surroundings, his artistic voice became evident. On one occasion he explained, "I saw no monotony after we struck the forests, every foot of the way was different from the other and yet quite as beautiful. I never tired of looking at it and sketching as fast as I could as the boat moved along."\footnote{John B. Fairbanks, Journal, 13 September 1901, Perry Special Collections.}

When Fairbanks decided to paint scenes along the Magdalena River, several individuals informed him that he would be unable to discover images worthy of his
canvas. One gentleman even declared that monotony would be the only site to behold.\textsuperscript{384} But Fairbanks believed otherwise. As the boat gently sailed up the grand river, he showed incredible scenes to his skeptical friends, who soon followed him around, eager to share little spots of beauty their then-trained eyes had discovered.\textsuperscript{385} On this trip, Fairbanks not only taught his acquaintances to appreciate their surroundings, he also created magnificent works that portrayed the scenic view. In fact, one of his most acclaimed pictures, "the jewel-like Magdelena River," was painted on this trip (fig. 9).\textsuperscript{386}

As a member of the Cluff Expedition, Fairbanks had time to further refine his photography, sketching and painting skills. Perhaps the opportunity to paint directly in nature was the greatest benefit of the expedition to Fairbanks, since it allowed him to focus on new sites and to observe the simplistic beauty of his surroundings. His skill benefitted tremendously from this experience.

In terms of achieving its objectives, the Cluff Expedition failed. Contrary to their plan, the group did not discover Book of Mormon lands, nor did it find the archaeological evidence it had hoped to uncover. Hunger, fatigue, and disillusionment proved to be their main achievement. They returned home discouraged and overwhelmed, examples of specimen and extensive journal accounts being the only evidence of their labors. Perhaps, then, the works Fairbanks created in Central America are one of the principal successes of the Cluff Expedition. Although a scientific failure in many ways, the trip

\textsuperscript{384} John B. Fairbanks, Biographies and Papers, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{385} John B. Fairbanks, Personal Notes, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{386} Oman, \textit{Images of Faith}, 53.
proved to be an artistic success. While Cluff did not expect art to become one of the main achievements of the journey, the pictures Fairbanks painted of the Magdelena River and the photographs he took are some of the most noteworthy accomplishments of the Cluff Expedition. Despite the discouragement and exhaustion Fairbanks felt in Central America, he succeeded as an artist. His pictures may be one of the few aspects of the Benjamin Cluff Expedition worth remembering.387

By the end of 1901, John left Central America. On returning home, he entered Avard’s room just after the little boy had rested his small eyes in sleep. Awakened by his father’s presence, Avard felt overjoyed to be reunited with him. He later recalled “the feeling of being united again with parental affection and parental care.”388 Fairbanks, too, felt overjoyed to be re-united with his beloved family.

**Traveling East With Hafen**

Not long after Fairbanks returned from the arduous expedition to South America, Hafen asked him to travel to the East Coast with him, where he hoped they could receive recognition for some of their work.389 The two men temporarily stayed in Chicago and then ventured to New York.390 Later, they traveled to Boston, where they met with sculptor Cyrus E. Dallin, who encouraged the two men in their efforts and introduced

387 Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, vol. 1, 318.

388 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

389 The two artists spent approximately five months in the East.

390 Conant, 24; Hafen and Fairbanks roomed at a house located at 249 West 123rd street.
them to other noteworthy artists.\textsuperscript{391}

In addition to painting pictures and meeting a variety of individuals involved in the artistic community, Fairbanks and Hafen viewed fine works in museums and art shows, thus gaining further knowledge of significant works and styles. For example, when writing to his wife, Hafen mentioned his interest in the Barbizon painters as well as his enjoyment in attending an art exhibit of the Society of American Artists.\textsuperscript{392} Such comments reflect Fairbanks' and Hafen's determination to expose themselves to their field. While working in the East, the two men worked to create paintings for exhibitions and developed artistic ideas for future paintings.\textsuperscript{393} Hafen later explained, "I feel that already much good has come out of my presence out here. I have accumulated a great deal of material knowledge for future management and I am so arranging it so I can communicate by writing with all important dealers also shippers and packers of artists paintings."\textsuperscript{394}

While working together, Fairbanks and Hafen developed an even deeper friendship. On one occasion Hafen explained to his wife, "John and I are something like you and Olive when we get together, we talk till we see stars, we can hardly get any

\textsuperscript{391} Conant, 25.

\textsuperscript{392} John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 14 June 1902, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{393} John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 26 February 1902, Perry Special Collections; John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 8 March 1902, Perry Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{394} John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 8 March 1902, Perry Special Collections.
sleep." As colleagues, the two men shared similar circumstances, and thus they understood one another's feelings, dreams, and burdens. Furthermore, since they shared a deep passion for art, they enjoyed discussing the sites and paintings they observed. In addition to common interests, the two friends shared a similar faith in God. They prayed and read from the scriptures together each morning and evening.

Unacquainted with culinary skills, Fairbanks and Hafen also encountered several humorous experiences as they traveled together. In one letter, Hafen explained to his wife: "I do not know of anything that increases in bulk as much as rice does by cooking. . . I had to hand out every dish and empty can we had about us to correll [sic] the swelling stuff. I wondered if it was going to fill the room before it got through! I guess Johnny can elaborate on this a little. When he came home he saw rice everywhere he looked."

When Hafen invited Fairbanks to travel east with him, both men struggled financially. Aware of the need to become acquainted with those involved in professional art, and determined to have their own works placed in the public eye, Hafen again included his friend in his plans. Although discouraged himself, he always took the time to assist and encourage Fairbanks, and selflessly led him down the path of professional art, hoping the two of them could ultimately achieve public recognition. Together, they embraced opportunities in an effort to succeed in their field. Once again, Hafen's support encouraged Fairbanks to follow his dreams.

---

395 John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 26 February 1902, Perry Special Collections.
396 John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 12 March 1902, Perry Special Collections.
397 John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 3 May 1902, Perry Special Collections.
Farm in Canada

When Fairbanks returned home from the East, he continued to paint, but eventually became overwhelmed with discouragement. As in his days in Paris, he feared he could never obtain success. In desperation, he purchased one-hundred-sixty acres of land in Raymond, Canada, in 1904 and left his artistic passions behind. But such a decision did not remain permanent, for Fairbanks could not stifle his passion for art.

Fairbanks hoped that if he did well as a wheat farmer he could resume his artistic activities and eliminate his financial burdens. Yet two years of crop failure resulted, and financial stability eluded him once again. During this time in Canada, he contracted an illness. While recovering, he had a life-changing dream in which he saw himself creating magnificent oil paintings. On waking from his slumber, he interpreted this dream as an omen that he should return to his former profession. After closing his affairs in Canada, he returned to Utah in 1916 and continued his career, believing that he had been inspired to persevere. Time would prove that this decision not only altered his personal future as an artist, it also had a profound impact on how he advanced Avard’s artistic opportunities.

In Salt Lake, John and J. Leo Fairbanks shared a studio, and once again, John fully embraced art. Shortly after recommencing his career, he developed a plan by which he hoped he could actively pursue his artistic dreams. Certain that Utahns needed to receive more exposure to artistic masterpieces, he approached different civic and

---

398 John Hafen to Thora Hafen, 15 April 1904, Perry Special Collections.

399 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.
educational institutions and proposed a plan. When speaking to officials, he agreed to accept commissions to copy famous works in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These paintings could then be placed in schools so children could become acquainted with the works of famous painters. Approximately twenty-five individuals agreed to support Fairbanks' plan and promised to pay in monthly installments for these paintings.400

Receiving a substantial amount of support for his artistic plan, Fairbanks quickly prepared for his return trip to the East in 1909. Earnestly hoping that this opportunity would prove beneficial to himself as well as to the furthering of art in Utah, he embraced his goal with enthusiasm and eager anticipation. At this point, his artistic focus returned and his former optimistic attitude again enveloped his very nature. Hoping for success, Fairbanks fervently prayed that this experience would alter the course of his career. Although disappointment eventually struck, the trip proved to be more a success than a failure.

**New York City**

Shortly after Fairbanks arrival in New York, his son Claude received a mission call to serve in the Eastern United States. Since he had wanted Avard to join him in New York, the family decided that the young boy should accompany Claude on his journey East. Then he could stay with his father. On Avard's arrival in the spring of 1910, father and son rejoiced at their opportunities.

Each day, as Fairbanks painted in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he became concerned that Avard had little diversity to occupy his mind, and knowing of his son's

---

400 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.
skill, he suggested that he should consider copying pieces of sculpture. Enthralled by the idea, Avard quickly agreed to follow his father's advice. In an earnest effort to facilitate the young man's talent, Fairbanks approached the director of the museum and asked if his son could produce copies of several significant works. Initially, the gentleman refused because Avard had barely entered his teenage years. But Fairbanks did not accept his response. Finally, in desperation, Avard recalled, his father exclaimed, "If he can do the copying, why not?" The man insisted that they needed to receive the approval of several artists before he could agree to the proposal, upon which Fairbanks informed him that as an artist he believed the boy should be given the chance to prove his ability. The director eventually agreed, but warned Fairbanks that his son would be dismissed if he proved incapable of the work.

As Avard began to sculpt, some of Fairbanks' focus shifted from his own work, and he began to teach and train his young son to become the artist he had always hoped to be. He believed that if Avard had the opportunity to pursue avenues that had proven impossible for him to follow, he could attain a level of success that his father had been unable to reach, a success that he believed his son could and should achieve.

Fairbanks immediately purchased the appropriate materials so his son could begin

---

401 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

402 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

403 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.
his work. And Avard excelled! As the museum director witnessed his astounding ability, he apologized for his initial response. Over time, those exposed to Avard’s work commented on his advanced skill, and several New York newspapers even wrote articles on the young sculptor. Fairbanks felt great joy as he witnessed his son’s success.\textsuperscript{404}

As Fairbanks copied different works, he continued to encourage his young son, who received a scholarship at the age of thirteen to study in the class of artist James Earl Fraser. Proud of Avard’s progress, and aware of his future potential, Fairbanks’ devoted his energy to helping him fulfill his goals. Perhaps he even hoped his own artistic dreams could be achieved through the work of his son.\textsuperscript{405}

Despite Avard’s success, Fairbanks became discouraged as the most of those who had hired him to create copies quit paying for his work. At this point, father and son had little to sustain themselves. But despite financial limitations, he developed a very close relationship with his son. He not only encouraged him to sculpt, he also discussed important artistic concepts with him, thus using their time in the East to train his most earnest pupil. Through artistic eyes he saw what others failed to notice and dreamed when others wallowed in discouragement.

Even though Fairbanks experienced limitations, he had the aspiration to become what he knew he could be. Besides his own persistence, he had the support of Church leaders who encouraged him to refine his skills. On one occasion, President Joseph F.

\textsuperscript{404} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{405} Ibid.
Smith wrote him, saying,

But we wish you to know that we fully appreciate the struggle one has to make in the line of art and succeed therein, while at the same time he is obliged to earn a livelihood. It is wonderful however what honest and persistent work will accomplish in time, and it will be for you and your sons to nail the colors to the mast, so to speak, trusting in the Lord and your own good works to enable you to achieve the success you are striving for.406

Notwithstanding the time Fairbanks spent creating copies of renowned works of art, he also had an overwhelming desire to produce original works. Yet he quickly discovered that such a goal proved financially impossible. Adequate remuneration seemed to come only when he produced copies. Notwithstanding such discouragement, he continued to create many paintings, especially during the summers when Avard and he spent time in New Jersey visiting with distant family members. During this time, Fairbanks sketched scenes in the countryside and then devoted the winter months to completing these works.

Just as Fairbanks had hoped to achieve artistic success as an art student in Paris, he fervently hoped to receive public recognition as a professional artist with the works he produced after returning home from the art mission. In New York, he embraced his dream again, and thus his longing to create great masterpieces returned. But beyond his hopes for his own achievements, he was a "loyal idealist for the people of the West, particularly those of the Latter-Day Saint faith, he hoped that through his ambitions and his interest, he would be one of the builders of an outstanding cultural influence in Utah

that would go down in history. Uncertain about the results of his own career in the
future, Fairbanks attempted to impress his idealism on his son.

As Fairbanks continued painting in New York, he developed the desire to return
to Europe to enhance his own skills and to allow Avard to further develop his sculpting
abilities. Although too young to understand the sacrifices his father made to enable the
success of his son, Avard later explained,

This is rather sacred to me, but time after time in prayers at night before repairing to
bed, my father would ask of our heavenly father, to help us become great artists that
we may be an influence for an advancement of our people. This was a very fervent
prayer, and of course it was his hope and his endeavor. He had now dedicated his
life to his art, and he was looking forward to my dedication of my abilities to the
same purpose. He was anxious for me to have the very best in training from the
very best sources possible.

After returning to Utah, the Fairbanks sought ways to earn money so European
study could become a possibility. While pursuing this goal, they devoted much time to
creating works in their studio, the old Social Hall, located on State Street between South
Temple and First South in Salt Lake.

Return to Paris

Fairbanks' desire to return to Europe remained strong, but once again, he lacked

---

407 Eugene Fairbanks Interview

408 Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

409 Eugene Fairbanks Interview

410 "This building had a large, spacious auditorium, a stage with a slanting floor, rooms
beneath the stage and a large basement room. I converted part of the basement into my casting
shop. The dressing rooms which had been used for actors and actresses, we converted into a
photographic dark room, and the large, spacious auditorium was used for an exhibition gallery." Eugene Fairbanks Interview.
finances. Following two years of monetary failure, he feared they could not study in Europe. Despite these fears, Fairbanks still felt impressed to pursue this goal. Following careful reflection and sincere prayer, he approached Church authorities and requested advance credit on artwork to help finance European study. To his great joy, they enthusiastically supported this idea and allowed him $75.00 per month to help sustain him throughout his affairs.\(^{411}\) Once again, the actions of the Church displayed its interest in art and its determination to encourage substantial artistic works. Yet despite this monetary assistance, the Fairbanks still lacked sufficient funds to take this important trip. Avard soon solved this problem, however, after developing a clever plan.\(^{412}\)

While searching for a solution to the financial situation, Avard recalled the fable of Antonio Canova, a ten-year-old Italian boy who sculpted a lion out of butter, a creation that made it possible for him to pursue a career as a sculptor. With time, Canova became one of the most renowned Italian sculptors. Inspired by the thoughts of this story, the young man approached Jensen Creamery Company with a proposal. During his interview, he shared the story of Canova and informed the manager that he could model a lion in butter for the approaching state fair to help promote the company's products. Fascinated by the idea, the president agreed to hire him. Since this masterpiece attracted a substantial crowd, Avard earned most of the money they needed to travel to Paris.\(^ {413}\) Thus, on 22 January 1914, Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, George Albert Smith and

\(^{411}\) Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

\(^{412}\) Eugene Fairbanks Interview.

\(^{413}\) Eugene Fairbanks Interview.
Seymour B. Young gave John B. and Avard Fairbanks a special blessing as they left for Europe to further pursue studies in art.\(^{414}\)

Fairbanks, anticipating his return to Paris, felt intense gratitude at the thought of his young son receiving the opportunity to study there while so young. At the time, Avard was nineteen years younger than Fairbanks had been when he first entered art training in Paris, and the father knew that such an opportunity would prove fruitful. He longed for his son to achieve his full potential, and hoped to be able to enhance his own skills as he resumed his personal studies.

On their way to Paris in 1914, John and Avard Fairbanks traveled to Boston, and while in Massachusetts visited the Fairbanks homestead in Dedham.\(^{415}\) From Boston they sailed to Liverpool on the ship Cymeric. As they arrived in Paris, they met with Virgil Hafen, son of John Hafen, who helped them settle in the city. Immediately, the younger Hafen took them to the École Nationale des Beaux Arts, and suggested that Avard study under famous sculptor Jean Antoine Injalbert (1845–1933). Following Avard’s introduction to this exceptional institution, they traveled to the Académie Julian so John Fairbanks could visit his former school.

While John Fairbanks studied privately, Avard worked under the direction of his professor until the beginning of summer vacation. Then, throughout the summer season, father and son stayed in a small town called Saint Hypolyte Sur le Doubs, near the Swiss border. John painted pastoral scenes in the nearby countryside while Avard studied the

\(^{414}\) James Edward Talmage, Journal, 22 January 1914, Perry Special Collections.

\(^{415}\) John later painted scenes of this home.
French language.

As World War I began, the Fairbanks had to alter their educational plans. While residing in the countryside, they learned of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. As the government called men into military service and political conditions became increasingly unstable, Fairbanks decided that they needed to return home. Achieving such a goal proved difficult, because father and son were constantly mistaken for spies. After catching the last train west from Paris, John and Avard Fairbanks left on a ship from Liverpool a few days later. When they arrived in New York, they only had fifteen cents left. J. Leo telegraphed some money to them, and they returned home.416

Although shortened because of the war, the trip to Paris had a profound impact on the Fairbanks. While there, John Fairbanks not only reacquainted himself with professional artists and painted in the French countryside, he also had the privilege to witness his son excel in his endeavors. Studying at the École des Beaux Arts, an institution where it was difficult to gain acceptance, was a magnificent achievement, especially for one so young. Fairbanks felt overjoyed as he witnessed his son make such impressive advancements. He also gained more confidence and saw the passion he felt for his own work enhanced. In Paris, Fairbanks recalled why he was an artist.

Later Art

In February 1917, the impression came to Fairbanks that he needed to paint scenes from Zion’s Canyon.417 He left for his destination on 10 May, staying in the home of

416 Avard Fairbanks Collection, Perry Special Collections.

417 Kirk, Fairbanks Family in the West, 238.
Oliver D. Gifford. After a short courtship with Gifford’s daughter, Florence, the couple was married in the Salt Lake Temple on 21 September 1917 by Joseph F. Smith.\textsuperscript{418} The Fairbanks’ spent the first winter of their marriage in Southern Utah while John painted murals in the World Room of the St. George Temple and their summer in Zion’s Canyon while Fairbanks painted scenes from there.\textsuperscript{419} He also painted murals in the Mesa, Arizona Temple.\textsuperscript{420}

The family later moved to Springdale, Utah, for several years because Florence’s mother had become an invalid and they had to care for her.\textsuperscript{421} While living there, Fairbanks continued to paint scenes of Zion’s Canyon. One of his works from this period is known as \textit{The Great White Throne}. On moving back to their home in Salt Lake City, Fairbanks had a beautiful studio built where he could spend his time painting.\textsuperscript{422} They raised their five children and one niece at their home at 1111 Whitlock Avenue.\textsuperscript{423}

On 3 September 1933, Fairbanks was called as patriarch\textsuperscript{424} of the Granite stake. This same year, the Church asked J. Leo and Avard to create the Mormon display for the

\textsuperscript{418} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{419} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{420} “Artist’s Rites Being Planned,” \textit{The Deseret News}, 17 June 1940.

\textsuperscript{421} Kirk, \textit{Fairbanks Family in the West}, 240.

\textsuperscript{422} Kirk, 241.

\textsuperscript{423} Kirk, \textit{Fairbanks Family in the West}, 241.

\textsuperscript{424} Patriarchs, also known as evangelists, hold an ordained office in the Melchizedek Priesthood of the Church. Patriarch’s give blessings to members of the Church which provide spiritual direction and reveal an individual’s lineage in the House of Israel.
Columbian Exposition in Chicago. John also participated in this project. They were asked to tell the story of Mormonism through art; the display was located in the hall of religion.\textsuperscript{425} Avard sculpted, J. Leo created stained glass windows, and John painted scenes depicting events such as the pioneers entering the Salt Lake Valley, the beginning of irrigation in Utah, encampment on the plains, and the first winter in the Salt Lake Valley.\textsuperscript{426} Such an opportunity allowed John to place his faith on canvas. For the remainder of his life, Fairbanks continued to paint. After suffering from prostate cancer and kidney stone, he passed away on 15 June 1940 from recurring kidney stones.

**Conclusion**

Several portraits of John B. Fairbanks exist, thus providing individuals with a knowledge of his exterior appearance. Although his warm, gentle, friendly eyes captured in these pictures imply much about his selfless nature, they do not completely explain who he was and how he developed as an artist. Naturally, an interior portrait or biography of Fairbanks’ life is necessary for one seeking to understand the landscape of his past. By considering more than the profile of this early Utah artist, one can understand the attributes that made him who he was and the processes that prepared him to work in his chosen field. When this occurs, one can see that Fairbanks accomplished more than sketching and painting; he also encouraged his sons to develop personal legacies.

More than talent, Fairbanks had determination and an overwhelming desire to

\textsuperscript{425} "Century of Progress Exposition 1933," (Chicago: Northern States Mission, 1933), 1.
\textsuperscript{426} Ibid.
please his Creator. Even when difficult circumstance arose, he embraced his career and contributed to the artistic environment of Utah and the Church. Because of his strong faith and endless optimism, many of his subjects display his appreciation for divine creations and a love for his Latter-day Saint heritage. A pictorial historian and theologian, he shared the past and his beliefs on canvas.

Perhaps Fairbanks’ determination to educate others became his greatest contribution to the world of art. Quietly and simply, he sought to further art education in Utah, and thus he has been all but forgotten. To Fairbanks, prestige was secondary. Rather than seeking personal gain, he focused on exposing those interested in art to great works, and encouraging individuals hoping to pursue an art career to follow their hearts.

Fairbanks fulfilled the promises he made as an art missionary. He held the Paris Art Mission most sacred, and believed he had the duty to educate others and to contribute to the aesthetic environment of Utah and the Church. He not only trained artists in the classroom, he also taught his sons to become exceptional artists. Certainly the legacy of Fairbanks has lived on through his successors.

Fairbanks gave his soul as an artist so others could become what he always hoped to be. He shared his training and encouraged other artists to seek further knowledge and understanding. He hoped his efforts would impact others; and they did. John B. Fairbanks’ career as an artist made a difference.427

427 Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken.”
APPENDIX A

28 April 1817
John Boylston Fairbanks born in Queensbury, Washington County, New York, to Joseph and Polly White Fairbanks

Spring 1820
Joseph Smith’s First Vision

11 July 1822
Sarah Van Wagoner born at Pompton, Bergen County, New Jersey

1839
Nauvoo became the gathering center and headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

1840s’-1850’s
Barbizon Movement

16 March 1843
John Boylston Fairbanks baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Elder John Leach

4 February 1844
Van Wagoner family baptized members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

27 June 1844
Death of the Prophet Joseph Smith

31 August 1844
John Boylston Fairbanks married Sarah Van Wagoner (John Leach performed the ceremony)

27 September 1844
Fairbanks’s leave Meads Basin, New Jersey, for Nauvoo, Illinois

1 November 1844
John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks arrive in Nauvoo.
1844–1845
John Boylston Fairbanks worked on the Nauvoo Temple as a stonemason.

10 December 1845
John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple.

1 January 1846
The first marriage sealing performed in the Nauvoo Temple.

23 January 1846
John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks sealed in the Nauvoo Temple.

25 April 1846
The Fairbanks family traveled to Winter Quarters, Nebraska from Nauvoo, Illinois, in the General Exodous.

27 November 1846
Sarah Fairbanks gave birth to daughter Harriet in Winter Quarters, Nebraska.

4 December 1846
Sarah Fairbanks’s father, Halmagh John Van Wagoner, passed away in Winter Quarters, Nebraska.

26 February 1847
Joseph Fairbanks, father of John Boylston Fairbanks, passed away at Winter Quarters, Nebraska.

1847
Sarah Fairbanks’s mother, Mary Van Houten Van Wagoner, passed away in Winter Quarters, Nebraska.

14 January 1847
Brigham Young receives the revelation now recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 136.

Spring 1847
General Exodous of the Mormon Pioneers begins.

17 June 1847
John Boylston Fairbanks chosen as captain of the fourth ten of the second fifty of the third hundred, Willard Snow being captain of the fifty and Jedediah M. Grant captain of the hundred.
17 June 1847
The Fairbanks family leaves Winter Quarters, Nebraska, and resumes their westward journey.

6 October 1847
Fairbanks family arrives in Salt Lake City.

1847
A covered wagon serves as the Fairbanks family’s first home in the Salt Lake Valley.

22 February 1849
The Church organized the first ward in Salt Lake. John Boylton served as ward clerk and his brother David served as bishop.

1850
James Pace was asked by Brigham Young to settle Peteetneet Creek in Utah Valley. In 1851 Brigham Young re-named the town Pacen (now Payson), in honor of James Pace. Payson is sixty-six miles south of Salt Lake City. The creek near which the town is located is named in honor of Indian Chief Peteetneet.

1851
The Fairbanks family move to Payson.

1851
Fairbanks family and others resettled three miles east of Payson in Pondtown (now Salem).

6 April 1853
Cornerstones laid for the Salt Lake Temple.

1853
The Timpanogots Utes lived in Salem. After experiencing problems with the Native Americans, settlers in Pond Town, including the Fairbanks family, moved back to Payson.

1853
The Walker War began.

1853–1856
John Boylston Fairbanks served on the city council in Payson.
5 March 1855
John Boylston Fairbanks called to serve as the second counselor to Bishop Hancock in Payson, Utah

27 December 1855
Birth of John B. Fairbanks; he was the sixth child and fourth son of John Boylston and Sarah Fairbanks

1855–1859
The Fairbanks home in Payson was built sometime between these years. Although the exact construction date is not known, the date given by the Utah Register of Historic and Cultural sites is 1856 to 1862

1857
The beginning of the Albert Sidney Johnston affair

1857
Brigham Young had the Saints in the northern counties move South

24 February 1857
Lillie Annetta Huish born in St. Louis, Missouri, to Walter H. Huish and Ann Smith Huish.

15 February 1862
John Boylston Fairbanks called to serve as the bishop in Payson

1862
Fairbanks began school

1862
Fairbanks contracted typhoid fever and was forced to withdraw from school

1863
Fairbanks got an awl in his knee which led to an infection. He had to withdraw from school another year

1862–1863
While too ill to attend school, Fairbanks developed a greater interest in art. His mom taught him to grease paper so he could trace images

1863
In 1863 artists formed the Deseret Academy of Arts; it was the first art school in the western United States. Dan Weggeland, George Ottinger, and John Tullidge
taught drawing and painting, but the academy only lasted ten months

1868
Rudolphe Julian founded the Académie Julian

**September 1868**
School of the Prophets organized in the Fairbanks home.

**19 November 1869**
John Boylston Fairbanks called on a mission to the eastern United States

1870s
Americans increasingly began to seek art training in Europe

1870
John Hafen began to study art in Karl G. Maeser's Twentieth Ward Academy.

10 **April 1870**
John Boylston Fairbanks returns from his mission to the eastern United States.

1870s
John Hafen was in Payson and became friends with John Fairbanks. Fairbanks would watch Hafen paint

1870s
Hafen worked for photographer Charles R. Savage

1870s
Lorus Pratt studied art in England

20 **April 1871**
John Boylston served a mission in Great Britain

1871
Joseph Smith Tanner appointed bishop of Payson

1873
John Hafen first came to public notice

1874
The term “Impressionism” was coined. It came from an 1874 work by Claude Monet entitled ‘Impression: Sunrise.’
1874
A group of young artists defied the official Salon in Paris and organized an exhibition of their own.

14 May 1875
John Boylston died of pneumonia.

1875
Fairbanks added initial “B” to his name at the request of his mother.

October 1875
Brigham Young officially organized the Southern States Mission in General Conference.

1875
Fairbanks met John Hafen.

1877
Fairbanks painted *European Castle*, his first oil painting.
Fairbanks served as the president of Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association.
Fairbanks attends school; he is very concerned with spelling correctly.
Fairbanks is asked to record patriarchal blessings for Brother Young.

1877
Completion and dedication of the St. George Temple.

10 February 1877
John B. Fairbanks received patriarchal blessing from Zebedee Colton.

26 February 1877
John B. Fairbanks was appointed editor of the Philomathean Society.

24 July 1877
John B. Fairbanks was married to Lillie Huish in the home of Bishop John Tanner.

October 1877
After harvest, John and Lillie took the two week trip to the St. George Temple in a covered wagon (with three other couples) to be sealed in the temple.
30 April 1878
J. Leo Fairbanks, the first child of John and Lillie Fairbanks, was born

1878–1888
John Henry Morgan appointed the mission president of the Southern States Mission

27 July 1880
Lillie Annetta (Nettie) Fairbanks was born

1880s
Society of Utah Artists initially formed.

1881
Danquart Weggeland painted in the Logan Temple; he also did some work in the St. George Temple in 1881.

October 1881
Fairbanks called to Southern States Mission in General Conference.

1881
Fairbanks canvassed copies of the book, Women of the Frontier, to help provide for his family while he served his mission.

10 October 1881
Fairbanks set apart as a missionary by Wilford Woodruff, Moses Thatcher, and Lorenzo Snow. He left for the southern states

1881–1883
Fairbanks served in the Southern States Mission

14 November 1881
Vernon Walter Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie, was born

1881
Salt Lake Art Association formed

1880s
Fairbanks begins to work as an artist

1882
Edmunds Act passed by the United States Congress
1883
Fairbanks returned from his mission to the southern states.

4 September 1883
Fairbanks released from his mission.

26 September 1883
Fairbanks arrives home (in Provo) from mission.

1883
Dan Weggeland and William Armitage painted in the Logan temple.

1883–1884
Fairbanks painted furniture for his brother-in-law for $21 a month.

Fairbanks worked as a clerk in Mr. Hancock’s store for $40 a month; he gave his job to a crippled man with a large family.

1884
Hafen and Fairbanks went sketching in the late summer and autumn of 1884 in and around Ogden and Logan. While thus sojourning, they took photographs of scenery and people and later enlarged them into paintings.

1884
Fairbanks worked as a photo enlarger for Springville’s portrait photographer George Edward Anderson.

1884
Completion and dedication of the Logan Temple.

9 November 1884
Birth of Ervon Huish Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks.

26 February 1886
Birth of LeRoy Smith Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks.

May 1886
In May 1886 a crayon portrait by Fairbanks of George Q. Cannon was said to possess ‘genuine merit.’

1887
Edmunds-Tucker Act passed by the Congress of the United States.
March 1887
In March 1887 Fairbanks’s portrait of Heber J. Grant, in crayon, was called ‘an excellent likeness, the best we have examined of the handiwork of the artist.’

29 September 1887
Birth of Ortho Lane Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks

September 1888
James Taylor Harwood, Cyrus E. Dallin, and John Willard Clawson arrived in Paris to study at the Académie Julian

1888
William C. Morris did work in the Manti temple in 1888 and Dan Weggeland and CCA Christensen produced murals there in the same period.

1888
Completion and dedication of Manti Temple

1889
During the early spring, Fairbanks hustled newspapers to earn money

12 June 1889
Birth of Claude Loraine Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks

1890
Wilford Woodruff announces the Manifesto which ends the practice of plural marriage

1890
American Club formed at the Académie Julian

April/May 1890
John Hafen, Fairbanks, and Lorus Pratt prayed on Ensign Peak about the Paris Art Mission.

3 June 1890
Hafen, Pratt, and Fairbanks were set apart as official missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by apostles Anthon H. Lund and Heber J. Grant, as well as Seymour B. Young of the First Counsel of the Seventy.

12 July 1890
The Paris Art missionaries arrived in Liverpool
24 July 1890
The Paris Art missionaries arrived in Paris

25 July 1890
The art missionaries met with Utah artist C.E. Dallin

December 1890
The art missionaries had Christmas dinner with the American Club in Paris

December 1890
Edwin Evans arrived in Paris as member of the Paris Art Mission

1890-1900
More than 6000 missionaries left the inter-mountian west to preach throughout the world

1891
Herman Haag joined the art missionaries in Paris

Spring 1891
Each of the art missionaries try to get picture accepted in the concours.
Fairbanks’s works were not accepted

Summer 1891
Fairbanks studied in the village of Chilleurs” met Mr. Adolph Schultz who critiqued his work for him

17 August 1891
John Hafen arrived back in Salt Lake City

6 April 1892
The capstone was placed on the Salt Lake Temple

April 1892
The art missionaries received a letter from Hafen informing them of the approaching completion of the Salt Lake Temple and encouraging them to think about the work

Spring 1892
Temple plans

11 May 1892
Birth of Florence Gifford in Springdale, Utah, to Oliver Demill and Alice Virginia Allred Gifford
Summer 1892
John B. Fairbanks painted with artist Albert Gabriel Rigolot in the French countryside

27 July 1892
John Fairbanks sends his last letter from Paris

October/November 1892
John Hafen begins working on the Salt Lake Temple murals

1892
By the end of the year all of the art missionaries had returned to Utah from Paris

January 1893
Hafen, Evans, Weggeland, Fairbanks, and Pratt submitted plans for the Salt Lake Temple murals

12 January 1893
The temple artists met with President Wilford Woodruff in the Temple and discussed painting; President Woodruff greed to pay them $300 a month

1893
Economic depression in the United States; affected Utah citizens

6 April 1893
Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple

1893
Society of Utah artists reestablished with Edwin Evans as president, John Hafen as vice-president, Herman Haag as secretary, John Clawson as treasurer, and James Harwood as custodian. Other charter members included John Fairbanks and Lorus Pratt.

13 January 1894
Birth of LaMar Raymond Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks

14 January 1894
Birth of Delamar Rigolot Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks
Death of LaMar Raymond Fairbanks

1895
Society of Utah Artists formally reorganized
9 September 1895

Birth and death of Alma Clyde Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks

1896

Utah accepted as the 45th state by Congress

1896

Fairbanks family rented out their home in Payson and moved to Provo so Nettie could attend Brigham Young Academy

1896

Fairbanks opened a photography studio called Fairbanks’ Art Studio at Union Block in Provo, Utah

2 March 1897

Birth of Avard Tennyson Fairbanks, last child of John and Lillie Fairbanks

1898

Sarah Fairbanks passed away

8 May 1898

Death of Lillie Huish Fairbanks after sustaining injuries from a fall

November 1898

John B. and J. Leo Fairbanks opened a two week exhibition of their paintings in Provo

1898

John moved to Ogden, Utah, after being appointed the supervisor of art in their public schools

1899

The Utah State Legislature created the Utah Art Institute (Alice Merrill Horne)

July 1899

Fairbanks appointed to the board of the newly created Utah Art Institute

August 1899

Fairbanks was appointed to teach in the LDS college in Salt Lake City

17 April 1900

Fairbanks left as a member of the Benjamin Cluff Expedition to Central America
December 1901
Fairbanks returned home from the Benjamin Cluff Expedition

1902
Fairbanks and Hafen traveled in the eastern United States

1905
Fairbanks moved to the province of Alberta, Canada to farm on a 250 acre homestead. He had a dream that he needed to return to his art work.

1909
Fairbanks went to copy paintings in New York

1910
Avard Fairbanks joined his father in New York

1911
The Church opened a mission in Paris, France

Fall 1913
John and Avard Fairbanks left to study art in Europe. Avard was admitted as a student at the l'École Nationale des Beaux Arts.

August 1914
World War I broke out while John and Avard Fairbanks were in Europe

February 1917
Fairbanks traveled to Zions Canyon to do some paintings

21 September 1917
Fairbanks married Florence Gifford with President Joseph F. Smith officiating.

Winter 1917–1918
Fairbanks painted the World Room in the St. George Temple

Summer 1918
Fairbanks painted in Zion's Canyon

15 October 1919
Birth of Florence Annetta Fairbanks, daughter of John and Florence Fairbanks
13 November 1920
Birth of Merwin Gifford Fairbanks, son of John and Florence Fairbanks

29 March 1922
Birth of John B. Fairbanks Jr., son of John and Florence Fairbanks

2 November 1924
Birth of Oliver Kendall Fairbanks, son of John and Florence Fairbanks

1926
The Fairbanks family moved to Springdale, Utah. They lived there for five years.

19 June 1927
Birth of Farrall D. Fairbanks, son of John and Lillie Fairbanks

1928
The Fairbanks family moved back to their home in Salt Lake City, located at 1111 Whitlock Avenue

1933
Columbian Exposition in Chicago

3 September 1933
Fairbanks became an LDS Church Patriarch of the Granite Stake

16 June 1940
Fairbanks passed away at the age of 84.

20 June 1952
Florence Gifford Fairbanks passed away
Fig. 2 John B. Fairbanks, *European Castle*, 1877, oil on canvas, 17" x 23". Fairbanks Family Collection.
Fig. 3 John B. Fairbanks/Albert Gabriel Rigolot, *Meadow of Trees*, circa 1892, oil on canvas, Fairbanks Family Collection
Fig. 4 Albert Gabriel Rigolot, *Summer in the Vale of Chevreuse*, oil on canvas, Springville Museum of Art.
Fig. 5 John B. Fairbanks, *Aspen Grove*, 1916, oil on canvas, 30" x 24 1/8", Brigham Young University Museum of Fine Arts, Provo, Utah.
Fig. 6 John B. Fairbanks, *Backyard in France*, 1892, oil on canvas, 28" x 22"
Fairbanks Family Collection
Fig. 7 John B. Fairbanks, Grain Stacks in France, circa 1890, oil on canvas, 15" x 21 1/4" Brigham Young University Museum of Fine Arts, Provo, Utah.
Fig. 8 John B. Fairbanks, *Harvesting in Utah Valley*, undated, oil on canvas, 34" x 38" Brigham Young University Museum of Fine Arts, Provo, Utah
Fig. 9 John B. Fairbanks, *Fairbanks Home*, 1933, Fairbanks Family Collection
Fig. 10 John B. Fairbanks, *Magdalena River*, circa 1901, oil on canvas, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City, Utah.
Fig. 11 Photograph of John B. Fairbanks, circa 1885, Springville Museum of Art, Springville, Utah.
Holiness to the Lord.

To all persons to whom this bears the same:

This certificate that the bearer, Elder

is in good standing and

admitting with the Church and Society, and in the United States Missionary

Yours obediently,
s

Fig. 12 Southern States Mission Certificate, 1881, Florence Fairbanks Cope, Spanish Fork, Utah
Fig. 13 Paris Art Mission Certificate, 1890, Florence Fairbanks Cope, Spanish Fork, Utah
Fig. 14 American Artists Taken at the American Club in Paris, circa 1890, Springville Museum of Art
(John Fairbanks is on the far right in the row seated on chairs).
Fig. 15 Students at the Académie Julian, circa 1890, Florence Fairbanks Cope, Spanish Fork, Utah.
John B. Fairbanks is located at the bottom third from the right, second row up
Fig. 16 Photograph of John B. Fairbanks' Art Studio, Florence Fairbanks Cope, Spanish Fork, Utah
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Cluff, Benjamin, Papers and Correspondence, 1900–1902, L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.


Deseret News

Deseret Weekly News


Fairbanks, John Boylston. 1846–1847 Diary. Special Collections, Marriot Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.


Jenson, Andrew, et al. eds. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 6 April 1830–31 December 1972. Salt Lake City: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Kenney, Scott. Research Collection. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.


Salt Lake Tribune

Simmons, Edward. From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922.

Talmage, James Edward. 1876-1933. The Collection of James Edward Talmage. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah


Secondary Sources


Gomes, Rosalie. *Impressions of Giverny: A Painter’s Paradise 1883–1914*. San Francisco:


Haseltine, James L. *100 Years of Utah Painting*. Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, Inc., 1965.


King, Pauline. *American Mural Painting: A study of the Important Decorations by*


Rhodes, Albert. “‘Views Abroad.” *Galaxy* 16 (July 1873): 5–15.


Swanson, V.G. et al., *Utah Painting and Sculpture*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith Publisher, 1997.


