Hoary-Headed Saints: the Aged in Nineteenth-Century Mormon Culture

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HOARY-HEADED SAINTS: THE AGED
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
MORMON CULTURE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts

by
Brian D. Reeves
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This Thesis, by Brian D. Reeves, is accepted in its present form by the Department of History of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree Master of Arts.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The influence of my aunt and uncle, Truss and Mary Lou Butterfield of Logan, Utah, lies at the heart of my decision to focus my research on old age. I lived in their home for nearly three years while attending Utah State University between 1976 and 1981, during which time my maternal grandparents, Ervin T. and Brenda Smith Hawkins, also lived there. They made their home with the Butterfields for about ten years, and before them my great-grandmother, Zerviah Greene Smith, spent the last three years of her life there.

I am indebted to Charles M. (Chick) Hatch, also of Logan, for lending me copies of his transcripts of United States Census records for Cache County, Utah, for 1860, 1870, and 1880. I also appreciate the interest of Dean L. May of the University of Utah and Charles S. Peterson of Utah State University, who recommended Chick Hatch's work to me.

Ian Barber, who has done extensive research at the LDS Church Archives, led me to valuable references pertaining to old age in the Journal of Discourses, Salt Lake Stake Melchizedek Priesthood Minutes, and journal of Brigham Young, Jr. Gordon Irving and Larry Draper of the
Church Historical Department shared information with me from their forthcoming theses on Church participation in Union, Utah, and wealth patterns in Salt Lake City, respectively. Others in the Historical Department have also been generous in pointing out sources and sharing insights.

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INTRODUCTION

Thanks to advancements in health and sanitation in the United States during the twentieth century, the number of older persons in the population has increased dramatically. During the past century America’s population over 65 "has increased in size seventeen times--more than triple the rate of the population in general". In Utah, the proportion of individuals over 65 in the general population has more than doubled since 1900, from 3.6 percent to over 7.5 percent in 1980.

The increase in the number of aged people has led in recent decades to a marked growth in the number of studies concerning them. However, most works on old age have focused on contemporary issues. Until the mid-1970s, little attention was paid to the history of old age. As late as 1982 one scholar wrote, "Preindustrial old age is . . . , from the historian’s standpoint, almost virgin

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territory, a gap to be filled."³

In the late 1970s, two authors, W. Andrew Achenbaum and David Hackett Fischer, published major works giving an overview of old age in America from the colonial era to the present.⁴ Their studies are still considered by many to be the leading histories of old age.⁵

In the introduction to his work, Achenbaum argues that "historical perspectives in gerontology are crucial. Studying the past can help us to understand the predicament of older people in contemporary American society."⁶ Fischer begins on a similar note: "If we really wish to confront the social problems of aging in our own time, we must begin by understanding them. And if we want to understand them, we must know something of their history."⁷

Peter N. Stearns also contends that understanding the stations and roles of older persons in the past will shed greater light on the larger world in which they lived. "What was said about the old, and what was done, and the


⁵Stearns, p. 2.

⁶Achenbaum, p. 6.

⁷Fischer, p. 5.
gap between may provide significant insight into the way preindustrial societies operated." 8

In the mid- to late-1970s, scholars began utilizing demographic data to identify characteristics of the aged experience in past generations. John Demos, Howard P. Chudacoff, Tamara K. Hareven, and Daniel Scott Smith were among the first to take this approach. Demos focused on social status, wealth, family relationships and other aspects of old age in New England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 9 Chudacoff and Hareven looked at household and family structures of older persons living in Providence, Rhode Island between 1865 and 1900. 10 In one of his studies, Daniel Scott Smith conducted a national sample of aged persons on the 1900 United States Census to determine how household structure was affected by such things as employment and loss of a spouse. 11

In 1978, Stuart F. Spicker and others edited a compilation of articles on old age from various humanities

8 Stearns, p. 2.


disciplines, including literature, anthropology and art.\textsuperscript{12} In 1982, Peter N. Stearns edited a work which dealt with old age in different preindustrial cultures.\textsuperscript{13} A few articles in Stearns’ book deal with modern preindustrial societies, such as India.

A recent work by Carol Haber includes a chapter giving a concise, clear view of prevalent attitudes toward the aged in the late nineteenth century; she also discusses clinical aspects of aging.\textsuperscript{14} Michel R. Dahlin’s 1983 dissertation contains valuable insights about the impact of industrialization on the elderly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{15}

Scholarly interest in the history of old age has increased rapidly during the past five years. Carol Haber pointed out in her bibliographic essay that it, like others, might be out of date before it went to press because so many new studies were underway.\textsuperscript{16} There is no

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12}Stuart F. Spicker et al., eds, Aging and the Elderly: Humanistic Perspectives in Gerontology (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, Inc., 1978).
\item \textsuperscript{13}Peter N. Stearns, ed., Old Age in Preindustrial Society (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982).
\item \textsuperscript{14}Carol Haber, Beyond Sixty-Five: The Dilemma of Old Age in America’s Past (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.)
\item \textsuperscript{15}Michel Robin Dahlin, "From Poorhouse to Pension: The Changing View of Old Age in America, 1890-1929," (Ph.d. dissertation, Stanford University, 1983).
\item \textsuperscript{16}Haber, p. 171.
\end{itemize}
concern, however, that libraries will be saturated with historical works on old age in the near future.

During the past fifteen years, a similar peak in interest has occurred in relation to Mormon history. As Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton claim, "A study of Mormonism is a justifiable aspect of the study of civilization and culture with roots in America and branches in most nations of the world."¹⁷ As with old age, the heightened interest in Mormonism stems from the numeric growth of the Church in recent decades. We may carry the parallel one step further and say, as has been said concerning the aged, that to understand the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today, one must also understand its past.

The time is ripe for a history of old age in the Mormon culture. This study addresses that topic, emphasizing the nineteenth century. David Hackett Fischer commented that the subject of old age "is enormous, and since we lack secondary materials, it must be studied almost entirely through primary sources. And those sources were originally arranged and indexed by archivists whose minds were on other things."¹⁸

Fischer was right in saying that the subject is

¹⁸Fischer, p. 25.
enormous, and that archivists have largely ignored it. The reason they have is that old age, like children, church, school, illness, death, and a multitude of other topics, was part of the fabric of everyday life. Archivists usually identify those topics which stand out in manuscript collections, not those which they have in common.

With few exceptions, the only way to get documents to surrender their information about the aged is to spend a lot of time going through them. As a manuscripts cataloger in the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have been fortunate enough to encounter obscure references to old age which will likely never appear in a subject catalog.

There are, however, primary and secondary sources which contain a wealth of information on the subject. Foremost among these are the journals of George Goddard and the diaries of C.R. Savage. Goddard and Savage were driving forces behind the Old Folks movement, which was popular at the turn of the century. The Goddard collection is in the LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City, as is a microfilm copy of Savage's diaries; most of the original Savage diaries are at Brigham Young University.

Mary Ann Weston Maughan commented at length in her journal on her participation in Old Folks excursions during her later years. Several series of Old Folks Committee papers give insights into its workings and effectiveness. There were also stake and ward Old Folks committees which
kept records, but they date from about the turn of the century, which marks the end of this study's focus. The above collections are all housed in the LDS Church Archives. In addition, the Millennial Star, a Church publication in Great Britain, commented regularly on Old Folks excursions, and unlike some other sources of potential value, has been indexed. 19

Several secondary works contain references to the Mormon aged. Florence A. Merriam, a non-Mormon writer, spent one summer in a small Utah town. Her published account of the experience includes valuable information on her interactions with an old widow she met there. 20 Kenneth Godfrey, Audrey Godfrey, and Jill Derr have produced a group of excerpts from writings of Mormon women which has been helpful. Biographical compilations edited by Vicky Burgess-Olson, Donald Q. Cannon, and David J. Whittaker, also contain valuable references. 21


Andrew Jenson’s *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, a four volume set, is indispensible as a reference tool in a work of this nature. Marvin Wiggins’ biographical index made birth- and deathdates for several individuals readily accessible.22

Two important factors in the formulation of Mormon attitudes toward the elderly were historical traditions and theological concepts, which were reinforced in the minds of Church members by their spiritual leaders. Donna Hill’s biography of Joseph Smith, the first president of the Church, contains insights into his family relationships which are helpful in understanding his views on old age, as does Richard L. Anderson’s work on Joseph Smith’s New England ancestry. Joseph made references to the aged which would have been overlooked had it not been for Dean Jessee’s published compilation of his personal writings.23

Leonard Arrington’s recent biography of Brigham

________________________________________________________
21(continued)
*Nineteenth-Century Mormons* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985).


Young, the Church's second president, includes telling information on Young's views toward, and experience with, old age. Arrington and Davis Bitton collaborated on a one-volume history of the Church, as did James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard; both works give a good overview of Church history.

Latter-day Saints have comprised the majority of Utah's residents from 1847, when they first settled there, through the present. Dean May's "Demographic Portrait of the Mormons, 1830-1980," gives a good idea as to the make-up of the Latter-day Saint community in Utah.

An important element in understanding the aged and their role in society is an awareness of some of their identifying characteristics as a group. How many were there? What percentage did they form of the total population? What were their living arrangements? What did they do for work? This thesis addresses those questions, utilizing census records for Cache County, Utah between

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1860 and 1880.

Many of those who filled the ranks of Utah's elderly at the turn of the century were the same persons who had helped establish its communities during the preceding decades, and were honored as founding fathers and mothers. Also, the pattern of succession in the leadership of the Church resulted in a high number of elderly men in presiding positions. Because ecclesiastical leaders were highly regarded among Church members, a certain amount of respect for old age was also natural.

Between the 1880s and early 1900s, when antagonists leveled charges that the Church was a corrupt influence in society, its defenders pointed to the exceptional treatment of the elderly in Mormon society as one point of rebuttal. However, while most Latter-day Saints held aged persons in high regard who remained active in the faith, their feelings toward those who did not emigrate to the Rocky Mountains or who left the Church, were generally different.

The Church played an important role in providing for the emotional, spiritual and, in certain circumstances, temporal well-being of its aged members. Church callings, genealogy, and temple work gave some members a sense of fulfillment, while attendance at socials, worship services and other meetings provided even more with regular activity.

The Old Folks movement, which began with annual excursions in 1875, was a significant, sustained effort to
pay homage to Utah's elderly. It was begun by C.R. Savage, George Goddard, and Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter; Savage and Goddard were its foremost advocates until their deaths in 1909 and 1899, respectively.

Several old persons recorded their feelings about different aspects of their advanced years in journals and other writings. Subjects they addressed include living arrangements, family, work and finances, recreation, loneliness, sickness and medicine, death, and post-mortal life.

This study paints a picture of prevalent attitudes toward the Mormon elderly in the nineteenth century. It identifies some characteristics of the aged population, and discusses feelings expressed by individual older persons about different aspects of their lives. It is a first step in gaining a greater understanding of how they fit into the larger pictures of old age and the Mormon Church in nineteenth century America.
CHAPTER ONE

MORMON ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AGED
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."¹

Historian David Hackett Fischer notes that "Veneration has always been an important idea in Christianity, and still retains a special meaning for many denominations."² His statement is applicable to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has traditionally attached great importance to showing respect for the elderly.

Mormon leaders have pointed to treatment of the aged as a manifestation of the positive impact of Church teachings in the lives of its members. In a 1907 statement defending Latter-day Saint values, the First Presidency declared, "Here are our sons and daughters, submit them to any test of comparison you will; regard for truth, veneration for age, reverence for God". The statement

¹Proverbs 16:31.

further asserted that Mormons "will compare favorably, in the Christian virtues, . . . , with any community in this or any other country."  

The value placed on the aged in Mormon culture is partly rooted in the background of the Church's founder, Joseph Smith. "From his family, as well as from the religious and social crosscurrents in early America, Joseph Smith received a heritage steeped in the Puritan ethic". Veneration of parents and aged family members was one of the ideals the Smiths shared with other New Englanders.

The Bible, which was widely read and preached from in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, contains several passages extolling worthy qualities of old age. The Old Testament proclamation, "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding," is typical. The Old and New testaments contain numerous admonitions for people to honor and care for the elderly, which were "endlessly repeated in the sermon literature of early New England."  

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5 Job 12:12.

6 John Demos, "Old Age in Early New England," in Michael Gordon, ed., The American Family in Social— (Footnote continued)
Writers and preachers portrayed the elderly as the only ones who could grasp the true meaning of life, since it was believed that people did not achieve their full spiritual and character development until the attainment of old age. The elderly were links to the past and the future. If the past was honored, so were they, because they were closest to it. They were also honored because they were "literally and figuratively closer than others to God. They stand, as it were, near the boundary between the natural and supernatural worlds." Common belief held that most persons lived to be old because they practiced certain virtues, which included "temperance, moderation, industry, and exercise." The possession of these qualities gave them wisdom, which entitled them to dispense it to younger generations. John Adams, former president of the United States, argued that the only ones suited to be legislators and magistrates were "aged men who had been tossed and buffeted by the vicissitudes of Life, forced upon profound reflection by

6(continued) Historical Perspective (New York: St. Martin's Press, c2978), pp. 222.


9Achenbaum, p. 15.
grief and disappointments, and taught to command their passions."10

Land ownership was another important factor in the status enjoyed by the aged in pre-industrial America. Those who held title to the land, usually the fathers and grandfathers of younger persons, were treated with deference by the hopeful inheritors. This "landed inheritance pattern," according to Michel R. Dahlin, "had a powerful impact upon the social and economic position of the old. Even those who did not fit into this inheritance system subscribed to the cultural pattern . . . which it helped to create."11

The incidence of old age in America was used by some to try to substantiate the superiority of the American way of life. Scientists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries gathered data to try to prove that Americans, on the average, lived longer than people in Europe.12

Deference to the aged was the "scriptural ideal," as


12Achenbaum, pp. 12f. Demos says that "4-7 percent [was] the likely portion of elderly people in established New England communities"; no comparative figures are given for Europe.
Haber notes, "And in part, colonial society was organized in accordance with these principles," but she goes on to point out that reality did not always measure up to the ideal. A person's value was not based solely on his age, but was tied to wealth, land ownership, family, and ability to contribute to society through work, civic, and religious activities.

John Adams' comment about older men making the best legislators came in response to measures enacted in New York, Connecticut, and Maine to set upper age limits for some offices. Thomas Jefferson, eight years younger than Adams, thought that the tyranny of generations (older over younger) was unhealthy. He argued for regular change in people and policies, suggesting that the constitution and laws of a republic be rewritten every nineteen years.

Abraham Shoemaker's 1797 U.S. Almanack declared that "if youth be trifled away without improvement, manhood will be contemptible, and old age miserable." Cotton Mather, a noted New England clergyman, condemned intemperance among the aged: "For them that stagger with age at the same time


14 Haber, pp. 9-22, 26.

15 Fischer, pp. 80, 81.

16 Quoted in Achenbaum, p. 16.
to stagger with drink, 'tis too loathsome a thing to be mentioned without a very zealous detestation."\(^17\)

Mandatory retirement was practically unknown in early New England, but persons such as Cotton Mather pointed out that it was an appropriate step to take in old age:

Old folks often can't endure to be judged less able than ever they were for public appearances, or to be put out of offices. But good sir, be so wise as to disappear of your own accord, . . . . Let your quietus gratify you.\(^18\)

Ebenezer Gay, an eighteenth-century minister in Hingham, Massachusetts, served until he died at age 90. While Gay resisted retirement, he also acknowledged that "respect and position in theory depended on performance, not on past service, ascribed power, or humane considerations."\(^19\)

Relationships between the aged and their grandchildren was another common aspect of life in New England. It is unclear, as Demos points out, "Whether or not grandparenthood was 'invented' in early New England," but "it certainly seems to have flourished there."\(^20\)

\(^17\)Cotton Mather, Addresses to Old Men and Young Men and Little Children (Boston: R. Pierce, 1690), p. 37, quoted in Haber, p. 23. Haber's comments, which were interspersed with the quote, have been deleted here.

\(^18\)Idem, A Brief Essay on the Glory of Aged Piety (Boston: S. Kneel and T. Green, 1726), p. 28, quoted in Demos, p. 244.

Joseph Smith's experiences and attitudes with regard to the aged were similar to the New England culture to which he traced his roots. He was influenced greatly by his grandfathers. He said, in an 1843 discourse on freedom, "It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul. Civil and religious liberty was diffused into my soul by my grandfathers while they dangled me on their knees."21

Joseph's feeling for his grandparents helped shape his attitudes toward the aged, and influenced the depth of his religious commitment. His maternal grandfather, Solomon Mack, was converted to Christianity in 1810 at age 76. He determined thereafter to devote his life to serving God. Solomon had his autobiography published in 1811; it contained an account of his conversion. He traveled about the Vermont countryside distributing it, despite the fact that he was "a poor cripple" and could not "get on or off my horse without help."22 He died a few years later, in 1820, in Gilsum, New Hampshire.

Eighty-four-year-old Asael Smith, Sr., was living in Northern New York when he first heard of his grandson's visions in 1828. While the initial reaction of most of his

20Demos, p. 231.


22Solomon Mack, A Narrative of the Life of Solomon Mack (Windsor, Vt. [1811]), quoted in Anderson, pp. 50, 57; also Anderson, pp. 23-25.
family was unfavorable to accounts of young Joseph's experiences, Asael declared his belief in them, stating that "he always knew that God was going to raise up some branch of his family to be a great benefit to mankind." 23

Asael died in 1830, the year the Church was organized. Before he died he read most of the Book of Mormon and "fully believed it." 24 One of his grandsons, George A. Smith, noted with pride that he did so "without the aid of glasses." 25

In 1836 Mary Duty Smith, Asael's widow, set out from Northern New York on a 500-mile journey to see her family in Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph and his brother, Hyrum, met her at the wharf in Fairport, about twelve miles from Kirtland. They found lodgings for her near the wharf that evening, and returned with their cousin, Elias, and a carriage to pick her up the next morning. 26

Elias wrote in his journal on May 17 that Grandmother Smith was "well and as smart as I have ever seen her for

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24 Anderson, p. 113.
25 Ibid., pp. 113f.
26 Ibid.
ten years. . . . [She] was overjoyed at meeting her children, grandchildren, etc., in this place, whom she had not seen for many years, and many of them she had never had the satisfaction of beholding."27

Eliza R. Snow, a resident of Kirtland, recalled that the "aged matron was particularly pleased to see Joseph, and said she was convinced that he was the prophet whom her husband Asael had long ago predicted would be raised up in their family."28

Joseph was equally pleased to see his grandmother, but his satisfaction was marred by forebodings that her death was imminent. Eliza R. Snow recorded that when he heard of her arrival at Fairport, he "responded with earnestness, 'I wish she had set the time longer.'"29 On May 27, "After a short but happy visit with her descendants, Mary Duty Smith died in her sleep about sunset . . . . She was buried in the cemetery near the temple".30

Joseph's knowledge that his Smith grandparents believed in his work was a reassurance to him that he had a divinely-appointed mission to fulfill, and may have strengthened his resolve to accomplish it. Asael's

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29 Ibid., p. 217, footnote 226.

30 Ibid., pp. 197f.
declaration that he knew that God would raise up someone in his family "to be a great benefit to mankind,"31 is widely accepted in the Church today as being prophetic, although it is not canonized scripture.

Joseph esteemed greatly the counsel of wise, aged persons. In an 1843 sermon he said, "The way to get along in any important matter is to gather unto yourselves wise men, experienced and aged men, to assist in council in all times of trouble."32

His advice on that occasion was consistent with views expressed elsewhere in contemporary America. An 1834 article in the Knickerbocker suggested, "'By respecting the advice of an old man, we not only gratify the individual by making him feel that he is not living in vain, but we insure to ourselves a great chance of success in the matter at hand; for age advises us from experience, and not from untested theory.'"33

A few aged persons were among those whom Joseph counted as his most trusted friends. On 23 August 1842 he wrote feelingly concerning Joseph Knight, Sr., one of "the faithful few, . . . [who] have stood by me in every hour of

31Anderson, p. 112.

32Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols., 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1973), 5:389. The sermon was reported by Wilford Woodruff.

peril." 34 He continued,

for fifteen years has he been faithful and true, and
even handed, and exemplary and virtuous, and kind;
ever deviating to the right hand or to the left.
Behold he is a righteous man.

On the same occasion Joseph prayed in Brother Knight's
behalf, "May God Almighty lengthen out the old man's days;
and may his trembling, tortured and broken body be renewed,
. . . ." 36

In 1831 Joseph Smith received a revelation wherein
the Lord stated, "And it shall come to pass that those that
die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet
unto them; . . . ." 37 In light of Knight's advanced age
and poor physical condition, and considering the scriptural
promise just quoted, one could ask why Joseph did not
simply pray for him to die peacefully and thereby escape
unnecessary suffering.

Wilford Woodruff, speaking in St. George, Utah in
1877, recalled a statement made by Smith which gives his
prayer on behalf of Joseph Knight a fuller perspective.
According to Woodruff, Joseph said that "the Lord in his
wisdom had implanted the fear of death in every person that

34 Dean C. Jessee, The Personal Writings of Joseph
533ff. Joseph Knight, Sr., was born in 1772 and died in
1847.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Doctrine and Covenants 42:46.
they might cling to life and thus accomplish the designs of their creator."\textsuperscript{38} To request an early exit from mortality could imply a failure to endure to the end.

Smith considered it a great blessing to attain the age of 70. On 18 April 1834 he met with Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, and Zebedee Coltrin. On that occasion, each was blessed in turn by the other three, by the laying on of hands. They confirmed upon Sidney the blessing of "old age and peace[,]" and blessed Zebedee "to be spared to see three score years and ten".\textsuperscript{39} In October 1835, after a meeting of the high council and Council of the Twelve in Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph wrote, "may God spare the lives of the twelve with one accord to a good old age".\textsuperscript{40}

Older members of Joseph's religious community were accorded special respect, even in the way they were addressed by their coreligionists. Church members usually referred to one another as "Brother" or "Sister", e.g., "Brother Kimball"; "Sister Snow". The pronouns "Father" and "Mother", however, were reserved for older members of the community. These titles gave dignity to the few who bore them, and may have elicited feelings of filial respect from others. Joseph's parents were known by nearly

\textsuperscript{38}Charles L. Walker, Journal, 19 August 1877, LDS Church Archives.

\textsuperscript{39}Jesse, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 61.
everyone in Nauvoo, Illinois as Father and Mother Smith. Others who were addressed in like manner included Father Morley, Father Cutler, and Father Whitmer.41

The values of honoring and caring for parents in their old age were instilled in Joseph’s mind when he was a youth. His eldest brother, Alvin, died in November 1823 from bilious colic, at age 24. As he lay on his deathbed, "He summoned each member of the family to say goodbye, asking Hyrum and Sophronia to see that the house was finished for their parents and that they were cared for in their old age."42

The Book of Mormon, translated by Joseph Smith, was published in 1830. The early chapters of the book include an account of the ocean voyage of an ancient prophet, Lehi, and his family to the Western hemisphere. During the journey his two eldest sons, angered at a rebuke they received from a younger brother, Nephi, bound him with strong cords and refused to release him. Nephi described the effect this treatment had on their parents:

they were brought down, yea, even upon their sickbeds. Because of their grief and much sorrow, and the iniquity of my brethren, they were brought near even to be carried out of this time to meet their God; yea, their grey hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.

41 The persons referred to are Isaac Morley (1786–1865), Alpheus Cutler (1784–1864), and Peter Whitmer, Sr. (1773–1854). "Old Father Whitmer" is referred to in the Doctrine and Covenants 128:21.

42 Hill, p. 59.
When Joseph Smith wrote to his younger brother William in December 1835, warning him against doing anything to grieve their parents, his words echoed those of Nephi: "how careful we ought to be of [our parents'] feelings in their old age[.] It cannot be a source of sweet reflection to us to say or do any thing that will bring their grey hairs down with sorrow [sic] to the grave." 44

The prophet was solicitous of his parents' welfare. In October 1835 his father, Joseph, Sr., became ill. On October 7 Joseph, Jr., administered some mild herbs to him in hopes of improving his condition, but without success. The next day he again "attended on my father with feelings of great anxiety--". 45 On Saturday, October 10, he wrote that his father was "failing very fast". 46

The next day, Sunday, Joseph waited on him all . . . day with my heart raised to god . . . that he would restore him to health again, that I might be blessed with his company and advi[c]e esteeming it one of the greatest earthly blessings, to be blessed with the society of Parents, whose mature years and experience renders them capable of administering the most wholsom [sic] advice; . . . . 47

That evening, he and David Whitmer laid their hands on

\[\text{\footnotesize 43} \text{Nephi 18:18, 19.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 44} \text{Jessee, p. 115.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 45} \text{Ibid., pp. 61f.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize 46} \text{Ibid., p. 63.} \]
Joseph, Sr., "and rebuked the diseas[e] and God heard and answered our prayers[.]" Joseph continued, "to the great Joy and satisfaction of our souls, our aged Father arose and dressed himself[.]

The rest of the evening was spent offering "praise to the most High[.]"\(^{48}\)

Two months later, Joseph invited his parents to live in his home. They accepted the offer, and moved in before the month ended.

Joseph Smith, Sr., was ordained as the first patriarch to the Church in 1833.\(^{49}\) He also served as an assistant counselor to his son beginning in 1837. Father Smith died in 1840. In January 1841 Hyrum Smith, Joseph's elder brother, was ordained as "Patriarch to the Church and Assistant President of the Church,"\(^{50}\) and served in those offices until he and Joseph died at the hands of a mob in Carthage, Hancock County, Illinois on 27 June 1844.

Joseph Smith's attitudes toward the aged were shaped by his cultural background, family, and personal experience. In turn, deep feelings about a strong family patriarchal order and respect for the aged influenced his approach to leadership in the family and Church. Those

\(^{47}\)Ibid.

\(^{48}\)Ibid.

\(^{49}\)Lawrence R. Flake, Mighty Men of Zion: General Authorities of the Last Dispensation (Salt Lake City: Karl D. Butler, 1974), p. 158.

\(^{50}\)Ibid., p. 75.
philosophies were perpetuated in the nineteenth-century Church.

Family patriarchy and regard for old age relate closely to each other, because the patriarch was usually the eldest male in a family, and often an aged person. Both principles are apparent in the leadership patterns of the two largest churches which trace their authority through the Prophet Joseph Smith: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). The Reorganized Church adheres to the belief that after Joseph's death the mantle of Church leadership rightfully belonged to his eldest son, Joseph Smith III.

After Joseph Smith was martyred in 1844, the majority of Church members followed the leadership of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young being the senior member. The LDS Church, with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, believes that Joseph made provision for the keys of leadership to pass to the Quorum of the Twelve after his death. The senior member of the Quorum in terms of continuous service, became the next Church president. This pattern of succession has been followed at the death of each succeeding president.

The office of presiding patriarch of the Church was always filled by a literal descendant of Joseph Smith, Sr., until it was discontinued in 1979. In addition, sometime after the establishment of Church headquarters in Utah,
patriarchs were ordained to serve in each stake.\textsuperscript{52}
Patriarchs are usually older men whose duty is to declare
lineage and pronounce blessings upon the heads of worthy
Church members.

The pattern followed in the succession to the
presidency in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints has resulted in a leadership composed, at the
highest levels, of mostly elderly men. The average age of
the twelve men who succeeded Joseph Smith as president of
the Church, was 74 at the time of becoming Church
president, and 85 at the time of death.\textsuperscript{53} The mean age of
members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles between 1830
and 1980 was forty-three at the time of their calls to be
general authorities; they served as general authorities of
the Church for an average of slightly over twenty-six
years.\textsuperscript{54}

The leadership structure of the Church elevates the
status of aged persons. Because of the high percentage of

\textsuperscript{51}Deseret News 1985 Church Almanac (Salt Lake City:

\textsuperscript{52}Other patriarchs were ordained (e.g., Isaac Morley:
see Andrew Jenson, Latter-Day Saint Biographical
Encyclopedia 1:235) before the settlement of Utah; it is
beyond the scope of this study to ascertain just when they
were ordained in each stake of the Church.

\textsuperscript{53}Only the ages of 11 persons were used in
calculating the average age at death; President Ezra Taft
Benson is still alive.

\textsuperscript{54}Donald E. Engstrom, Computer Study, 1980, LDS
Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
older Church leaders, and because they are revered by the active lay membership, there appears to be a rippling effect which causes old people as a group to be esteemed highly by Latter-day Saints.

Books accepted by the Church as scripture (including the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price), especially the Old Testament, contain several references to the elderly. The Lord instructed Moses to tell the children of Israel, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man". 55

The scriptures suggest that righteous old age is a desirable stage of life. The Psalmist declared, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing[.]" 56 The Doctrine and Covenants says, referring to the Millennium, "In that day an infant shall not die until he is old; and his life shall be as the age of a tree[.]" 57

In their histories on American old age, David Hackett Fischer and W. Andrew Achenbaum found that there was a change in attitudes about the aged sometime during the nineteenth century. Fischer dates the change as occurring

55Leviticus 19:32.
56Psalms 92:13, 14.
57Doctrine and Covenants 101:30.
between about 1770 and 1820, during and after the American Revolution. Achenbaum places it between the close of the Civil War and the early years of the twentieth century. 58

Fischer argues that the change was an outgrowth of two ideas which became popular during the revolution: equality and liberty.

Prior to that time, the authority of age had rested upon a hierarchical conception of the world. The intoxicating idea of equality—'lovely equality,' Jefferson called it—destroyed the hierarchy of social orders and called into question hierarchies of sex and race as well. Second, there was an extension of the ancient idea of liberty . . . . [which] destroyed the authority of age by dissolving its communal base, for the power of elders in early America had rested upon a collective consciousness—upon the submergence of individuality into the family, the town, the church. The growth of a spirit of social atomism snapped the ties of obligation between generations as well as between classes.

He continues, "The growth of these ideas in Anglo-America was caused by the interaction of English Protestant ideas with the American environment." 59

Achenbaum and others argue that the change in American attitudes was caused by increasing industrialization, accompanied by the growth of cities. The power of the aged, which had been based partly on land ownership, was eroded by urbanization which, according to some persons, "promoted individualism while rural life promoted communalism." 60

58 Fischer, p. 99; Achenbaum, p. 39.
59 Fischer, p. 109.
In the rural setting there was no mandatory retirement age, and most people worked as long as they were physically able. The farm environment enabled them to make a more meaningful contribution to the family economy for a longer period of time. "Opportunities to contribute . . . , as in tending a garden or mending farm tools, were more restricted in the city where wages were the chief component"\(^{61}\) of family income.

Historians have differing opinions as to why perceptions of the aged changed in the nineteenth century, but they agree that there was a change. The shift is illustrated by a quote from the 1872 *New England Almanac*: "'Years do not make sages; they make only old men.'"\(^{62}\) Scholars also agree on another point, namely, that attitudes toward the aged were diverse; there were always exceptions to the general trends.\(^{63}\)

Mormon attitudes toward the elderly in the mid- to late nineteenth century more closely resembled those of Puritan New England than contemporary America. Dean May offers an insight into Mormon culture which partly explains why this was so. He claims that some attitudes which were prevalent during the Church's formative years--in the case

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\(^{60}\) Dahlin, p. 31; see also Haber, p. 4.

\(^{61}\) Dahlin, pp. 29, 30.

\(^{62}\) Quoted in Achenbaum, p. 47.

\(^{63}\) See Fischer, p. 120; Haber, pp. 172, 173.
of old age, attitudes which Joseph Smith and other Church members inherited from New England—"found fertile root among the Mormons and then were left upon their hands as institutions" which continued long after they lost their meaning in the culture from which they were inherited. Some of these "institutions," as May calls them, "now go out of Deseret to all parts of the world as part and parcel of what it means to become a Mormon." It should also be remembered that the economies of most Mormon communities were still based on agriculture in the late nineteenth century, and that changes in American attitudes were most noticeable in urban centers.

Two sets of attitudes toward old age prevailed in Mormon culture after Church headquarters were established in Salt Lake City. Righteous old age was a blessing from heaven. In other words, as the author of Proverbs put it, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." The righteous were defined as those who maintained their membership in the Church and supported its leaders.


65 Proverbs 16:31.
On the other hand, for those who left the Church or did not migrate to the Great Basin, characteristics of old age were seen as a chastisement, not a blessing, from above. This class of the elderly were objects of pity rather than veneration.

The migration of Church members to the Rocky Mountains after the death of Joseph Smith proved to be a challenging journey for most, and was presumably more so for the aged participants. Those who embarked on the journey were honored by their own and subsequent generations, whether they arrived or not. If they made it to the Great Basin, they were identified as pioneers; if they died enroute, they were martyrs.

John Frantzen, writing in about 1890, recalled an "elderly gentleman," Brother Thorbjorssen, who emigrated from Norway the same year he did, 1857. They traveled in the same handcart company. Brother Thorbjorssen was then about sixty years old and a widower. He was in pretty fair circumstances, and had never been under the necessity of performing much hard manual labor. Nevertheless in emigrating to Utah he joined in the hand cart company, helped to pull the same across the plains, came to the valley enjoying good health, [and] located in Salt Lake City where he was afterwards married and lived for quite a number of years and died as a good and faithful Latter-day Saint.66

Pioneers, or the first to do anything in an area of successful endeavor, are nearly always memorialized by

66John Frantzen, Reminiscences and Journal, 1889-1892, microfilm of ms., LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 22.
ILLUSTRATION 1

"Pioneers of 1847"
at Temple Square, 1897

Source: George Edward Anderson Collection, LDS Church Archives.
succeeding generations. After two years in the Salt Lake Valley, the Mormons began to commemorate their arrival. Annual celebrations, held on July 24th, included homage to the elderly. The 1849 parade included a brass band, young men and women dressed in white, several Church leaders, and twenty-four "Silver Greys led by Isaac Morley, Patriarch[.]"\textsuperscript{67}

The procession marched through the streets of Salt Lake City to the Bowery, where speeches were given.

. . . Mr. Phinehas Richards came forward in behalf of the 24 aged sires in Israel and read their congratulatory address on the anniversary of the day. . . . the clerk rose and read an ode on liberty[, which] was then sung by the 24 Silver Greys to the tune of "Bruce's Address to His Army."\textsuperscript{68}

In 1850, elderly brethren were again represented in the parade and at the bowery, where H.G. Sherwood spoke briefly on their behalf in making a "presentation of the declaration of Independence, the constitution of the United States, and the constitution of the State of Deseret, . . . ." In his speech, Sherwood said that their fathers had loved

this declaration and constitution, bequeathing it to us their sons, to be handed down to future generations, with a solemn charge to ever support it as they had done, . . . .

. . . To follow their wishes, we . . . request the favor from our honourable President, that his honor . . . preserve in his safest archives, for future . . .

\textsuperscript{67} "Celebration of Pioneer Day," in Kate B. Carter, comp., Heart Throbs of the West, 12 vols., (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1939-1951) 2:27.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p. 28.
posterity, these records; . . . .

While ghere long we may go and sleep with our fathers.

By their words and presence on that occasion, they served to remind the people that they were indebted to their forebears for the freedoms they enjoyed, and had a sacred obligation to preserve the same.

The participation of the "aged fathers" in the 1850 celebration in Salt Lake City illustrates a major role which the elderly played in mid-nineteenth century Utah. They served as living links to the past, reminding younger generations of persons and experiences, good and bad, which they would never know except through the communications of others.

Reminding people about the past would, if they listened, increase their historical perspective and deepen their appreciation for the circumstances they currently enjoyed. At an Old Folks' gathering in 1897, Church president Wilford Woodruff reminisced,70

We see things to-day and look upon them without wonder that in our early days would have been considered miraculous. . . . In my boyhood every acre of grain was cut with a sickle in New England. . . . The reaper and the binder were never dreamed of in those days. If such things had been brought into the wheatfields then, the people of the land would have almost thought the millennium had come.

The elderly were also links to the future.

69 The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star, 15 November 1850, pp. 338f.

70 Millennial Star 59 (15 July 1897):444.
Prescendia Kimball observed at a ladies' prayer meeting at the home of Rachel S. Ware in Salt Lake City in 1876, "I look at these old ladys [sic] and think it will not be long before their sun goes down, and their spirits will go back to His presence".  

71 In 1890 Brigham Young, Jr., visited his uncle, Lorenzo Dow Young, prior to departing on a Church mission to England. Lorenzo told him, "I shall be gone before you get back." At this, Brigham asked him to relay a message to their relatives in the spirit world when he got there: "Unkle should you see Father and our loved ones before I do tell them I am coming doing the best I can to be worthy to meet them and enjoy their society." His account of their visit concluded, "Thank God I have seen the good old man, perhaps for the last time in this life."  

While older Church members generally enjoyed high esteem in the Mormon community, people were not blind to the limitations which could be caused by, or blamed on, old age. John Frantzen recalled that in 1857, the year he emigrated from Norway, he heard an address given by Hector C. Haight, president of the Scandinavian Mission, at a

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71 Salt Lake Nineteenth Ward, Ladies Prayer Meeting Minutes, 1873-1883, LDS Church Archives.

72 Brigham Young, Jr., Journal, 14 August 1890, LDS Church Archives. As it turned out, Brigham returned from his mission in 1893, and Lorenzo Dow Young did not die until 1895, at age 88. See Jenson, LDS Biographical Encyclopedia 1:126 and 4:725.
conference in Christiania:

I could not hardly understand anything he said. He could not speak anything but English, although he [had] then been in Scandinavia a year or more and had the chance to hear the Danish language spoken every day, but he was an elderly man, hence not so easy to learn.

Florence A. Merriam, a non-Mormon writer, spent a summer in a small community in Davis County, Utah in the early 1890s, and published an account of her experience in 1894 in a book entitled, My Summer in a Mormon Village. Her account, while not favorable towards Mormon theology, gives a glowing portrayal of an elderly woman, recently widowed, with whom she became acquainted. She referred to her simply as "Grandma."

Merriam's description of Grandma identifies some traits which were commonly viewed as elements of noble old age. Even though she did not share Grandma's fervor for the Mormon faith, she was impressed by her devotion. Grandma and her husband had come to America from England.

"Not all the gold in California," the old lady said impressively,--"not all the gold in California would have taken us from our home, but we came for the gospel, . . .;" and her beautiful face bore out the testimony. . . .

Her smooth white hair fell in curls beside her cheeks under bunches of purple flowers that decorated her black English cap. After all her troubles not a line of her face bespoke impatience or complaint--the record was a life of loving-kindness. . . . When she ran on with the garrulousness of old age, it was enough simply to sit and look at her serene old face."

73 Frantzen, p. 23.
Merriam also took note of Grandma's stature in the local community:

there was a touch of authority and a strain of simple dignity in her bearing. . . . She held a position of dignity in the neighborhood. She was the mother of a respected race-- . . . had lands and cattle, and kept her private accounts, . . . .

Grandma had sown seeds of patience, sacrifice and kindness throughout her life, which had now borne fruit in the serenity, posterity and respect which she enjoyed. Her "hoary head" had indeed become "a crown of glory," because it was "found in the way of righteousness." 77

Another role of aged Church members was to exhort others to righteous living. Of course, Church leaders were prominent in this regard, but lay members also took part. Andrew Jenson recorded an impressive incident involving an elderly sister at a Scandinavian meeting in Pleasant Grove in 1873:

On Friday evening I attended as usual the Scandinavian meeting . . . . Old Sis. Thomsen . . . bore a powerful and impressive testimony to all present concerning her firm belief in the gospel as it had been revealed through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith the prophet, and in a very kind and impressive manner she advised all present to live their religion and remain faithful to the Church, . . . .

Shortly after concluding her testimony the sister fainted.

75 Ibid., pp. 90f.
76 Ibid., p. 104.
77 Proverbs 16:31.
78 Andrew Jenson, Journal, 23 February 1873, Ms., LDS (Footnote continued)
She was carried to a bed, where she lay until after the meeting and then, accompanied by friends, started for her home, which was about 500 yards away. She collapsed half-way there, "and died almost immediately." Jenson's concluding statement concerning Sister Thomsen was, "for a number of years she had been known as a faithful member of the Church in Pleasant Grove." 79

As a young man, Angus M. Cannon was strongly influenced by the testimony of a patriarch in the Salt Lake Sixth Ward. Cannon fasted and prayed in hopes of gaining a spiritual witness concerning the truth of Mormonism, but without success. At the end of the third day, a Sunday, he decided to attend a worship service and then give up the quest, "feeling that God would not answer him." At the meeting "the patriarch, Jesse West, bore his testimony, [and] young Angus felt a power take hold of him—a power which shook the bench and all those seated upon it. As he later recalled, 'The heavenly power I experienced when under the influence of that occasion I can never

78 (continued)
Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

79 Ibid.

forget."

Cannon later served as president of the Salt Lake Stake, and as a patriarch.

It is difficult to discuss old age without discussing death, for, as one seventeenth century Puritan cleric observed, "'all men may die, but old men must.'" Latter-day Saint theology holds that if a person has lived according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, death should not be a time for mourning.

King Benjamin, a religious and political leader in the Book of Mormon, told his people in a farewell address,

I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. . . . if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness.

Brigham Young, speaking at a funeral, said,

Shall we rejoice that we have the opportunity of paying the last respects due to this lifeless clay, . . . ? Yes, we will rejoice. It is a matter of rejoicing more than the day of his birth. . . . Should we not . . . rejoice at the departure of those whose lives have been devoted to doing good, to a good old Age?

Notwithstanding his proclamation about rejoicing over the demise of a righteous soul, Brigham knew the sorrow

80 (continued)

81 Fischer, p. 108.

82 Mosiah 2:41.

such a departure could cause. At the funeral of his counselor and close friend, George A. Smith in September, 1875, he wept openly. "For many Saints, it was the first time they had seen Brigham cry."\(^{84}\)

A humorous incident in Brigham's friendship with George A. Smith occurred in 1843, when they spent the night in a house in New Jersey.

The house "was so infested with bed-bugs that we could not sleep," wrote Brigham. "Brother George A. Smith gave it as his legal opinion that there were bed-bugs there which had danced to the music at the battle of Trenton, as their heads were perfectly grey."\(^{85}\)

Nineteenth-century diarists regularly noted the passing of their acquaintances. References were sometimes routine and matter-of-fact. Entries from the journals of George Goddard, a resident of Salt Lake City, are illustrative. On 23 June 1879 he wrote, "James Smithers was buried who died on Saturday 21. over 70 years old, our old faithful leader of the Tabernacle Choir."\(^{86}\) On 6 May 1883, "I learned of the death of Mother Kinney[..] She died about 1/2 past 11 a.m near 85 years of age, in a small room belonging to H.G. Park." Under date of May 7 he listed the speakers at Mother Kinney's funeral, including himself, and

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\(^{85}\) Ibid., p. 107.

\(^{86}\) In George Goddard, Papers, Ms., LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City.
members of his family who were in attendance at the cemetery; he made no reference to how he felt. 87

Occasionally, however, reflective comments accompanied a diarist's note on the death of an associate. C.R. Savage wrote on 1 April 1882,

During the past week Bros. Hopwood & Ferguson of the Salt Lake Choir have passed away and have been buried. Thus are the most useful & tried men in our Social Company of Saints leaving us and their places will long be vacant—Good Men and not such in a single day & It takes years to make a man.

Predictably, published obituaries of aged individuals were usually laudatory. The obituary of 97-year-old Mary Philips, carried in the Deseret News in 1871, included the following,

When eighty-two years old she gleaned over twenty bushels of wheat and raised thirty bushels of potatoes and dug and carried them into her cellar. . . . She possessed a great memory, which she retained with her intellect in full up to her death. . . . She . . . has gone down to her grave like a shock 88 of corn fully ripe, and awaits a glorious resurrection.

Not all of those who initially joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints remained devoted to it. While faithful veterans in the Church were highly esteemed,

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87 Ibid. Nineteenth-century diarists tended to be less introspective than most people are today.

88 Charles Roscoe Savage, Diaries, 1855-1909, microfilm of ms., LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

89 Millennial Star 33 (28 February 1871):138f; also Journal History of the Church, 19 January 1871, p. 1, LDS Church Archives. Her obituary was exceptionally long because at the time of her death she "was supposed to [have been] the oldest person in the Territory."
those who did not migrate to the Rocky Mountains or who became disaffected after their arrival, were viewed in a different light.

Silas Richards was laboring as a missionary in Iowa in December 1869. While staying at a hotel in Rushville, he dreamed that while travelling to look up an old branch of the Church, he crossed a small stream which was nearly dry. In it he saw several small fish struggling for life, "which," he said, "I could have caught with my hands, but I considered them worthless." He also saw "a large fine looking fish," and picked it up. When he did, "it was rotten and it dissolved in my hands." The interpretation he received of the dream was to the effect that the fish represented the old branch of the Church that he was going to visit. "[T]hey have not gathered with the Church and are therefore not of the fold."

Richards also recorded the fulfillment of his dream,

... I went to them, and those that remained in the flesh, after a lapse of more than 20 years, were spir[i]tually dead. I found the big fish, he received, and entertained me kindly, believed in "Mormonism," ... but he was too old to go to Salt Lake.

Unfavorable imagery was not reserved for those who left the Church. On 6 August 1877 an editorial appeared in the Millennial Star, the official organ of the Church in

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90 Silas Richards, Reminiscences [ca. 1872], microfilm of ms., LDS Church Archives.
91 Ibid.
Great Britain, entitled "Growing Old." The author severely scolded those who, despite their continued activity in the Church, had not emigrated to the Rocky Mountains. He chided,

Increase of years does not necessarily imply increase of wisdom, nor is wisdom always confined to maturity.

... the Gospel of salvation in this life is one which involves many practical details, ... --that of gathering, for instance, ... .

... how can we account for the apathy which seems to characterize some ... who for ten, twenty, thirty or more years have lingered along in Babylon and never mustered energy enough, to comply with this cardinal principle of the Gospel[.] ... Now they are all through the Conferences lamenting their folly, and many who could have gathered time and again by their own means are suppliants of charity and beggars [sic] for deliverance,-- . . . ; where is the posterity of these old members? scattered to the winds; . . . .

... such can only resolve that their future shall be one continued effort to avoid every ... evil, and God in his wisdom and mercy may yet overrule this . . . gin, and open up a way of escape for them and theirs. 92

Some diarists wrote in conciliatory, though perhaps not admiring terms, of elderly associates who had withdrawn from the Church. Henry Ballard, bishop of the 2nd Ward in Logan, Utah, from 1861 to 1900, wrote on 20 February 1897,

John Irvine's funeral was held in the meeting house he was aged 82 he was a good quiet man but had with drawn himself from the church some years ago upon very trifaling affairg but never turned against the church in any manner[.] 93

While on business trips to California in 1877 and


93 Henry Ballard, Journal and Memoirs, 1852-[1904], typescript, in the Joel E. Ricks collection, on microfilm (Footnote continued)
1878, C.R. Savage made a point of stopping to pay his respects to Mrs. Fanny Stenhouse. Thirty years earlier, as a youth in England, Savage first heard the message of Mormonism from her husband, Elder Thomas B.H. Stenhouse, "whose teachings and instructions made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind." Thomas and Fanny later became estranged from the Church, and Fanny authored a book, published in 1874, entitled, *Tell It All: The Story of a Life Experience in Mormonism*, which gave a negative portrayal of the faith she had once espoused.

Savage reflected on his 1878 visit with Mrs. Stenhouse,

I found [her] more agreable [sic] and less vinager [sic] in her talk than a year ago . . . . She told me that, she cared more for her old friends than for any new ones she had made - in other words (mine) apostacy had not Enlarged her circle of friends - but those she had gone back on were her only true ones.

He also wrote, "If such persons could do their first works over again I should rejoice to see her back among her old friends."  

That same year Savage told of meeting another former member of the Church:

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93(continued)  
in the LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.  
95C.R. Savage, Diary, 1878.  
96Ibid.
Old Joseph Silver the apostate——called to see me——he was very garrulous——and as the rest of his kin are, very conscious [sic] of being in the right——I liked Jos Silver the Mormon——but Jos Silver the apostat[e] I do not care for——he is no improvement on the original.

Thomas B. Marsh served as the first president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, from 1835 to 1839. He left the Church in the latter year, and joined the ranks of its opponents. In 1840, Brigham Young succeeded him as president of the Twelve. Some 17 years later, Marsh wrote a letter to Young, applying for readmission into the Church.98 Brigham responded in the affirmative, whereupon Marsh was rebaptized and journeyed to Salt Lake City.

Two days after Marsh's arrival in Salt Lake, he was invited to address members of the Church in a Sunday morning meeting. He expressed his penitence, and was received back into fellowship by a unanimous vote of the congregation. Marsh was about 58, and "looked very old and feeble".99 Brigham Young addressed the congregation next. "Brother Thomas considers himself very aged and infirm, and you can see that he is, brethren and sisters. What is the cause of it? He left the Gospel of salvation."100

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97Ibid., 30 April 1878. Silver was about 53; see his death notice in the Deseret News, 15 July 1895, p. 5.

98Lawrence R. Flake, Mighty Men of Zion: General Authorities of the Last Dispensation (Salt Lake City: Karl D. Butler, 1974), pp. 174, 175.

99Ibid., p. 174.

Young said there were less than two years between his age and Marsh's, but he was young and Marsh was old. He accounted for the difference this way: "'Mormonism' keeps men and women young and handsome; and when they are full of the Spirit of God, there are none of them but what will have a glow upon their countenances; . . . the Spirit of God is with us and within us."

Brigham's remarks on that occasion point out that Mormons, while they honored what they considered to be righteous old age, still sought for the youthful ideal. Talleyrand, a French statesman of a previous generation, captured that philosophy when he said, "Everybody wants to live long, but nobody wants to be old."

In 1930 B.H. Roberts wrote concerning Thomas B. Marsh,

for several years he lived upon the bounty of the very people he had betrayed, a poor, shattered, broken down old man. On several occasions, in public as well as in private, he said: "If any of you want to see the effects of apostasy, look upon me."  

The treatment of aged Church members by Mormons--and non-Mormons--was occasionally pointed to in defense of the

101 Ibid.


Latter-Day Saint way of life, and to curse the Church's enemies. An 1888 account of the Haun's Mill massacre, which had occurred in Missouri 50 years earlier, includes a graphic portrayal of the martyrdom of Thomas McBride, "an old grey-haired veteran of the American revolution."

McBride encountered some members of the mob in front of Brother Haun's house. The old man, trembling with age rather than from fear, surrendered his gun, saying, "Spare my life, I am a Revolutionary soldier." But the inhuman murderer, . . . , shot the veteran down with his own gun, and then a Mr. Rogers, . . . , fell upon him and hacked him to pieces with an old corn-cutter, leaving . . . his brains oozing from his cracked skull, and his white hairs crimson with his gore.104

Contrast that with the 1886 editorial comment in the Millennial Star: "Nowhere in the world that we have been, have we seen so deep, so genuine a respect for old age, or such great love for youth, as in the communities which are composed of Mormons."105 In 1893 another Star editorial touched on the same theme, this time quoting from the Ogden Standard, a Utah newspaper: "The years . . . may have revolutionized nearly all things else in human nature; but, thank God! they have not changed the reverence which is felt for the women and men who endured in the past to make the glorious present possible."106

104 Andrew Jenson, "Haun's Mill Massacre," Historical Record 7 (December 1888): 673.
105 Millennial Star 48 (10 July 1886): 458.
106 Millennial Star 55 (14 August 1893): 536.
CHAPTER TWO

THE CHURCH IN THE LIVES OF THE ELDERLY

Since leaving my native country and friends 45, years & 2 months ago, my experience has been of a very chequered character. . . . And although at our parting, sorrow and sadness filled the hearts of my parents, I have no doubt, in the spirit world, they are now rejoicing in the fact of my embracing the Gospel which then caused them so much grief.¹

Provision was made for meeting the needs of elderly Church members as early as 1831, when Edward Partridge was named as the first bishop of the Church. His responsibility was to look after the temporal welfare of the Saints, including the aged and infirm.²

Later, when the mass migration of Church members to the Rocky Mountains was underway and Brigham Young was advocating handcarts as an economical means of accomplishing the task, the question of transporting the elderly arose. While he believed that they were entitled to ride, he was also concerned that providing wagons for infirm persons to accompany those who walked might "encourage infirmity or rather laziness. . . . There would soon be but few able to walk if such arrangements were made." The very aged and infirm, he explained, "should be brought in wagons

¹George Goddard, Journal, 5 December 1896, LDS Church Archives.
²Hill, Joseph Smith: The First Mormon, p. 131.
in a separate train."³

The idea to isolate "the very aged and infirm," however, was never implemented. John Frantzen later recalled that the handcart company he traveled with in 1857 included "an ox team, driven by C.C.A. Christensen. This was principally for the accommodation of the old, infirm, sick and unable to walk from morning until night."⁴

In 1877, the year Brigham Young died, he urged bishops to keep close contact with the members of their wards. They were to accomplish this with the assistance of ward teachers, who were to visit each home in the ward weekly. Although the visits did not need to be long, Young specified that "'every member of each ward should be well and thoroughly visited at least once a month.'"⁵

When the bishop became aware of families who needed economic assistance, the need was often met with commodities from the bishop's storehouse. The storehouse was supplied through donations received from ward members in the form of tithing and fast offerings. Items typically donated included garden produce, dairy products, meat, and fuel.


⁴John Frantzen, Reminiscences and Journal, 1889-1892, p. 31, LDS Church Archives.

⁵Arrington, Brigham Young, p. 395. A Latter-day Saint ward is roughly equivalent to a parrish or congregation in other faiths.
Ward relief societies, the Church's organization for women, also played an important role in attending to the needs of ward members. In an epistle dated 6 October 1880, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, with John Taylor at its head, charged the relief societies throughout the Church to "comfort the poor, alleviate much suffering, administer consolation and needed help to the widow, the orphan, the sick, the infirm, and the aged."\(^6\)

Relief Society sisters frequently visited older members in their wards, especially women. If a woman was sick, they helped with household responsibilities. At other times the visits were social in nature, to help fill the emotional void felt by some persons who could not get out often.\(^7\) Rebecca H. Mace of Kanab, Utah, recorded on 14 March 1895 that she, "With about 22 or 3 other members of [the Relief Society] provided with Pic nick, surprised Sister Rider and spent the day with her sewing her carpet rags."\(^8\)

Often, surprise visits or parties coincided with the

\(^6\) Council of the Twelve Apostles, Circular Letter, 6 October 1880, p. 9, LDS Church Archives.

\(^7\) Interesting insights into the activities of local relief societies are found in the journal of Mary Jane Mount Tanner, a relief society president in Provo, Utah; excerpts published in Kenneth M. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill M. Derr, Women's Voices: An Untold Story of the Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982). See especially pp. 316-319.

\(^8\) Godfrey et al., p. 390.
birthdays of the elderly sisters. Sarah M. Kimball, president of the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society in Salt Lake City, went one step further. She held "a special dinner for the widows and aged women in her ward," on her 75th birthday. Her guests were transported to and from the dinner "in carriages at her expense."  
Lyman O. Littlefield, speaking in the Logan Temple in 1889, lauded the charitable service rendered by sisters of the Relief Societies:

They have carried relief and comfort and said words of condolence . . . at the bed [sic] of death as the victims of the destroyer were about to try the realities of another life. They have organized . . . quilts and clothing for the living and burial habiliments for the departed. . . . [They are] still performing marvels of mercy in all the God-blessed vallies of Utah, as helps to the aged and afflicted of every creed . . . .

While the Church was willing to help those in need, accompanying such help was an expectation that, whenever possible, the recipient should do something in return. Aged persons were not exempt.

In 1884, C.O. Card, president of the Cache Stake,

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9 See Henry Ballard, Journal, 16 April 1900, typescript, in the Joel E. Ricks Collection; Mary Ann Weston Maughan, Journal, 10 March 1894, LDS Church Archives.


11 L.O. Littlefield, address, 4 May 1889, "The Achievments [sic] of Women," pp. 37, 38, Logan Temple, School of Science lectures, LDS Church Archives.
wrote to Bishop George L. Farrell in Smithfield, asking him to come to Logan to get an older brother who was in need of assistance. "He is a good old man & his last record was made in your ward," wrote President Card. "I think he can repay you to a great extent if not all in working or choring around your Tabernacle during its erection."¹²

Just over a decade later George L. Farrell, still bishop in Smithfield, wrote to the presiding brethren in Salt Lake, complaining about an aged man in his ward whom he felt was living off the Church, without doing anything in return.

[W]e have been furnishing him Flour, Meat, Potatoes, Butter, & Wood along as he called upon us, but he wanted Merchandise and Wheat, and I told him if he would come and do a little carpenter work I would let him have some Wheat, but he left without saying whether he would do so or not, and I have not seen him since.¹³

The bishop was especially irritated by what he had heard concerning the brother’s attitude.

One of the Brethren told me the other day, that Bro [sic] feels that he has done enough for the Church to be supported the balance of his days without work. . . . There are older Men, who are more feble [sic] than he, who work for their living, and I think he Should do something towards getting his living.¹⁴

Any perceived intent of freeloading was looked upon with

¹² Cache Stake, Letterpress Copybooks, 1879-1908, LDS Church Archives.


¹⁴ Ibid. A letter from the brother in question to George Reynolds, dated November 1895, indicates that he was 77 years old.
disapproval.

The expectations of elderly sisters were different regarding physical labor, but there were instances where they were encouraged to give their "widow’s mite" if they could. In 1897, Bishop Charles Adams in Parowan, Utah, wrote to Salt Lake City concerning the estate of a Sister Barton, who had lived in and been largely cared for by the local ward.

A short time before her death at age 82, Bishop Adams approached Sister Barton and, reminding her that the ward had built her a home and paid for the property on which it stood, suggested that perhaps she would like to have it deeded back to the ward upon her death, "so that other poor might enjoy it as she had done."¹⁵

There were numerous cases in which the Church gave economic assistance to elderly members. However, it usually came only after personal, family, and other available resources had been depleted. Church leaders made it clear that families were responsible to care for their own aged members. The New Testament declaration of Paul aptly describes the feeling in nineteenth-century Mormon culture: "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the

¹⁵ Chas. Adams, Letter, 2 February 1897, Parowan, Utah, to President Wilford Woodruff, LDS Church Archives. Bishop Adams’ further justified the request he made of Sister Barton by pointing out that she had no living offspring.
faith, and is worse than an infidel."\(^{16}\) This attitude prevailed in much of American society, especially where there were few institutional alternatives to family care of aged persons.

For those older persons who were financially destitute, unable to work, and had no family members who could support them, the Church arranged for living accommodations. Such a person sometimes boarded with a local family, who in return received "tithing credits, Church payments, or blessings in heaven."\(^{17}\)

Bishop John Tuckett of the Springville 1st Ward wrote to Church leaders in 1895 concerning the plight of a Brother Marchbank. Marchbank, a native of England, had embraced the gospel and emigrated to Utah. For some reason he returned to England where, according to the bishop, he "rented a house for the youse [use] of the Elders and helpt them in every way in is [sic] power until sickness compeld him to take refuge in the work house".\(^{18}\)

Because Brother Marchbank's family did not have the means to pay his fare home, Bishop Tuckett wrote to Church leaders in 1895 concerning the plight of a Brother Marchbank. Marchbank, a native of England, had embraced the gospel and emigrated to Utah. For some reason he returned to England where, according to the bishop, he "rented a house for the youse [use] of the Elders and helpt them in every way in is [sic] power until sickness compeld him to take refuge in the work house".\(^{18}\)

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\(^{16}\) I Timothy 5:8.


\(^{18}\) John Tuckett, Letters, 1895, Springville, Utah to President Wilford Woodruff, LDS Church Archives.
headquarters asking if they could help. The Church was experiencing financial difficulties of its own,\textsuperscript{19} and Joseph F. Smith indicated that there was really nothing they could do except arrange for discount travel rates for Marchbank. About the only solution was to take up a collection among the elderly brother's friends in Springville.

It is not clear whether Marchbank made it back to Utah or not. However, his wife wrote to Salt Lake City early the next year enquiring how much the fare would be for him to travel with the Latter-day Saint emigration company leaving England the following April.\textsuperscript{20} Marchbank's case was one of many in which Church leaders placed the responsibility on families--and communities or wards--to care for their own.

Upon learning of the plight of a sister who wanted to emigrate from England in 1882, presidents William B. Preston and C.O. Card of the Cache Stake wrote a letter to her son, who was working in a railroad camp, reminding him of a debt he owed her and encouraging his immediate action


\textsuperscript{20}Mrs. M. Marchbank, Letter, 7 February 1896, Ogden, Utah to President Wilford Woodruff, LDS Church Archives. There is an obituary for Mary Ann Marchbank (1827–1910) in the Deseret News, 16 July 1910, p. 2, which lists her husband as a survivor, but it does not state where he lived.
on her behalf, "as she wishes to use the means to come this year."²¹

The presiding authorities of the Church felt strongly enough about the duties of children to aging parents that if a young man was called to serve on a proselyting mission and responded that he was helping to care for them, he was almost invariably excused from the call.²² One man wrote from Pleasant Grove, Utah, in response to his mission call in 1897 that he was the oldest son and therefore bound to care for his parents.²³ Another wrote from Deweyville the same year that his father "thinks he can't spare me as I am the youngest and only son at home."²⁴ Both young men were excused from their mission calls.

Occasionally, older men were called to serve on missions. Silas Richards noted with some pride in about 1872 that a few years previous, in 1869, he and over 200 others had been called to serve as missionaries throughout the United States. These, he wrote, "were mostly old men

²¹Cache Stake, Letterpress Copybooks, 1879-1908, LDS Church Archives.

²²See missionary responses of: Cyrus N. Sanford, Springville, Utah, 12 June 1894; Charles Parker, Kanarra, Utah, 28 February 1895; Schuyler White, Farmington, Utah, 18 June 1895, LDS Church Archives.

²³George Harris, Letter, 18 May 1897, Pleasant Grove, Utah, to "Dear Brothers", missionary correspondence, LDS Church Archives.

²⁴N.B. Marble, Letter, 31 October 1897, Deweyville, Utah, to the First Presidency, ibid.
of experience, that like myself had been in Utah almost from the first settlement of the Country."\textsuperscript{25}

While older brethren were used to advantage in various missions, the physical restraints which often accompanied old age limited their effectiveness. In 1898, George Christensen, president of the Scandinavian Mission, wrote to Rulon S. Wells expressing concern over "the unusual number of aged brethren that were being sent to that Mission, some of whom, ..., were quite feeble."\textsuperscript{26} Christensen wrote,

"Experience teaches us that these men cannot stand the hardships of a mission, and are more or less afflicted with feebleness and sickness and while their counsels are of much benefit, yet they are a source of much anxiety to those with whom they labor and in many cases must be released before the expiration of two years[.]\textsuperscript{27}

On the other hand, Rulon S. Wells, president of the European Mission, reported at the same time that older missionaries in Great Britain were, "in most cases", filling "a long felt want". He admitted, however, that they were not extremely aged, most of the older ones being "between 50 and 60".\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{25}Silas Richards 1807-1884), Reminiscences [ca. 1872], microfilm of ms., LDS Church Archives. He was 61 when he embarked on the mission in October 1869.

\textsuperscript{26}Rulon S. Wells and Joseph W. McMurrin, Letter, 25 June 1898, Hamburg, Germany to Pres. Wilford Woodruff and counselors, LDS Church Archives.

\textsuperscript{27}Quoted in ibid.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
Between 1 June 1897 and 1 June 1898, 108 persons were set apart in Salt Lake City for missions to Scandinavia. Their ages ranged from 18 to 74. The median age of those set apart was 31. Thirty-one persons (28.7 percent) were over age 50, eleven of which (10.2 percent) were over 60. Frederick J. Holst, age 74, was the only one in his eighth decade. 29

Information on the length of time served is available for five of the eleven missionaries over age 60; they served an average of barely more than ten months apiece. Three of them served between 20 and 23 months. Another, Bengt T. Bengtson, returned home after four months on account of sickness. The fifth, Ole C. Jensen, died on 30 May 1898 at age 68, six months after he embarked on his mission. It was shortly after his death that George Christensen expressed his concerns about aged men serving on missions. 30

The 1834 march of Zion's Camp provides another example of an aged man who was a source of concern to others. However, the cause for concern was not his waning powers, but his vitality. Samuel Baker, a well-disciplined former soldier, was nearly 80 at the time of the march. According to George A. Smith, the old man

29 Missionary Department, Missionary Registers, 1860-1959, 11 vols., LDS Church Archives, 3:47-74.
30 Ibid.
walked the whole journey, refusing lifts offered by the teamsters, saying, "God commanded me to go to Zion, and go signifies to walk, not to ride."

George Albert said this was considered a rather stern interpretation by some of the young men, who were not above resting for a mile or two in a luggage wagon when the opportunity came.

Older people served in various capacities in the Church, at all levels. Church leaders regularly faced the problem of how to release elderly persons from service in local callings without undermining their feelings of self-worth and usefulness. Shortly before his release as president of the Salt Lake Stake in 1904, Angus M. Cannon, age 69, "wrote in his journal that the General Authorities had been heaping praise on him to make it 'easier on me.'"

In the upper echelons of Church leadership—namely, the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve Apostles, First Council of the Seventy, Presiding Bishopric and Presiding Patriarch—callings were for life. Releases came only through death or disciplinary action. A summary of Christian D. Fjeldsted's Church service gives some idea of the extent of activity among Church leaders in later life at this level. Fjeldsted was a member of the First Council of the Seventy.

He was born in 1829 in Denmark. He and his young

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wife joined the Church in 1852 and emigrated six years later to Utah, where they lived in the Salt Lake Valley. In 1872 he moved to Logan, Cache County, having been "called to labor as a missionary among the Scandinavian Saints in the northern counties of Utah."  

In 1881 Fjeldsted returned to Denmark, where he presided over the Scandinavian Mission for three years. In 1884 he was ordained to the First Council of the Seventy; in 1888 he was back in Scandinavia for another two-year term as mission president. Between 1901 and 1905 Fjeldsted, then in his seventies, made several more trips to Scandinavia on Church business; he served a third term as mission president for about eight months in 1904 and 1905.

Upon his release in January 1905, he returned to Utah. Shortly thereafter his "health began to fail, and he died in Salt Lake City Dec. 23, 1905, after an operation."  

He performed much of his most active and meaningful service as a relatively old man. Like others, he literally wore out his life in Church service.

A few leaders had to endure stifling disabilities before their lives ended. Apostle Charles C. Rich lived for three years after suffering a paralytic stroke in

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33Jenson, LDS Biographical Encyclopedia 1:203f.
34Ibid. 3:746; 4:370.
35Ibid. 1:103.
1880 at age 71. In his diary, Andrew J. Allen noted Rich’s attendance at the general conference of the Church held in Salt Lake City in October 1882. He wrote that Rich, a resident of Bear Lake County, Idaho, "had to be brought on a feather bed on the cars and fed by a spoon." Service until death was not mandatory for female leaders who presided over the Relief Society, Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association, and Primary Association of the Church, but they often did so. Ninety-three-year-old Emmeline B. Wells, general president of the Relief Society, was inconsolable when faced with the prospect of her release. Despite the efforts of Church president Heber J. Grant to reconcile her feelings to the move, it "stood in her mind only as a public humiliation." Nevertheless, the release stood. When President Grant left, she started up the staircase to her room. Before reaching the top, she suffered a stroke and fell to the stairs unconscious. She lay nearly comatose for the next three weeks and died on 25 April 1921.

At the local level, leaders generally served for long periods of time, but were released when advanced age,

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36 Andrew J. Allen, Journal, 1848-1884, typescript, in the Joel E. Ricks collection (microfilm), LDS Church Archives; see especially entries dated 6 October 1882 and 27 November 1883.


38 Ibid.
often accompanied by declining health, warranted. Occasionally, they were released because they themselves indicated that it might be for the best. Thomas Sleight, a 67-year-old high councilman in the Bear Lake Stake, recorded in his journal in 1901 that he was quite annoyed at not being able to hear what was said in high council meetings, "which prevented me from acting intelligently on propositions." He took his problem to the stake president and indicated that a release would be agreeable to his feelings. By a unanimous vote of the stake membership he was honorably released at the next stake conference.

Older men played significant roles in many Latter-day Saint wards. In a study on Church participation in Union, Utah in 1910, Gordon Irving found that men over age 55 participated in 60 percent of all sacrament meeting "events," which included giving talks, blessing the sacrament, offering opening and closing prayers, and blessing infants.  

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39 See Gordon Irving, "The Church and Young Men in Union, Utah, 1875-1920: Religious Participation and Social Realities in Mormon Utah," p. 8; paper presented on 3 May 1986 at meetings of the Mormon History Association in Salt Lake City, Utah.

40 Thomas Sleight, Journal, 1860-1918, entry dated 23 June 1901, typescript, in the Joel E. Ricks collection (microfilm), LDS Church Archives.

41 Irving, "Sacrament Meeting Participation Study: Comparison of 1910 and 1985/86 Patterns," unpublished paper in possession of the author; also "Patterns of Religious (Footnote continued)
Only about 14 percent of Union Ward members attended Sunday meetings in 1910. According to Irving, "most of them were faced with such enormous economic challenges that all of their energies were absorbed in the struggle for survival, leaving little time for formal religious participation." Of those who attended Church on Sundays, several were over 65, which suggests that they may have had fewer responsibilities to keep them away.

Women, regardless of age, participated much less than men in Sunday worship services. They likely took part in Relief Society activities during the week, but seldom spoke in public meetings where men were in attendance. Emmeline B. Wells, a prolific writer and prominent worker in women's organizations, attended a "Retrenchment meeting" (for young ladies) in the Salt Lake Eleventh Ward on 15 March 1875. The bishop and his counselors were also present. She wrote, "I rose and tried to speak for a few minutes, the first time in my life that I ever spoke in

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41(continued)

42Ibid., "The Church and Young Men in Union, Utah, 1875-1920: Religious Participation and Social Realities in Mormon Utah," p. 11.

43Ibid., "Patterns of Religious Participation," p. 6; also "Sacrament Meeting Participation Study, pp. 2, 3. Irving found that in 1910, women in the Union Ward participated in only two percent of sacrament meeting events. That small percentage included an "elderly woman giving a talk on Pioneer Day."
public before men."44 She was 47.

In 1849 at a high priests meeting, Brigham Young said, "I will suggest to this Quorum that we take their best, aged, fatherly, gray haired members, and appoint them in the wards for teachers." According to Brigham, younger men were not as well suited to the position because "they cannot enter into a family and be listened to with as much respect and reverence as a fatherly old man full of years & experience."45

Several of Union's older men served as ward teachers. They visited other ward members regularly and reported significant occurrences or needs to the bishop. These bishop's aides "were a select and specialized group". In fact, they may have been "the only men . . . who were committed enough that the bishop could rely upon them to carry out assignments".46

On 22 April 1900, 68-year-old Henry Ballard resigned his position as bishop of the Logan 2nd Ward, "which position I had occupied 3[9] years and 8 Days," because of "failing health."47 One week later at the quarterly Cache


45 Salt Lake Stake, High Priests Record, 1848-1860, LDS Church Archives.

Stake conference, Apostle Francis M. Lyman

presented Geo L Ferrell and Henry Heughs [sic] that had been released from being Bishops to be ordained Patriarchs and to travel and give Blessings[.] he also presented me to be ordained one but not expected to travel unless the Lord improved my health[.] we was each sustained with a full vote . . . .

Henry Hughes, age 76, had served as bishop in Mendon for 31 years 49 and George L. Farrell, 71, had presided in Smithfield for 20. The average age of the three retiring Cache Valley bishops was just over 70; they had served for an average of 30 years.

The practice of releasing bishops and other local leaders and then immediately ordaining them to be patriarchs, was common in the Church at the turn of the century. By 1903 it had become so widespread that the First Presidency sent a circular letter to all stake presidents, urging that they use more discretion in recommending brethren for the office of patriarch. They warned that a consequence of the practice was

that a great many of our patriarchs are men of extreme age and waning powers.

. . . . because a man has filled with credit a presiding office and has attained to a good age is no reason why he should or should not make a good patriarch; and it is to the peculiar fitness of the men you may recommend to fill this officer that we desire you hereafter to especially consider.

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47 Henry Ballard, Journal and Memoirs, 1852-[1904], typescript, in the Joel E. Ricks Collection (microfilm), LDS Church Archives.

48 Ibid.

49 Isaac Sorensen, History of Mendon, Utah [n.d.-1920], typescript, in the Ricks Collection.
The office of patriarch was an honorable one. It had been held by various members of Joseph Smith's family, including his father and brother. It is not surprising that many former bishops and others were ordained to be patriarchs in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries: it allowed them to retire from active leadership roles into a less physically-demanding position, and still maintain a degree of prestige in the Church community.

For some who had worked long and hard in the Church, being released suddenly from a time-consuming calling caused a great void in their lives in terms of emotion and activity. Angus M. Cannon was initially disheartened at his release as president of the Salt Lake Stake, and the thought of being released had a fatal effect on Emmeline B. Wells.

The notion that old people should disengage from the worldly concerns of life, such as business activities and land ownership, has been expressed repeatedly in various cultures. 51 Latter-day Saint theology provided old people with meaningful activities which could fill the void

50 First Presidency, Circular Letter, 29 June 1903, in David K. Udall correspondence, LDS Church Archives.

created in the lives of those who followed the societal expectation that they disengage from extensive participation in temporal affairs. Temple work enabled them to fill many of their own needs, while performing an important service to their ancestors and the Church.

Temple work—the performance of baptism and other gospel ordinances on behalf of deceased persons—is a vital part of Latter-day Saint theology. The construction and use of temples are, according to Church doctrine, in direct fulfillment of biblical prophecies. \(^{52}\) Malachi declared that Elijah would be sent in the latter days "to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers". \(^{53}\) The linking of living persons to ancestors beyond the veil increased the feeling of closeness which people felt with them. To Latter-day Saints it was, as Malachi had said, a literal turning of "the heart of the children to their fathers."

Warren Foote began compiling an extensive genealogical record of his ancestors when he was 80. He continued the work day by day for about three months, much of the time in great pain, but being impressed of the great importance of the work, . . . , I felt the weight of the responsibility resting upon me, and being in very poor health I feared that I might pass away before I should get it completed. \(^{54}\)

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\(^{52}\) See Isaiah 2:2, 3.

\(^{53}\) Malachi 4:5, 6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 110:15.

\(^{54}\) Warren Foote (1817–1903), [Foote Family Genealogy] 1898–1939, LDS Church Archives. The record was continued (Footnote continued)
His relief at having completed the task is apparent in his next sentence: "I thank the Lord my God that he has preserved my life to accomplish it."

Lorenzo Snow declared shortly before he turned 83, "the most important work that Latter-day Saints can do on this earth is that of opening the door for the salvation of their kindred dead." On another occasion he warned, "When we go back into the other life and find our dead friends living there, if we have not performed the labor that is necessary for their exaltation and glory we shall not feel very happy and it will not be a very pleasant meeting."

Because it focused on service to other persons, temple work helped aged people to approach the ideal expressed in different cultures, that they become selfless. It also provided the elderly with opportunities for positive social interaction. It brought persons together,

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by someone else after Warren Foote's death.


Deseret Weekly News, 1 June 1895 (50:738), quoted in ibid., p. 97.

many of whom shared similar circumstances, including their advanced years and desire for continued meaningful relationships. Temple work helped many persons find relief from the pangs of loneliness and isolation which often accompanied old age and/or widowhood.

The performance of genealogical research and temple ordinances was not a privilege reserved only for elderly Church members. However, the demands of family, work, and other responsibilities drew so heavily on the time resources of younger persons, that the majority of those who actively engaged in temple work were more advanced in years. 58

Another important benefit of engagement in temple work and related activities was that they helped older persons prepare, mentally and spiritually, for death. It enabled them to transcend the daily concerns of mortal life and look forward with anticipation to their entrance into a higher sphere. Having performed, vicariously, gospel ordinances for their ancestors who could not do the work themselves, they could—and did in many instances—look forward to meeting them in the world of spirits.

On his 81st birthday, George Goddard tried to imagine

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58 While it is apparent that a large number of those who participated in temple work were elderly, it is not yet clear what percentage they constituted of the older population at large. It is therefore difficult to say how far-reaching the impact of temple work was in the lives of elderly Church members.
the feelings his forebears would have as a result of temple work performed on their behalf by living descendants. Goddard had left England as a convert to the Church 45 years earlier, "And although at our parting, sorrow and sadness filled the hearts of my parents, I have no doubt, in the spirit world, they are now rejoicing in the fact of my embracing the Gospel which then caused them so much grief." He anticipated a happy reunion with them in the life beyond death.

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59George Goddard, Journal, 5 December 1896, LDS Church Archives.
CHAPTER THREE

C.R. SAVAGE AND THE OLD FOLKS COMMITTEE

May the blessings of God . . . be with all who wipe the
tear away from sorrow's cheek, smooth the wrinkle from
the brow of care, and make glad again the heart that
beats but slowly because of ripened years.¹

The Old Folks movement, which began with annual
excursions in 1875, was a significant, sustained effort to
pay homage to Utah's elderly. It was begun by C.R. Savage,
Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter, and George Goddard. During
their lifetimes, Savage and Goddard were its foremost
advocates; the movement outlived them by several decades.

On Friday, 17 December 1897, a free entertainment was
held at the Salt Lake Theatre for the "Old Folks, Widows,
Deaf Mutes, News Boys, and orphan children"² of Salt Lake
City. The main attraction was a sleight of hand
performance; there was also music. The audience was well
entertained and a jovial spirit prevailed, but, wrote one
observer, "none were so happy as . . . 'Charley' Savage and

²George Goddard, Journal, 17 December 1897, LDS
Church Archives.
George Goddard[,] the one [Savage] nearing seventy and the other [Goddard] eighty-five."  

As the entertainment began, Savage introduced Goddard, who was scheduled to make a few remarks to the audience. He then turned to exit the stage, but Goddard would not let him go,

and there they stood like two happy old cronies, the one talking and the other blushing like a girl. Mr. Goddard said that twenty-two years ago Mr. Savage had conceived the idea of gathering the half-forgotten old people and giving them a day of pleasure away from home.

Charles Roscoe Savage was born on 16 August 1832 in Southampton, England. He first heard the message of Mormonism at the age of fifteen and was baptized into the Church on 21 May 1848. He performed missionary labors in Switzerland and England before emigrating to America, where he arrived in February 1857.  

He stayed in New York City for two years, where he worked in a printing office, served as leader of the New York Branch choir, and met and married Annie Adkins, also a native of England. While in New York he determined to make photography his vocation. In 1859 he was sent to Florence,

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3 Millennial Star 60 (6 January 1898):11, 12. The correspondent being quoted was Charles Ellis, a non-Mormon who was friendly to the Church. The material was copied into the Star from an article in the Deseret News.

4 Ibid.

5 Biographical information on C.R. Savage is taken from Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia 3 (1920):708-711, unless otherwise cited.
Nebraska on Church business, and the next year he crossed the plains to Utah with a company of other Latter-day Saints, arriving on 27 August 1860 in Salt Lake City, where he settled permanently.

C.R. Savage developed a successful photography business in Salt Lake City. His photographic exhibits won first prize in the World’s Exposition on at least four occasions. He suffered a major setback in 1883 when his business establishment was destroyed by fire, which resulted in the loss of many valuable photographs.

He practiced polygamy, taking Mary Emma Fowler and Ellen Fenn as plural wives in 1876 and 1878, respectively. Both were from England. Mary Emma Fowler died in 1881 and his first wife, Annie Adkins, died in 1893. In 1895 he married a widow, Annie Smith Clowes. C.R. Savage was the father of thirteen children, seven sons and six daughters; Annie Adkins bore him eleven children and Ellen Fenn, two.

Savage’s Church activities included service as a home missionary in the Salt Lake Stake and as a member of the Tabernacle Choir. He was also active in the community in other ways, giving illustrated lectures on Utah, contributing articles to local publications, and speaking at funerals. He performed numerous charitable acts. On one occasion George Goddard was led to write concerning him, "He is a great caterer for the old and the young."  

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C.R. Savage frequently passed the home of John Daynes and family, located on the northwest corner of "F" and South Temple streets. According to Savage's daughter, whenever he went by

he would see John's elderly mother sitting on the porch. She was there day after day, year after year, whenever the weather would permit, and Savage wondered if she ever went outside of the yard. He thought that there must be other old people that lived in the same way,

and decided to do something about the problem.

He approached Edward Hunter, the 82-year-old Presiding Bishop of the Church, and proposed that a free excursion be held annually for the aged residents of Salt Lake City. Hunter liked the idea and assigned his clerk, George Goddard, to assist with arrangements.

They decided to hold the first outing at Lake Point, on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. John W. Young, manager of the Utah-Western Railroad, offered free transportation there and back on his line, and others offered to assist in various ways.

Between eight and nine o'clock on the morning of 14

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7Savage's home was at 80 "D" Street. See his obituary, Deseret News, 4 February 1909, p. 10.


10Ibid.
May 1875 the excursion train pulled out from the Salt Lake Depot carrying 244 passengers, 180 of which were over the age of 60. According to Goddard, the party consisted of "aged, infirm, and mostly indigent saints."\(^{11}\) Two hours later they reached their destination and were made welcome at Dr. Clinton’s nearly-completed hotel.

At the hotel the aged guests socialized, ate, and enjoyed a program until one o’clock, at which time several of them went for a ride on the lake on the Corinne Steamer. The boat went out about nine miles, and they enjoyed dancing and singing during the trip. Back at the hotel there was more singing. At five o’clock the train was loaded and started back to Salt Lake City where it arrived between eight and nine o’clock that evening.\(^{12}\)

George Goddard expressed his great satisfaction with the activities of the day. Free transportation had been provided to the aged on street cars and on the train. The Salt Lake Seventh Ward also provided music free of charge, and the captain of the steamer was "gentlemanly and courteous." No accidents of any kind were reported; "the hand of the Lord was over us for our safety."\(^{13}\)

Others must have agreed with Goddard’s assessment of the success of the outing, because when the train left the

\(^{11}\)Goddard, Journal, 14 May 1875.

\(^{12}\)Ibid.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., 14 May 1875.
depot headed for Provo the following year on June 7, it carried more than twice as many passengers, including over 300 who had passed the age of 65. On that occasion the train stopped briefly at Lehi, American Fork, and Pleasant Grove, "to receive the greetings & Music of the citizens".  

They were met in Provo by a band, and 50 wagons with spring seats to carry them to Father Graves' Grove. At the grove they were joined by persons from other communities, making a combined total of about 800 elderly participants. After a picnic, remarks by Bishop Hunter, and more music, Father (Samuel) and Mother Vincent were introduced to those assembled. He was 101; she was 99.

W.C. Dunbar approached the aged couple and sang, "My Dear Old Wife and I," with appropriate gestures. Apostles John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and Orson Pratt then came forward and "by virtue of the priesthood", pronounced a blessing upon the heads of Father and Mother Vincent. "The Company then dispersed, some to the dance, others to the swing—and many under the shady trees talking over the reminiscences of the past."  

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14 Ibid., 7 June 1876.
15 Presiding Bishopric. Old Folks Central Committee, Scrapbooks, 1876, p. 1, LDS Church Archives.
16 Old Folks Central Committee, Scrapbooks, 1876, p. 1.
17 Goddard, Journal, 8 June 1876.
On the way home the Seventh Ward Band played a song in each car, and cakes and lemonade were distributed to everyone. Goddard wrote that about 300 "aged poor" traveled on the train free of charge, while the remainder gave one dollar each for the trip. After all expenses were paid, including refreshments, tickets, and the use of railroad cars, the Committee had 20 dollars left.

No excursion was held in 1877, but thereafter outings were held every year for nearly a century. Several communities took turns hosting the annual event. Table 1 lists the communities which hosted the excursions between 1875 and 1900.

In conjunction with the excursions, committee members issued badges to the elderly participants which entitled them to free or discounted rates on train and street car lines on the day of the annual event. The badges had colored ribbons hanging from them which identified, by decade, the ages of those who wore them: red for 70 and over, blue for 80, and white for 90. The committee occasionally had to have special badges made for those who reached the century mark.18

On 17 August 1908, the day after C.R. Savage’s 76th birthday, the management of Saltair on the Great Salt Lake invited Salt Lake City’s aged residents to the resort for a day of free entertainment. Savage noted in his diary that

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18 Jenson, Encyclopedic History, p. 616.
a fourth color, golden yellow, had been adopted for those between the ages of 60 and 70.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{OLD FOLKS EXCURSIONS, 1875-1900}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\hline
Date & Destination \\
\hline
14 May 1875 & Lake Point (Great Salt Lake) \\
8 June 1876 & Provo \\
1877 & No excursion \\
11 June 1878 & Ogden \\
24 June 1879 & American Fork \\
8 July 1880 & Black Rock (Great Salt Lake) \\
22 June 1881 & Ogden \\
28-29 June 1882 & Salt Lake City (Tabernacle, Liberty Park) \\
11 July 1883 & Provo \\
22 July 1884 & American Fork \\
23 June 1885 & Garfield \\
29 June 1886 & American Fork \\
22 June 1887 & Ogden \\
12 July 1888 & Lehi \\
26 June 1889 & Ogden \\
15 July 1890 & Salt Lake City \\
18 June 1891 & Springville \\
29 June 1892 & Payson \\
18 July 1893 & Ogden \\
10 July 1894 & Saltair Beach (Great Salt Lake) \\
11 July 1895 & Pleasant Grove \\
16 July 1896 & Ogden \\
22-23 June 1897 & Fort Douglas, S.L. Tabernacle, Garfield \\
6 July 1898 & Lagoon (Farmington) \\
1899 July 8 & Geneva (Utah Lake) \\
1900 July 6 & Lagoon (Farmington) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textbf{Source:} George Goddard, Notebook, George Goddard Collection, LDS Church Archives; C.R. Savage, diaries, microfilm, LDS Church Archives. The source for all but the last two years is Goddard's notebook.

\textsuperscript{19}Savage, Diary, 17 August 1908.
Because of their small number, persons over 90 often received special recognition. George Goddard went through the excursion train as it traveled toward Ogden in 1881, finding two men and two women who were past 90. He placed a ribbon with a silver medal attached, over the head of each of them, "accompanied by a hearty blessing . . . . The recipients were deeply affected."  

Mary Ann Weston Maughan of Wellsville in Cache County, Utah, attended her first Old Folks excursion in 1887, the year she turned 70. That year the outing was to Lester Park in Ogden. She visited with friends of bygone years at the park until it was time for the program to start in the pavilion. A younger lady accompanied her to the entrance, but was denied admittance because, according to Maughan, "she did not have on the mighty badge."  

The program that year began by Brother William C. Dunbar playing his bagpipes. Then there was singing, prayer, talking, and more singing. Committee members distributed presents to the guests, beginning with the eldest. When their turn came, Mary Ann and an associate from Logan approached the stand, where C.R. Savage was handing out presents. After contesting her age (probably in jest), he gave her a silk parasol.

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21 Maughan, Reminiscences and Journal, 22 June 1887.
She asked to see George Goddard. "He came dancing along the stand" and greeted Sister Maughan. "We've caught up. We've got there," he exclaimed, "pointing to his red badge."\textsuperscript{22}

Goddard's energetic activities at the outing caught up with him the next day. He recorded in his journal that he was "Hoarse and tired from yesterdays exertion."\textsuperscript{23} The effects lingered with him for a few more days, when he wrote that while his health was good, he had "scarcely got over [his] exertions at the old folks excursion."\textsuperscript{24} His activities that year were not unlike others. He frequently exhausted himself helping to see that they were successful. The extent of his efforts is evident in his journals. On one occasion he wrote, "No one but those who do it, can fully estimate the amount of perspiring labor connected with such an undertaking."\textsuperscript{25} At the end of the two-day activity at Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City and Garfield in 1897, Goddard, age 81, recorded, "I was very tired, and heartily glad to get a good nights rest."\textsuperscript{26}

George Goddard was born on 5 December 1815 in Leicester England. He and his wife joined the Church in

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23}Goddard, Journal, 23 June 1887.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 25 June 1887.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 11 June 1878.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 23 June 1897.
1851, and in October of that year they and their eight children sailed for America. Five of the children died enroute to Utah: two on the ocean, one in St. Louis, and two more on the plains. The surviving family members reached Utah on 15 September 1852.  

Goddard began "peddling on a small scale" after reaching Salt Lake. Then, in 1856, he obtained a position as a clerk to Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter, in which capacity he continued until 1883. He was the First General Superintendent of the Church Sunday School organization from 1872 until his death, on 12 January 1899. He also sang in the Tabernacle Choir for 20 years, and in the Thirteenth Ward Choir for 25.  

Goddard was one of many who worked to make the Old Folks outings successful. In his detailed account of the 1878 excursion, he mentioned several others who gave assistance. William Eddington, William Naylor, Hyrum H. Goddard, Arthur Stayner, Ezra T. Clark and one of C.R. Savage's sons who helped prepare and distribute lemonade, candy, gingerbread and cake to the 552 passengers in the eleven-car train. The refreshments were served going to and returning from Ogden.  

Also in 1878, George Goddard and the Seventh Ward

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27 Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia 1:706, 707.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 11 June 1878.
string band sang three songs in each passenger car on the train, one on the way, and two returning. The Ogden Brass Band, plus nearly 150 carriages and wagons met the train at the station; the band serenaded the guests, and the carriages transported them to Mayor Farr's Grove, where 20 girls dressed in white distributed flowers to the most aged members of the company. The Tenth Ward Brass Band also played during the day.

As the popularity of the excursions grew, so did the Old Folks Committee. At the time of the Old Folks Excursion held on 28 and 29 June 1882, the committee consisted of seven men: Edward Hunter, Presiding Bishop of the Church, age 89; C.R. Savage, 49; George Goddard, 66; William Eddington, 60; William Naylor, 46; John Kirkman, 51; and William L. Binder, 49.\(^{30}\)

During the next three years two more members were added to the committee: Andrew Jenson, 32, in 1883; and Nelson Empey, 48, in 1885.\(^{31}\) William B. Preston became the new presiding bishop of the Church after Edward Hunter’s death in October 1883, and by virtue of that calling oversaw the activities of the Old Folks Committee.\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\)The Contributor 3 (July, 1882):314. For birthdates of the men listed, see Marvin E. Wiggins, comp., Mormons and Their Neighbors: An Index to Over 75,000 Biographical Sketches from 1820 to the Present, 2 vols. (Provo: Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 1984).

\(^{31}\)Jenson, LDS Biographical Encyclopedia 4:726, 727.
The host communities went to great pains to see to the comforts of the elderly excursionists. In 1891 at Packard’s Grove in Springville, "The old folks walked on a path covered with sweet new mown hay".\textsuperscript{33} New mown hay was also strewn along a six-foot wide path the aged were to walk on from the train station to the park in Payson in 1892. The hay was to help reduce the dust.\textsuperscript{34} On each side of the path were children waving banners to welcome the visitors.\textsuperscript{35}

Committee members sometimes visited a prospective host community well in advance of the excursion to ensure the support of local Church leaders and others.\textsuperscript{36} On 9 June 1878, Savage and Goddard made such a visit to Ogden. They held a public meeting in the tabernacle, after which "the Bishops and other Authorities met in the vestry and arranged by committee to have everything attended to for the comfort of the old people . . . . The Lord was with us and we prospered."\textsuperscript{37}

The planning was effective. Accounts of the 1878 and

\begin{itemize}
  \item See \textit{Millennial Star}, 49 (1 August 1887):492-493.
  \item "Old Folks’ Day, 1891," \textit{Millennial Star} 53 (13 July 1891):444.
  \item Goddard, Journal, 29 June 1892.
  \item Ibid.
  \item See ibid., 9 June 1878 and 2 June 1891.
  \item Ibid., 9 June 1878.
\end{itemize}
1879 excursions which appeared in the *Millennial Star*, a Church-sponsored publication in Great Britain, indicate that immense numbers of persons turned out to meet the train at the stations, complete with teams for transportation and a local brass band in each place.

A correspondent for the *Ogden Herald* painted a romantic image of the meeting of the ages in an account of the 1887 excursion. On arriving at their destination the elderly were directed to tables by young men and women. The reporter observed an old man being helped to his seat by one of the young misses: "It was the respect of youth for old age; it was a commingling of smiling Spring with Autumn's maturer shades."\(^{38}\)

Traditionally, a number of younger persons accompanied the aged on the annual excursion train from Salt Lake, as aides. On the 1888 outing however, fewer young people were taken along, perhaps to make room for more of the elderly. The *Millennial Star* noted the diminished "number of young folks, who on former occasions have been taken along, often to the inconvenience of the old folks."\(^{39}\)

Old Folks Committee members canvassed in Salt Lake

\(^{38}\)Quoted in the *Millennial Star* 49 (1 August 1887):494.

\(^{39}\) *Millennial Star* 50 (13 August 1888):516. There was a total of 80 young men and women serving as waiters and waitresses at the outing. The reference to fewer young people only has reference to those who came on the train.
City each year for contributions from businesses and individuals. George Goddard recorded in 1880 that in addition to cash contributions from several individuals, the committee received a hat, a pair of slippers, a shawl, pants, two arm chairs, sugar, wine, brandy, ginger snaps, candy, oranges, and other groceries and merchandise. The Deseret News donated printed cards for the occasion.40

The Committee distributed the goods thus gathered to the elderly on the day of the excursion, often as prizes for having accomplished certain feats. In 1880, a Brother Beers received the pair of slippers for singing a song entitled, "The Down Side of Life."41 Samuel Neslen received an arm chair for his rendition of "King of the Cannibal Islands"; William Wilding was given one dollar and a bottle of wine for being the oldest man present; and a Sister Sabine was "given a sack of flour for not having received a cross word from her husband for one year. Brother Sabine testified to the fact."42

At the 1878 excursion Mary Shelley, age 83, received a framed portrait of Church president John Taylor for having worked in a coal mine in Scotland for 40 years, and

40 George Goddard, Notebook, George Goddard Collection, LDS Church Archives. The notebook includes information concerning the 1879 and 1880 Old Folks excursions.


42 Ibid.
crossing the plains with a handcart. There were arm chairs for the oldest man and woman present. The Committee gave James Shields a pound of tea for being over 80, "always chopping wood for his wife, and making the fire for her in the morning. . . . Mary Haslem, mother of 22 children, Ann Lee, 21 children, Emma Austin, 17, and Ann Lee, seven pairs of twins, each received a dress pattern." 43

The Old Folks Committee often gave presents to the host community as a token of appreciation for their hospitality. In 1889 for instance, "many presents were distributed by C.R. Savage and the balance turned over to the Ogden Authorities, for the poor of their respective wards." 44 In 1891 the Committee gave prizes to everyone over 70 in Springville, and then on the way back to Salt Lake City handed out 500 more to the aged people on the train. 45 In 1892 they gave prizes to the elderly residents of Payson; the Salt Lake excursionists generally did not receive prizes that year. 46

On some years the excursion was held on or close to

44Goddard, Journal, 26 June 1889.
45Ibid., 18 June 1891.
46Goddard wrote in his journal for 29 June 1892 that prizes were given to the "old folks of Payson." Mary Ann Maughan's journal account of the same outing says, "the committee thought best to give the presents to the poor of Payson, as a token of our appreciation for their kindness in providing such a feast for our entertainment".
June 22, Edward Hunter's birthday. During the program at the 1879 outing, Bishop George Halliday presented Hunter with an engraved gold-headed cane on behalf of the Saints of Santaquin.

In 1880 C.R. Savage publicly thanked the businesses and private individuals, "Mormon and non-Mormon," for their generosity in supporting the efforts of the committee. The Old Folks Committee openly solicited the participation of the non-Latter-day Saint community in the movement, both as contributors and recipients.

Advertisements for outings regularly pointed out that all old people were invited to attend regardless of their religious preference, color, or social status. A broadside advertising the 1887 excursion declared, "Age is the passport to the festivities of the day--'Indian, Moslem, Greek or Jew'--all are welcome."

The excursions aided in breaking down some of the social barriers which existed between Mormons and

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SNAP SHOTS AT THE VETERAN'S EXCURSION.

Source: Presiding Bishopric, Old Folks Committee, Scrapbook, 1898.
non-Mormons. In 1891 George Q. Cannon, first counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, "expressed his pleasure at seeing so many persons of opposite opinions putting aside their religious and political differences and meeting as citizens, and members of the great human family."  

Clergymen of other faiths occasionally took part on the programs. The list of speakers for 1896 gives some idea as to the extent of their participation. The speakers that year included LDS Church president Wilford Woodruff; Joseph F. Smith, Woodruff's counselor in the First Presidency; C.R. Savage; C.F. Richardson, a Presbyterian minister; Apostle Franklin D. Richards; William Naylor of the Old Folks Committee; Bishop Edwin Stratford of the Ogden 4th Ward; and one or two others.  

Richardson was the only non-Mormon on the program.

Because of the animosity expressed toward the Church in the national press, especially in the 1880s in relation to the polygamy issue, Church leaders were anxious to dispel misconceptions about the degraded condition of the Mormon people. The Old Folks movement was one thing they pointed to as evidence of their high moral character. In his 1891 address to the old folks, George Q. Cannon said that "Honoring old age was the test of the civilization of


a people, an evidence of their advancement."\textsuperscript{52}

On a few occasions, non-Mormon dignitaries 
accompanied the excursions and commented favorably on what 
they saw. Utah's territorial governor, Caleb W. West, 
attended in 1888 and his successor, Arthur L. Thomas, 
attended in 1892. Captain J.B. Johnson, former speaker of 
the Kansas House of Representatives, was at the 1889 
excursion.\textsuperscript{53} Commenting on the Old Folks movement, Johnson 
said that he "recognized a greater power than that of man, 
that had been over it all."\textsuperscript{54}

When Governor Thomas attended in 1892, he passed 
through the train cars shaking hands with the excursionists 
and wishing them well. Speaking to the 1888 assembly, 
Governor West expressed the hope that "as long as the sun 
shines and mountain breezes blow in fair Utah, this 
beautiful custom of treating the Old Folks to recreations 
... may be perpetuated."\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52}Millennial Star 53 (13 July 1891):444. A modern 
scholar expressed a similar thought in his foreword to a 
collection of essays on old age by people in the humanities 
disciplines. He wrote, "one measure of the humaneness of a 
culture is its treatment of the elderly". See Stuart F. 
Spicker et al., eds., Aging and the Elderly: Humanistic 
Perspectives in Gerontology (Atlantic Highlands, 

\textsuperscript{53}Millennial Star 50 (13 August 1888):514, 515; 
Millennial Star 51 (22 July 1889):454; Maughan, Journal, 
June 1892.

\textsuperscript{54}Millennial Star 51 (22 July 1889):454.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 13 August 1888, p. 515.
It is difficult to estimate how many elderly persons actually participated in the excursions each year. However, some sources contain data on the number of aged persons on the train on a particular excursion, and others tell the total number of persons present at the places of outing. Table 2 contains estimates for selected years.

An indicator of increased participation in the excursions as the years progressed, is the number of passenger cars in the trains which carried them to their destinations and back. For instance, in 1878 and 1879 there were eleven cars.\textsuperscript{56} When they went to Ogden in 1887 there were sixteen passenger cars, plus two cabooses and a baggage car.\textsuperscript{57} When they went to Ogden in 1893 there were 20 cars,\textsuperscript{58} and when they returned again in 1896 they needed "Two sections of . . . trains of 14 cars each."\textsuperscript{59}

The founders of the Old Folks movement developed strong feelings about its importance while it was still in its formative stages. Bishop Edward Hunter said at the 1878 excursion that he felt "this was a big thing," and "spoke warmly of Bro. Savage's plan for the benefit of the folks."\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} Goddard, Journals, 11 June 1878 and 24 June 1879.
\textsuperscript{57} Savage, Diary, 22 June 1887.
\textsuperscript{58} Goddard, Journal, 18 July 1893.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 16 July 1896.
\textsuperscript{60}"A Rare Excursion," Millennial Star 40 (12 August (Footnote continued)
TABLE 2

ATTENDANCE AT OLD FOLKS EXCURSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Participants over age 70</th>
<th>Total participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Lake Point</td>
<td>180 (over age 60)</td>
<td>250+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Salt Lake</td>
<td>ca. 1100 (Tabernacle)</td>
<td>ca. 10,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>800 (seated in park pavillion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Lehi</td>
<td>697**</td>
<td>ca. 3,000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Springville</td>
<td>594 (from S.L. County)</td>
<td>. . .#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Ogden</td>
<td>1200+ (on trains)</td>
<td>. . .##</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: George Goddard, journals, unless cited otherwise.

*The Contributor, 3 (July, 1882):314.

**Millennial Star 50 (13 August 1888):514. According to this account, there were 527 over age 70 on the train, plus "70 old people of Lehi", and "perhaps 100 people from other parts of Utah county." Goddard's journal says that there were 500 over age 70 from Salt Lake County.

***Ibid. The article states, "The entire assembly at the grove was estimated at nearly 3,000."

#Goddard's journal for 18 June 1891 indicates that there were 11 tables at the grove, "holding 100 at each". He does not state, however, if the tables were full, if there was room for everyone, or if they were seated in shifts.

##Goddard's journal for 16 July 1896 states, "The number of people on the Park, amounted to many thousands."

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(continued) 1878):509, 510.
George Goddard wrote concerning the 1878 excursion, "This was surely one of the great events of the last days and God our heavenly Father be praised for causing the weather to be so propitious, . . . , his Angels to guard and protect his children from the least accident, and shedding forth in their midst so abundantly of his holy spirit." 61

The success of the excursions spawned a broader range of activities. In 1884 and 1885 the Committee sponsored excursions for orphans and other children. 62 The broadsides advertising those events listed several women on the committee of arrangements, many of whom were wives of men on the Old Folks Committee.

In about 1887 an Old Folks choir, consisting of a small group of Tabernacle Choir members "under the leadership of Professors [Ebenezer] Beezly [sic] and [Thomas C.] Griggs," 63 began performing on the excursions for the aged. They continued to perform in conjunction with Old Folks entertainments for over 50 years. 64

In February 1888, the Committee invited all of the

62 Old Folks Committee, Scrapbooks, 1884 and 1885. LDS Church Archives.
63 Millennial Star 49 (1 August 1887):493; Old Folks Committee scrapbook, 1897, p. 7, newspaper article dated December 1897, from an unidentified source.
64 See Journal History of the Church, 20 June 1936, p. 8, LDS Church Archives.
residents of Salt Lake City who were over 70, widows, orphans, or deaf mutes, to a play in the Salt Lake Theatre, free of charge. A similar invitation was published ten months later for an opera, "The Bohemian Girl," which was held on New Year's Eve. After the latter performance, the Committee provided sandwiches, tea and coffee for the performers and Theatre staff in the Green Room of the Theatre. C.R. Savage commented that the affair was "a good time for everyone."66

It appears that the next free winter theatrical entertainment came off in 1892 and thereafter it, along with the summer excursions, became an annual event which continued until after Savage's death. The post-performance dinner for the cast and theatre staff also continued. The list of guests invited to the winter productions was ultimately expanded to include poorhouse inmates and newspaper boys.67

In commenting on the success of the 1897 Old Folks excursion, George Goddard alluded to possible changes in the make-up of the Old Folks Committee. He wrote, "This was by far the greatest number of the aged, that we ever had on our hands at one time, and perhaps may never have again."68 One year later, on 7 June 1898, he recorded that

65 Savage, Diary, 2 February 1888.
66 Ibid., 31 December 1888.
he was trying to arrange an appointment to see the First Presidency, "In company with CR Savage, to obtain their consent to have the old folks, Widows & orphans looked after, throughout every Stake, Ward, and branch of the church in all the world."\(^{69}\)

Sometime during the next six or seven months they succeeded in obtaining First Presidency approval for their idea. A circular letter signed by Presiding Bishop William B. Preston and the other Committee members instructed all stake presidencies and bishoprics to organize stake and ward Old Folks committees.\(^{70}\)

The purpose of the local committees was to plan and carry out entertainments twice a year for the elderly, widows and orphans living within their boundaries, once in the summer and once in the winter. Everyone was to be invited, regardless of "creed, color, race, or social condition."\(^{71}\)

Local Old Folks parties had already been inaugurated in some communities. The first mention made of such an event by Goddard or Savage was on 19 January 1887 when Savage recorded that he, in company of William C. Dunbar

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 23 June 1897.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 7 June 1898.

\(^{70}\) Old Folks Central Committee, Scrapbooks, 1898, pp. 6, 7.

\(^{71}\) Ibid.
and George Goddard, went to American Fork "to mingle with about 100 old folks in a sociable". 72 He went on to say in the next sentence, "The old Folks movement seems fully inaugurated and must stand." 73

The American Fork gathering was an annual event thereafter, 74 and Savage and his fellow committee members, together with their wives, were always invited. They attended regularly. C.R. Savage developed a lasting friendship with John Tracy and wife, and would often stay a few days with them when he went to American Fork.

A few other wards also held parties prior to the establishment of stake and ward Old Folks committees. George Goddard recorded attending parties in Farmington in 1891; Lehi in 1896; and the Salt Lake Second Ward in 1897. Savage and Goddard attended a half-dozen or more local gatherings in 1898. 75 After the Old Folks Committee gave the official word to stakes and wards to organize their own committees, annual parties were held regularly throughout the Church.

72 Savage, Diary, 19 January 1887. American Fork had played host to the Old Folks excursion the year before.

73 Ibid.

74 See Ibid., 16 January 1889.

75 Ibid., 1898; Goddard, Journal, 1898.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Maddox</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. B. Savage</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Bowen</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma B. Savage</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ado B. Savage</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Goldner</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza B. Goodner</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August Bank</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ishman</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph A. Hilt</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann. Neil</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Dansie. Hyl</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida L. Hyl</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah. Frey</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William. Edmonds</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah, Born. Corn.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. B. Corn.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. L. Hyl.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. L. Hyl.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Ashby</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad Chester Ashby</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary M. Ashby</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Watson</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard. Corn.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. R. Corn.</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: East Bountiful Ward, Davis Stake, Old Folks Register, LDS Church Archives.
On 24 June 1902, Presiding Bishop William B. Preston sent a report form to each of the 50 stakes in the Church, requesting information on Old Folks committees in every ward. The report asked for the name and address of each ward committee chairman; also the name of the chairman of the stake committee.\(^76\)

Forty-three stakes returned the report. Of those, 31 reported having an operative stake Old Folks committee, and 12 reported that they had none. Four stakes (Cache, Davis, St. Joseph, and Summit) were fully organized, with a stake committee and a committee in every ward.

Other stakes were organized to a lesser extent, in some cases having a few ward committees but no stake committee. The Granite, Maricopa, and Malad stakes reported that their Young Men's and Young Women's organizations were responsible for carrying out entertainments for the aged, and hence they had no stake Old Folks committees.

Stakes in sparsely-settled areas had unique problems which hindered the smooth operation of a stakewide committee. The Emery Stake in West Central Utah had a committee in every ward,\(^77\) but the stake clerk, Arthur W.

\(^76\) Old Folks Central Committee, Local Committee Chairmen Files, 1902-1903, LDS Church Archives.

\(^77\) Arthur W. Horsley indicated that he had waited for some of the wards to get organized before sending the report in.
Horsley, explained that the stake committee was released "on account of not being able to bring the people together, it would require much travel by wagon." William Halls of the San Juan Stake in Southwestern Utah reported, "There are only 6 men in the stake over 70 years old, and only 12 over 60."

To distinguish it from similar organizations in stakes and wards, the headquarters committee in Salt Lake City added a word to its title, making it the Old Folks Central Committee. The Central Committee continued to sponsor annual excursions from Salt Lake City to other places. This probably caused some jurisdictional overlap with the Salt Lake Stake, which may partly explain why the Salt Lake Stake did not sponsor an Old Folks gathering for its members until 1906. 78

In some wards the Old Folks parties were part of day-long festivities which involved most of the local community. The precedent may have been set in American Fork. After their 1890 party for the elderly (which included "some happy remarks" by a local Presbyterian minister), they were returned to their homes, "and younger folks who had been helping, continued the fun with dancing, speeches and singing until a late hour." 79

78 Savage, Diary, 17 August 1906.

79 Deseret News, date not given, quoted in the Millennial Star 52 (10 February 1890):93.
The Mendon and Salt Lake Twenty-Fourth wards held similar parties in 1899. Bishop Henry Ballard wrote about the social held in the Logan 2nd Ward on 19 January 1900, "We got up an old folks party in the afternoon with a dinner for all over 60 years of age in the Ward and in the evening for all married folks with a picknick and song and dancing and speeches." A Millennial Star correspondent reiterated in 1900 that the local Old Folks committees were responsible for providing entertainments for more than just the elderly. "[E]ach ward is expected to look after its own old people, widows, and orphans, lame, halt, blind, those who are poor, and the wives of missionaries, to give them an outing twice a year, one in the winter and one in the summer." Perhaps an important reason for the success of the Old Folks movement was C.R. Savage's close relationships with other members of the Old Folks Committee. When his wife, Annie, died in 1893, the speakers at the funeral included George Goddard, William Eddington, and William C. Dunbar. Although Dunbar was not officially a member of the

80 Isaac Sorensen, History of Mendon, Utah [n.d.-1920], typescript, in the Joel E. Ricks collection (microfilm), LDS Church Archives; Goddard, Journal, 2 January 1899.

81 Henry Ballard, Journal and Memoirs, 1852-[1904], typescript, in the Ricks Collection, LDS Church Archives.

82 "A Characteristic Old Folks' Party," Millennial Star 62 (26 April 1900):267f. The correspondent is identified simply as "J.O.F."
Committee, he was frequently on the program at entertainments on their behalf. He was Savage's close friend.

In addition to his public endeavors for the elderly, Savage performed other less conspicuous acts of service. On 11 January 1882 he wrote, "We had a delightful time at home this evening. The assembly consisted of about 300 of the oldest people in the ward." He also noted that, among others, Brothers Dunbar and Goddard were present "and contributed to the happiness of all present."83

He hosted similar gatherings in 1886 and 1887. On 2 January 1888, he and William C. Dunbar made New Year's visits to several old people. They continued the practice84 until 1898, when he recorded on January 1, "For the first time in many years I do not visit my friends in company with Brother Dunbar who is now kept at home on a/c of sickness."85 Savage did, however, go with his son to visit another sick friend that day.

George Goddard passed away on 12 January 1899, at age 84. C.R. Savage spoke at his funeral and acted as a pallbearer. Savage commented in his diary that the funeral "was the largest ever given to any other than the

83 Savage, Diary, 11 January 1882.
84 Savage's 1895 diary does not state whether he made the visits or not.
85 Savage, Diary, 1 January 1898.
presidents of the Church."\(^{86}\)

One week after Goddard's death an entertainment was held in the Salt Lake Theatre for the Old Folks, widows and orphans of the community. Savage recorded that everything went well, but concluded his diary entry with a four-word remembrance of his former associate: "no Brother Goddard there."\(^{87}\)

During the last decade of his life Savage attended many Old Folks gatherings, including local parties and the larger excursions and entertainments sponsored by the Central Committee. His diaries, in which entries were sometimes sporadic, record his attendance at nine Old Folks gatherings in 1904, nine in 1905, five in 1906, sixteen in 1907, and eight in 1908.

In 1907 Savage made regular visits to Henry W. Naisbitt, an old friend born in 1826, who was "blind and partially paralyzed - a wreck of his former vigoras [sic] self."\(^{88}\) On one occasion he "took him a bottle of unfermented wine."\(^{89}\) Another evening that year the Savages entertained four couples and a widower in their home, including Brother and Sister Naisbitt.\(^{90}\) In March 1908,

\(^{86}\)Ibid., 12 January 1899; see also an entry made in George Goddard's diary by his widow, Elizabeth, on 15 January 1899, the day of the funeral.

\(^{87}\)Savage, Diary, 19 January 1899.

\(^{88}\)Ibid., 23 July 1907.

\(^{89}\)Ibid.
Sister Savage invited twelve widows for an afternoon in their home.

On 17 August 1908, the day after C.R. Savage’s 76th birthday, C.W. Nibley, who had been the Presiding Bishop of the Church since the previous December, treated the Old Folks Central Committee to supper. On that occasion the Committee voted to have a banquet on Savage’s birthday every year for as long as he lived.91 He passed away less than five months later, on 3 February 1909, after a brief illness.

Charles Ellis wrote in 1898 concerning C.R. Savage, George Goddard, and the Old Folks movement, "the faithfulness of these two men to this benevolent scheme has made for them a fund of love in the hearts of the old people that might be envied by the crowned heads of the world."92 Governor Caleb W. West spoke in a similar vein at the 1888 excursion. He said that he had been informed that the man who first originated the idea of tendering to the Old Folks a free excursion [C.R. Savage] was present on the stand, and he felt impressed to utter, as his honest opinion, that if that man had done no other noble deed, this one alone should entitle him to one of the highest seats in heaven.93

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90Ibid., 24 April 1907. Henry W. Naisbitt passed away on 26 February 1908; see Savage’s diary entries for 26 February and 1 March 1908.
91Ibid., 17 August 1908.
92"The Old Folks of Salt Lake," Millennial Star 60 (6 January 1898):12.
93Millennial Star, 13 August 1888, p. 515.
The popularity of the Old Folks movement in Utah led one writer to proclaim, "Old Folks' day is honored now by all classes, and commended by every creed and party in this territory." Another asked in 1889, "why should there not be a national Old Folks' Day?" Clearly, not everyone was as exuberant about the movement as the Mormons were. In fact, recent works on the history of old age contain no information on what, if any, recreational activities were planned for their enjoyment elsewhere in the United States during the nineteenth century. Scholars have either overlooked the topic, or very little happened. For now at least, it appears that the movement initiated by C.R. Savage to meet recreational needs of the elderly, was a uniquely Mormon phenomenon.

On 30 October 1906, C.R. Savage spoke at the funeral of a man in the Salt Lake Eighteenth Ward. The funeral was poorly-attended, and Savage looked with sadness on the man's widow and five children. He reflected on the event in his diary: "if a man live[s] so that he does not make friends[,] None will come to do him honor when the change comes".  

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94"The Old Folks' Excursion," Millennial Star 51 (22 July 1889):452-454. The article was apparently taken from the Deseret News.

95"The Old Folks Excursion," Millennial Star 49 (1 August 1887):492-495.

96Savage, Diary, 30 October 1906.
Based on his own thought about the volume of attendance at one's funeral being an indicator of his past works, Savage should have been pleased with his life's labors. The Assembly Hall on Temple Square in Salt Lake City was "filled to overflowing" on the day of his funeral. James E. Talmage, one of the speakers at the services, said, "He needs no monument, no pillar to perpetuate his memory, for he has built his own monument enduringly."\(^{97}\)

Twenty-nine years later, in ceremonies held on 23 July 1936 on the corner of South Temple and Main streets in Salt Lake City, Presiding Bishop Sylvester Q. Cannon presented a red sandstone monument and drinking fountain to the city on behalf of the Old Folks Central Committee.\(^{98}\) Atop the sandstone sits a bust of the father of the Old Folks movement, C.R. Savage. He may not have needed the monument, but people needed to remember what he and his coworkers had done and thereby be inspired to give the aged in their own day more than just respect, but enjoyment as well.

\(^{97}\) *Journal History of the Church*, 7 February 1909, p. 5. LDS Church Archives.

\(^{98}\) Ibid., 23 July 1936.
ILLUSTRATION 4
C.R. SAVAGE MONUMENT, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, CA. 1936

Source: LDS Church Archives.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF AGED PERSONS IN MORMON CULTURE, WITH DEMOGRAPHIC COMMENTS ON THE AGED IN UTAH

Oct 15/97 finds me at the 78th Mile Stone, Standing on the Divide looking back over the tortuous [sic] path I have come up to this and looking Yonder to the other shore. . . . uncriticising and waiting for the summons to the Inevitable."  

Old age in the nineteenth century was not defined simply in terms of years as it is today in the United States. There was no set retirement age, and there were no financial benefits for leaving the labor force. As a result, most men worked as long as they were physically able. Most occupations in America were still related to agriculture in 1900, ² and old age was based more on a person's stamina than chronological age. Some people were considered to be old at 50, while others were still relatively young at 65.

The ambiguities in defining old age are readily

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¹ David Candland, Letter, 10 October 1897, Chester, Utah to the First Presidency, LDS Church Archives.

apparent in nineteenth century Latter-day Saint sources. Brigham Young referred to 58-year-old Thomas B. Marsh as an old man in 1857. Silas Richards wrote that he and other "old men of experience" were called to serve as missionaries to the United States in 1869; he turned 62 that year. In determining whom to treat to free train fares and other courtesies on their annual excursions, the Old Folks Committee identified "Old Folks" as persons aged 70 or over. When stake and ward Old Folks committees were formed in 1898 to provide local entertainments, everyone over age 60 was to be invited.

The 1880 United States Census defined everyone 60 and over as old, and the 1890 Census defined old age as beginning at age 65. Sixty-five is currently the age at which a person can begin collecting full Social Security benefits from the United States government. In tables 3 through 6, the elderly are defined as those persons aged 65 or older.

Information compiled from United States Census schedules for 1860, 1870, and 1880 for Cache County, Utah, provide insights into the presence of old age in Mormon

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4 Silas Richards, Reminiscences [ca. 1872], LDS Church Archives.

culture, and tell about the presence—or non-presence—of old people in an area where settlement was beginning in the 1860s.

The Millennial Star ran an article in 1880 which claimed that "[t]here is an unusually large proportion of people of advanced age in the community of Latter-day Saints. The nature of the religion of Jesus Christ tends to longevity, among its requirements being temperance in all things." That year, 3.44 percent of the United States population was 65 or older; in Utah, 2.98 percent of the population was 65 or older.

There were 383 persons aged 65 or older living in Cache County in 1880, comprising 3.04 percent of the total county population. Those figures were, both numerically and proportionately, significantly higher than the two previous census years, 1860 and 1870. Old people comprised 0.57 percent of the county population in 1860, and 1.88 percent in 1870. The median age of the over-65 population was 67 in 1860, and 70 in 1870 and 1880.

6 "The Old Folks," Millennial Star 42 (9 August 1880): 506.


8 I am indebted to Charles ("Chick") Hatch of Logan, Utah, who lent me copies of his transcripts of the 1860, 1870, and 1880 United States manuscript censuses for Cache County, as well as an unpublished volume of statistical compilations which are based on the transcripts.
To understand better the numbers, one must also take into account the history of the area. The first permanent settlers arrived in Cache Valley in September 1856, establishing a townsite which they called Maughan's Fort.\(^9\) It was named for Peter Maughan, who headed a group of eight or nine men, most of whom also had their families with them.

In 1857 United States troops were dispatched to Utah under an executive order which later became known as "Buchanan’s blunder." As Johnston’s Army approached Utah, Brigham Young directed Church members to move to communities south of Salt Lake City, where they waited while differences were resolved. Peter Maughan’s group vacated their small settlement, which was located about 80 miles north of Salt Lake City, in March 1858. They left 1500 bushels of wheat in storage, and more grain growing in the fields.\(^11\)

Settlement resumed in Cache Valley in 1859. That year Providence, Mendon, Logan, Richmond, and Smithfield

\(^9\)It is possible that the median age was 70 for two consecutive decades because of age heaping. In 1870 and 1880 in Cache County, persons near age 70 rounded down more frequently than up. In 1870, sixteen reported their age as 69, twenty-six reported 70, and only six reported 71; in 1880 the figures were thirty-one, thirty-nine, and eleven, respectively.

\(^10\)Joel E. Ricks, ed., The History of a Valley: Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho (Logan, Utah: Cache Valley Centennial Commission, 1956), pp. 33-35. A few years later, Maughan’s Fort was renamed Wellsville.

\(^11\)Ibid., p. 37. The grain they stored was gone when they returned.
were settled. According to the United States Census, there were 2605 persons living in Cache County in 1860, in 11 communities. The 1870 census showed a population of 8229.

Included in the 1870 census were the towns of Franklin, Bridgeport, Oxford, Clifton, and Weston; these were made part of Idaho when it became a state in 1873. Even with the loss of those towns, by 1880 the population of Cache County had swollen to 12,577.

Table 3 shows the number of aged persons living in Cache County in relation to the total county population in 1860, 1870, and 1880.

### TABLE 3

**AGED POPULATION IN CACHE COUNTY, UTAH, 1860-1880**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged males</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged females</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total aged</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total County pop.</td>
<td>2605</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>8229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Charles Hatch, Transcript of 1880 U.S. manuscript census for Cache County, Utah.

A couple of factors help to explain the increase in Cache County's elderly population between 1860 and 1880. Many of the original settlers there were in their forties and
fifties when they arrived, and had aged 20 years. As the region became increasingly settled, more aged persons and their families considered it a viable option to locate there. In the formative stages of development, the aged were noticeably lacking in number.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of rapid growth in Utah, as many converts to the Church heeded the call to gather to "Zion." For the first few years after the Latter-day Saints arrived in the Rocky Mountains, settlement was concentrated mainly in the Salt Lake Valley. As the influx of emigrants continued, new settlements were established in more areas, including Cache Valley.

Most Latter-day Saints who followed the Quorum of the Twelve and Brigham Young after Joseph Smith's death, had abandoned their homes in Nauvoo, Illinois by early 1846. During the winter of 1846-47, Winter Quarters (located near present-day Omaha), Nebraska, became a way station for westbound Mormons. ¹²

The Mormon migration to Utah in the late 1840s "was not" as historians Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton have noted, "the movement of a single horde but rather a chain of sometimes loosely linked companies inching toward a destination at first ill defined."¹³ Many did not reach

the Salt Lake Valley for five or six years after leaving Illinois. Dean May has estimated that about 41 percent of the Mormons in the Western United States were still in Iowa in 1850. Many persons died before reaching Utah; the mortality rate was higher among children and the elderly than in other age groups.

Jeremiah and Elizabeth Hatch and their family stopped near Winter Quarters in December 1847. He was 81 years old and she was 75. Elizabeth was among many who died at Winter Quarters; her husband succumbed two-and-a-half years later "at the camp home of his son, Josephus", near Council Bluffs, Iowa. Several other members of their family completed the journey to the Rocky Mountains.

The establishment of new settlements in Utah and surrounding areas was a work for the young. Few aged persons participated in such ventures, and several of those were dependents in their children's families. In Cache County in 1860, there were also a few household heads who were in their sixties. These persons, usually men, had one or two things in their favor: good health, able-bodied

\[13\]Ibid., p. 96.


children still at home or living close by, or both.

If this theory of Mormon old age settlement patterns holds true, one could expect to find a much higher concentration of aged persons in Salt Lake City than in Cache County in 1860. Salt Lake City was a well developed community in 1860, while settlement was beginning on a large scale in Cache County.

Larry Draper has conducted a study on wealth distribution in Salt Lake City, using United States Census records for 1850, 1860, and 1870. He found that in 1850, 2.68 percent of all household heads in Salt Lake City were age 65 or older; by 1860, the number had jumped to 5.48 percent. Table 4 shows the number and percentage of household heads aged 65 or above in Salt Lake City in 1850 and 1860, and in Cache County in 1860, 1870, and 1880.

TABLE 4
AGED HOUSEHOLD HEADS IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, 1850-1860 AND IN CACHE COUNTY, UTAH, 1860-1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># households</th>
<th># heads aged 65+</th>
<th>% heads aged 65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLC, 1850</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC, 1860</td>
<td>1496</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache, 1860</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache, 1870</td>
<td>1617</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache, 1880</td>
<td>2249</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>8.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Larry Draper, Unpublished statistics on household heads in Salt Lake City, Utah, 1850 and 1860; Charles Hatch, Transcript of 1880 U.S. manuscript census for Cache County, Utah.
There was a much higher concentration of aged household heads in Salt Lake City than in Cache County in 1860. However, when one considers that settlement in Cache Valley began about ten years later than in Salt Lake City, it becomes clear that settlement patterns of the aged in both areas were similar. The percentage of aged household heads in Salt Lake in 1860 very closely resembles the 1870 Cache County figure. During the early years of settlement, few aged persons were present, but their numbers increased as communities became more established.

When older people settled in frontier areas, it was often for the benefit of their children. In 1894, William Eddington, 72, left his home in Salt Lake City for the Teton Basin in Idaho, where settlement had begun in the late 1880s. He went for two reasons: he was in financial straits, and he wanted to help "secure a home for his children." C.R. Savage lamented the departure of his friend to an area which was "70 miles from a railroad and hundreds from the necessary Comforts of old age."16

Conditions in the Teton Basin proved to be too much for Eddington. He wrote to Savage in early 1896 that he could remain no longer. He returned to Salt Lake City a short time later and remained there until his death, which occurred on 3 March 1913.17

16 C.R. Savage, Diary Entries, undated (probably July or August 1894) and 16 August 1894; Jenson, Encyclopedic History, pp. 867f.
For many older persons, life revolved around their families. Those who had a spouse still living were considered fortunate. David Candland, 77, wrote in 1897 that despite his straitened financial circumstance, his wife "never reproaches but aids and comforts me." On the 70th birthday of his wife Betsy, George Goddard wrote, "I would not exchange her for any woman on the earth, and like my Country, I can truthfully say of her, with all her faults I love her still."

Others were plagued by an aching emptiness after a husband or wife died. Thomas Memmott of Scipio, Utah, recorded in February 1896 that his mother was living with him and his family and was fairly content, "but the memory of her 60 years partner remains strong with her, & the yearning to go & meet him is strong."

C.R. Savage was frequently called upon to speak at funeral services, and always maintained his composure as he did so, but when his first wife, Annie, died in 1893, her loss had a profound influence on him. On 18 February 1894 he spoke at the funeral of Sister Guiver, an elderly widow

17 Obituary Index Cards, LDS Church Historical Department.
18 David Candland, Letter, 10 October 1897, to the First Presidency, LDS Church Archives.
20 Thomas Memmott, Letter, 22 February 1896, Scipio, Utah, to Joseph F. Smith, missionary correspondence, LDS Church Archives.
in his ward.\textsuperscript{21} The services were a tribute, both to her and the ward members, who put on a nice funeral despite the fact that Sister Guiver had no living relatives nearby. The funeral brought back memories of Annie Savage to her husband, who "had a miserable day - reviewing in my heart the experiences of a few months before."\textsuperscript{22}

"Grandma," as Florence A. Merriam called her, also grieved over the memory of her recently-deceased husband. She recounted how he had always been so kind to her. "Since I was took with the lameness," she said, "he always had my stockings warm for me in the morning." In her small kitchen were two rocking chairs, one on either side of the stove, one of which now sat empty. Her sorrow over losing Grandpa ran deep. "Oh! nobody knows, nobody knows the miss of it!"\textsuperscript{23}

Associations with children and grandchildren added another important dimension to the lives of old people. According to records kept by some of them, much of what they did was with their families in mind. In 1894 James V. Williams commenced writing his life history at age 63. He prefaced the manuscript with a clarification that it was "not for the purpose of gaining notoriety, but to simply

\textsuperscript{21}He lived in the Salt Lake Twentieth Ward.

\textsuperscript{22}Savage, Diary, 18 February 1894.

bequeath a true . . . narration of individual experiences to my beloved family and dear friends."²⁴

Reflecting over his life on his 66th birthday, George Goddard noted that he abstained from using "Tea, Coffee, Tobacco, [and] Strong Drink" in accordance with a set of principles taught by Joseph Smith and subsequent Church leaders and known collectively as the Word of Wisdom. Goddard had two motives in obeying the law: "First, to secure the blessings which my Heavenly Father has promised to those who observe them, and second, to set an example before my family, that will be worthy of their imitation."²⁵

Holiday activities were often planned with grandchildren in mind. John C. Dowdle, 68, a resident of College Ward in Cache County, commented on his family's activities on Christmas day, 1904: "We had prepared a Christmas tree for the amusement of all our Grand Children that was near by. They all got a present of some sort."²⁶ George Goddard described his 1880 Christmas preparations in a similar manner. On Christmas Eve, "Between 9 & 10 p.m we assorted the various Christmas presents intended for presentation tomorrow to members of the family including

²⁴James V. Williams, Reminiscences and Diary, [ca. 1894]-May 1905, LDS Church Archives.

²⁵Goddard, Journal, 5 December 1881.

²⁶John C. Dowdle, Autobiography and Diaries, [ca. 1884]-1908, vol. 3, p. 80, LDS Church Archives.
our seven Grand Children, then filled the only two stockings now needed in our house, the family being smaller than [for] over 30 years past."²⁷ The stockings were for Heber and Nellie, Goddard's two remaining children at home.

Goddard's Christmas Eve entry mentions the diminishing numbers in his household. Within a few years his remaining two children were gone, but they stayed nearby, as did other family members. In 1890 he reported that he and his wife Betsy lived "in what we call Goddards Court No 1 being in the rear of 251 E. 2nd. South St." in Salt Lake City.²⁸ His daughter Nellie, and his plural wife, Mary, lived in Goddard's Court, number six. His son Heber, with wife and child, lived in number five, but was preparing to move to Nephi to become a barber.

Goddard's six other living children were located as follows in 1890: two daughters in Salt Lake City, one son in Bountiful, two sons in Ogden, and one daughter in St. George. All lived in Utah and, with the exception of his daughter Mary in St. George, could be reached within an hour or two. Goddard also recorded in 1890 that of the thirteen children born to him and his first wife, Betsy, eight had died.²⁹

²⁸Ibid., 10 September 1890. The Polk directories for that time period also list his address as "Goddard's Ct."
²⁹Ibid. Concerning the make-up of Goddard's family, he wrote in his journal on 5 December 1894 that he had "two (Footnote continued)
Death was an ever-present reality in the nineteenth century. Five of George Goddard's grandsons died in 1891. Besides coping with deaths, he expressed concern about the way family members lived. In commenting on the death of a two-month-old great-granddaughter he wrote, "It is our fervent prayer that the Lord will bless and sanctify this unexpected bereavement to the conversion of its parents."30

In 1880 United States Census takers began recording for the first time, the relationships of persons to the head of the household in which they resided. Knowing such relationships provides insights into nineteenth century family structures and living arrangements. Table 5 shows the living arrangements of persons aged 65 or over in Cache County, Utah in 1880.

Living patterns of the aged in Cache County in 1880 support Daniel Scott Smith's conclusion that "The family in the direct sense of household co-residence of adult generations was the welfare institution for old people"31 at the turn of the century. Over 85 percent of the men in Cache County, in both age cohorts, lived in the same dwelling with one or more family members. The figure was

29 (continued)
good faithful wives, and eight affectionate children, and many Grand, and great grand children."

30 Ibid., 31 December 1896.

just under 85 percent for women under 75, but dropped nearly 14 percent for those who had passed that age.

TABLE 5
FAMILY STATUS OF AGED PERSONS IN CACHE COUNTY, UTAH, 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>65-74 M(N=139)</th>
<th>F(N=149)</th>
<th>75 &amp; Over M(N=45)</th>
<th>F(N=50)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Individual</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head or Spouse</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative of Someone in Dwelling</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Individual</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship not Defined</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Charles Hatch, Transcript of 1880 U.S. manuscript census for Cache County, Utah.

The loss of a spouse was the major reason for the drop in coresidence with family among women over age 75. A vast majority suffered a loss of status. Women in the younger age cohort were nearly five times more likely to head a household or be married to the head, than were those over 75. The proportion of women living alone doubled among the older group, while there was practically no change in the percentage of men living alone at the same age.

Census records indicate that it was common for children to live with their grandparents after the latters' own children had established households of their own.32
About ten percent of those households headed by aged persons in Cache County in 1880, also included grandchildren. It was more common for elderly persons to have at least some children and grandchildren living close by.

Interactions with grandchildren often had a revitalizing effect on people in older generations. Fifty-three-year-old C.R. Savage summarized the change caused by a visit he received from his daughter and young grandson in 1885 by saying that they "Kept our house breathing with life." Of course, the pulse of activity in a home was reversed when young family members concluded their visits. The day after the departure of George Goddard's daughter and three grandchildren after an extended stay, he observed, "this morning we had a much quieter meal than for several weeks past."  

On the other hand, an older person's departure sometimes created voids in the lives of younger family members. Mary Jane Mount Tanner enjoyed a five-week visit from her mother-in-law in early 1878. After Mother Tanner left, Mary Jane wrote, "I was so lonely, it seemed as if some one was dead."  

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33 Savage, Diary, 18 December 1885.
34 Goddard, Journal, 29 October 1888.
35 Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill M. (Footnote continued)
There was also occasional friction in relationships between generations. Sometimes the onset of old age for a household head coincided with the arrival of a child at an age when he wanted greater autonomy. An incident involving 65-year-old Andrew J. Allen and his 17-year-old stepson is illustrative. The young man left home in February 1884, and the elder Allen sorrowed at the turn of events. "After me raising him up from a child 2 and a half years of age [he] refused to be controled by me and leaves it greivs me to think how little he appreciates the chances I have endevered to g[i]ve." Conflicts did not, however, lessen the desire of older persons to maintain close ties with their progeny. In the words of 72-year-old Andrew Jenson, "without children and grand-children old age is not desirable."

Separation from loved ones was a universal experience for old people in the nineteenth century. The 1900 Federal Census for Smithfield, Paradise, and that part of Logan identified by the census taker as Township 11, all in Cache County, shows that women over age 65 had borne, on the

35(continued) 


37Andrew Jenson, Retained Copy of Letter, 14 December 1922, to his daughter Eleanora, Andrew Jenson Collection, LDS Church Archives.
average, 6.04 children, 3.64 of which were still alive the year the census was taken.  

"Grandma," Florence A. Merriam's David County widow, told the authoress that her religious faith helped her cope with the death of her family members.  

"I never could have borne what I have--lost my children--my Alice,"--her voice always grew tremulous when she spoke of this daughter; "and now the great trial--separated from my husband," her voice breaking, "I never could have borne it all if it had not been for my hope, my great hope."

Census studies clearly indicate that persons over age 65, especially those in farming communities, worked as long as they were physically able. Definitions of old age were based as much on a man's physical condition as it was on his number of birthdays. Table 6 shows work patterns among Cache County's aged population in 1860 and 1880.  

Cache County's economy in the nineteenth century was based largely on agriculture. The proportion of men engaged in agriculture, shown in table 6, resembles closely

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38 Brian D. Reeves, "Old Folks in Cache Valley, 1900," unpublished paper in possession of the author, p. 4. The survival rate of children of aged mothers in this sample was 60.2 percent. The average number of children borne by older women in the three Cache County communities was slightly higher than the number Daniel Scott Smith found in his national sample of the 1900 U.S. census. Older women in his study had borne an average of 5.5 children; the number still surviving in 1900 was not reported in the article, "Life Course, Norms, and the Family System of Older Americans in 1900," Journal of Family History (Fall, 1979), p. 294.

national employment figures. The nationwide percentage of men employed in agriculture in 1880 was 44.6.\(^4\) In rural areas, unemployment was uncommon.\(^4\) The farmer was dependent on the earth for his income, and it provided him ample opportunity for work. The work of nineteenth-century women usually took place at home. They seldom identified themselves as having other gainful employment.

TABLE 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENT OF THE AGED IN CACHE COUNTY, UTAH, LISTING GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT OR NO EMPLOYMENT, 1860 AND 1880</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M(N=6) F(N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Charles Hatch, Transcript of U.S. manuscript census for Cache County, Utah, 1860 and 1880.

In the cities, where they had to compete for available jobs, unemployment was a reality which many older persons faced. A report issued in Massachusetts in 1910 "explained that the wide-scale introduction of machinery


\(^{41}\) See Haber, p. 33.
and the stress of modern competition brought earlier retirement to workers at time when the average life span was lengthening." The report also stated "that old age [as] a time of unemployment and poverty was both created and extended by industrialization and technological advance."42

Financially, George Goddard was better off than most aged persons in Salt Lake City, yet even he struggled under the burden of unemployment at one point. In December 1888, at age 73, he wrote,

Not having any special employment on my hands for many months past, and as a consequence, my insufficient income prevents me meeting all my obligations, I often feel low spirited and discouraged for the lack of some useful labor, that I could be of some benefit to others and myself also.

On New Year's Eve he wrote, "time has hung heavily on my hands".43 Goddard was able to extricate himself from his financial woes,44 but the things he experienced during late 1888--no job, little income, a lot of time to think, and discouragement--were similar to what other elderly people

42 Dahlin, p. 54.
43 Ibid., 13 and 31 December 1888.
44 He was able to sell a piece of property, and had homes built on another lot, which he rented out. See his journal for 5 December 1889. On 31 December 1891 he was able to write, "Our five houses are all rented, and bring us a monthly income of $18000 dollars. I thank my Heavenly Father for this great temporal blessing, in our advanced age, that our daily wants are supplied without the necessity of daily toil & labor."
faced when failing health or other circumstances forced them out of gainful employment.

Holidays and social activities provided diversions from the demanding activities which occupied most people's daily lives. On Decoration Day (May 30), large numbers of people went to cemeteries to decorate graves of deceased family members. The day was especially meaningful to old people, who numbered many former associates among cemetery inmates.

After the Old Folks movement got underway in the mid-1870s there was an increase in parties held specifically for the aged. George Goddard invited everyone in his ward aged 70 and over to a party in his home on his 67th birthday; 24 elderly persons attended, plus 27 of his family members and other friends. Sarah M. Kimball treated the widows in her ward to dinner on her 75th birthday in December 1893. John Tracy of American Fork held a party for over 100 invited guests on his 70th birthday in 1896. "The occasion was the result of a vow he made that when he should reach 70 years of age he would

45See Henry Ballard, Journal, 30 May 1906, typescript, Ricks Collection; also Elizabeth Goddard, Journal (at the conclusion of George Goddard's last journal), 30 May 1899.


treat the old folks of Am Fork to a free dinner."\(^{48}\)

Old people recorded very little humor in their journals. The reason for this is unclear. It may be a reflection of a societal standard which frowned on levity; it may tell something about the hardness of daily life in the late nineteenth century; or it may simply be that a diary or journal was not the customary place to record anecdotes.

John C. Dowdle was an exception to the rule of not including humor in his writings. On Thanksgiving Day in 1906, as he approached his 70th birthday, he wrote, "think of the thousands of Turkeys that went to the great beyond." A few months later he quipped, "I went fishing this evening, for the first time in many, days my luck was about as usual, finding the sucker on the big end of the pole.\(^{49}\)

One way to determine what was important to old people is to look at what they wrote about most frequently. A few common themes appear in autobiographical writings of elderly Mormons, even though the emphases of their writings varied.

George Goddard and C.R. Savage, for example, regularly mentioned sicknesses and deaths, socials, family occurrences, and the Church. Their writings, however, may

\(^{48}\)Savage, Diary, 3 December 1896.

\(^{49}\)John C. Dowdle, Diary, 29 November 1906 and 12 February 1907.
have been heavily weighted towards socials and deaths because of their identification with the Old Folks movement: they planned and attended many Old Folks entertainments, and elderly people frequently asked them to speak at their funerals. Comparison with other sources can show whether Goddard's and Savage's interests, as reflected in their personal writings, were similar to those of other people.

Henry Ballard of Logan, Utah, was born on 27 January 1832 and died on 27 February 1908. He wrote the last 40 entries in his journal between January 1901 and May 1904. His writings can be grouped under five headings. The results are summarized in table 7.

There was, of course, overlap between topics. Some of the entries concerning death and sickness, related to Ballard's family. His family was a pervasive topic throughout his journal. The numbers in table 7 concerning activities of family members reflect only those entries which did not fit into other categories. All entries concerning deaths, regardless of who died, were counted under deaths; the same applies to parties and Church-related themes.
TABLE 7
PROMINENT TOPICS IN HENRY BALLARD'S JOURNAL,
JANUARY 1901-MAY 1904

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Number of Entries</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family members' activities</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths, funerals, sickness</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parties</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Henry Ballard, Journal and memoirs, 1852-[1904], typescript, Joel E. Ricks collection (microfilm), LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

*This indicates only the number of entries which do not fit into any of the other categories.

It is safe to conclude that his family was at least as important to him as any other topic. Deaths and sickness, the Church, and social functions were also significant in his mind. He, like others, appreciated attention. Six of the eight parties he mentioned were either specifically for him, or honored him as part of a larger group, namely, the Old Folks.

The themes which come to the fore in the journals and diaries of Henry Ballard, George Goddard, and C.R. Savage, are also found regularly in writings of other Latter-day Saints. Church and family are pervasive themes throughout Mormon writings and literature. The fact that socials are
mentioned so frequently suggests, ironically, that they were infrequent occurrences which participants felt were worth remembering. In Ballard's case, the majority of the parties related in one way or another to his age.

Death and sickness were also frequent themes in journals because they were significant to those affected. A sickness or death in a family could mean the loss of income and, in the case of death, affection. The aged were influenced by death and sickness more than others. As people got older, sickness occurred with greater frequency and life expectancies grew ominously shorter.

In 1863, Dr. Daniel Maclachlan published a study in which he recorded the frequency of illness among his patients, based on their ages. He found that

At fifty, the 'average man' could count on nine or ten days of illness; by sixty-five the number had risen to thirty; and it more than doubled to seventy-three or seventy-four by the time he reached seventy. Like infants susceptible to myriad diseases--and highly likely to die--the old were placed in a similarly precarious role.

Henry Ballard referred less often to sickness in his journal than many other old persons did. Of his thirteen entries concerning deaths, funerals, and sickness, two focused on sickness, although he sometimes mentioned causes

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of death. Generally, sickness was a popular topic in the writings of elderly Latter-day Saints.

Losing teeth among the elderly was not technically defined as a sickness, but it happened frequently. Some chose to help the process. Elizabeth (Betsy) Goddard had six lower teeth pulled by a Brother Barlow on 23 April 1884. The next day he put a new set in and charged her twelve dollars, "half cash & half tithing pay." In an 1870 meeting in the Salt Lake Fifteenth Ward, the sisters of the Relief Society offered to buy a new set of artificial teeth for Martin Harris, age 87. He thanked them but declined the offer on account of his advanced years. "I shall not live long. Take the money and give it to the poor," he counseled.

Failing eyesight was another problem with which many of the aged had to contend. In 1894, George Passey of Mesa, Arizona went to an eye doctor concerning his sight problems, but the doctor said there was nothing he could do to help him. Passey believed, nevertheless, that "I shall yet be able to see to read for I know there is a power more potent than that of the oculist."

51 Goddard, Journal, 24 April 1884.
52 Excerpted from an article by Edward Stevenson, in a biographical sketch of Martin Harris by an unidentified author, LDS Church Archives.
53 George Passey, Letter, 11 November 1894, Mesa, Arizona, to Andrew Jenson, Andrew Jenson collection, LDS Church Archives. Passey turned 50 in December 1894. He (Footnote continued)
C.R. Savage occasionally noted the illnesses of old people he knew. During the 1880s he observed the following ailments: cancerous tumor, pneumonia, apoplexy, paralysis of the brain, cancer in the neck and throat, heart trouble, and nervous prostration.\(^5^4\) In five of the seven cases mentioned, the purpose of his entry was to record that the person had died from the ailment.

Complaints mentioned by others included "urinary problems caused by an enlarged prostate," rheumatism, paralysis, neuralgia, boils, hard coughing, gout, and stomach cancer.\(^5^5\) On 26 August 1893, Savage summarized the ill health of two of his acquaintances with the diagnosis, "both are afflicted with old folks troubles." On another occasion he wrote, "Old Grandpa Lewis is losing his grip and many of the old and tried people are feeling the effects of old age."\(^5^6\)

Some afflictions resulted directly from injuries

\(^{53}\) (continued)
died on 23 June 1912 in Provo, Utah. His obituary (Deseret News, 25 June 1912, p. 12) does not mention the condition of his eyesight.

\(^{54}\) Savage, Diaries, 4 August 1882; 21 January and 7 June 1885; 11 August 1887; 7 March 1888; 4 and 6 January 1889.


\(^{56}\) Savage, Diary, 26 August 1893; also an undated entry at the end of his 1887 diary.
sustained in mishaps. In November 1888, George Goddard, 72, was visiting different settlements in the interest of the Sunday Schools of the Church. On the morning of November 11 he was travelling between Price and Huntington with W. Willes, 74, and a Brother McNivene. They "jogged along in pleasant conversation, until we came to a very steep hill." Near the top, on the downhill side

the bit of one of the horses broke, and a ring on the other bit, thus loosening the bridles and causing the horses to run furiously in an oblique direction which turned each of us out of the wagon with great force on a heap of rocks and boulders. We were all three very much hurt, but I think I was injured most, on the left side of my head & face, and my left hand were dreadfully bruised and turned very black, my right shoulder, and left breast were also much injured, which deprived me of the use of both arms & one small rib was also broken.

Goddard was knocked unconscious in the accident. After he regained consciousness, other travellers passing that way conveyed the trio to Huntington where they convalesced for a few days. They held meetings there the next Sunday, and returned to Price on Monday. On Tuesday, November 20, they caught the 11:20 a.m. train for Salt Lake City, where they arrived at five o'clock p.m., "with hearts ful [sic] of gratitude for the improved condition of our bodies". 58

Church members used a variety of remedies to treat

57 Goddard, Journal, 11 November 1888. James V. Williams recorded a similar incident in his journal, which happened to him on 28 March 1901, at age 69.

physical ailments. A tenet of the faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that when a person is seriously ill, he should seek divine help in obtaining relief. In 1852 Brigham Young counseled, "'When you are sick, call for the Elders, who will pray for you, anointing with oil and the laying on of hands; ...'"

The laying on of hands was an integral part of helping the afflicted, but there was more. Brigham continued, "'and nurse each other with herbs, and mild food, and if you do these things, in faith, and quit taking poisons, and poisonous medicines, which God never ordained for the use of men, you shall be blessed.'" He did not like orthodox physicians much better than he did their prescriptions. Referring to physicians on one occasion he said, "'I could put all the real knowledge they possess in a nut shell and put it in my vest pocket, and then I would have to hunt for it to find it.'"

In the late 1860s and 1870s Brigham began to see more value in doctors and medicines. He called some young men and women, including his nephew, Seymour B. Young, to go on missions to the Eastern United States to study medicine, but the impact of his earlier teachings was still apparent


60 Quoted in Arrington, p. 310.

61 Ibid., p. 311.
at the end of the century, especially among the elderly. Florence A. Merriam observed in 1894, "In the younger generation both the prejudice and the faith are being modified" with regard to medicine, "but in talking with grandma I found the old faith unshaken." \(^{62}\)

Grandma related an experience to Merriam in which the divine and human aspects of treating illness came into play. She told that recently when she was so ill as to be considered almost beyond hope, the sisters administered to her, that is, they layed their hands on her and blessed her. \(^{63}\) When the administration was concluded the sisters told her that her mission on earth was not over, and promised that if the blessing they had given did not cure her, something else would. A short time later she found a circular on the floor of her home, advertising a patent medicine. Her husband got her a bottle of the medicine, and she began to recover. "[N]o one ever knew where it [the circular] came from, and she believed it was 'sent'." \(^{64}\)

People could request priesthood blessings from family

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\(^{62}\) Merriam, p. 116.

\(^{63}\) Administration to the sick by the laying on of hands is an ordinance which was practiced by women as well as men in the nineteenth century Church. Administering to the sick has subsequently become strictly a priesthood function. The priesthood is a male calling in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., pp. 116, 117.
members, ward teachers, or other associates as often as they felt they needed them.\textsuperscript{65} Between 1893 and 1899 men were set apart at the Salt Lake Temple "for the special purpose of blessing the sick who came to the temple."\textsuperscript{66}

Mormons also practiced the second half of Brigham Young’s counsel, to treat with "herbs, and mild food." On 10 July 1883 George Goddard was suffering with pain in his bowels, "but by bathing my feet in hot mustard water and taking some composition, and the blessing of the Lord, I . . . , perspired freely, and [was] entirely restored."\textsuperscript{67} Wilford Woodruff reported that on the evening of 29 March 1898 he was having trouble with his throat and "could scarcely breathe until I had applied some fat bacon to [it] when I got relief & went to Sleep."\textsuperscript{68}

In 1897 Goddard had "a serious attack of gravel or stoppage of water." The pain continued for four days. "In the mean time I took an injection of 3 Quarts of warm


\textsuperscript{66}Salt Lake Temple, Administrations to the Sick Record, 1893-1899. The use of most temple records in the LDS Church Archives, including this one, is restricted, so I did not see it. The information quoted here is from the record description in the Archives author/title catalog, 07 November 1986, on microfiche.

\textsuperscript{67}Goddard, Journal, 10 July 1883.

water, besides a tea of spearmint, Marsh Mallow, Holland Gin & spirits of Nitre." On the fifth day he reported, "I feel much better, Though still a prisoner." He rested well that night, had breakfast the next morning, and felt whole again, "Having had a thorough cleansing, by injecting 3 Quarts of warm water in my inside for four successive days." 69

Some people identified treatments simply by their popular names, without telling of what they consisted. In 1895 Rebecca Howell Mace of Kanab, Utah, was having difficulty communicating with a woman who was hard of hearing. "I advised her to use the New Hygiene treatment and she felt much benefitted." 70 Annie Adkins Savage suffered from almost constant itching and pain for many years. As a result, in March 1890 she tried a remedy called "the Microbe Killer." Two weeks later her husband reported that "improvement seems to be apparent." 71 Regardless of whether or not various remedies were effective, the sources show that Mormons commonly used them, and in many cases believed that they benefited thereby.

In some instances old age and sickness served to help a person. On 2 October 1871, Brigham Young was arrested

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70 Godfrey, Godfrey, and Derr, Women's Voices, p. 389.
71 Savage, Diary, 17 March and 1 April 1890.
and charged with "lascivious cohabitation." In the courtroom, "he placed his opponents at a disadvantage by sitting respectfully and quietly in front of the judge for almost an hour." When he left the scene, "feeble and tottering from his recent sickness," his demeanor and appearance elicited feelings of sympathy for him, even among non-Mormons. "One who volunteered to serve as his defense attorney was Major Charles H. Hemstead, former editor of the anti-Mormon Union Vedette."  

Triumphant moments notwithstanding, old age was recognized as a time of decline. Sixty-nine-year-old Mormon artist C.C.A. Christensen contrasted youth and old age in lyrics he sang at an Old Folks Party in Ephraim, Utah in 1901:

The spring-time of youth we remember,  
With its blossoms and sun-shiny days;  
But old age, like the days of December  
Have few of sun’s beautiful rays.  

His words echoed those of another poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who wrote in 1886,

Whatever poet, orator, or sage  
May say of it, old age is still old age.  
It is the waning, not the crescent moon;  
The dusk of evening, not the blaze of noon.  

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72 Arrington, American Moses, p. 372.


In a survey of nineteenth century English children's literature, Susan Tamke found that old age was valued as being good when it existed for others. In stories in which the aged were recipients of good deeds, their value was that "they permit the young to be good." 75

Richard Ballantyne, founder of Latter-day Saint Sunday Schools, recorded in 1895 concerning his work with the youth of the Church,

surely no more joyful, nor profitable labor can be performed by an Elder. There is growth in the young. The seed sown in their hearts is more likely to bring forth fruit than when sown in the hearts of those who are more advanced in years. 76

Two years later on his 80th birthday, "a Jubilee celebration of Sunday School Children" was held in Ogden in his honor, with several thousand in attendance. 77 According to Tamke's model, he met the storybook standard of a good old person by being others-oriented, and enabled the children to develop character by being there for them to honor. Stories aside, the important thing in Ballantyne's experience was that it gave him personal satisfaction and, presumably, a good self-image.

The day before his 90th birthday, by appointment,

76 Richard Ballantyne, Reminiscences, 1895, 2:13, LDS Church Archives.
77 Goddard, Journal, 26 August 1897.
Church president Wilford Woodruff attended a gathering of 10,000 Sunday School children in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. As he stood to address them and looked out over the assembly,

The scene perfectly overpowered me as the whole scene of my childhood & Early manhood come upon me the prayers I had offered up to the Lord to let me live to see a prophet or Apostle to teach me the Gospel of Christ and here I stood in the Great Tabernacle in the Rocky Mountains filled with ten thousand Children of the Prophets' Apostles & Saints. My head was a fountain of tears.

He wrote in his journal on that date, "This was one of the most important days of my life." 79

Clearly, old people's lives were enhanced by their interactions with younger people. Both groups had significant roles to fill. The young gave life to the old; the old gave perspective to the young. In the final stages of life, many of the elderly also had something in common with children: dependency.

Joseph Lathrop lamented in 1805,

Once we were men; now we feel ourselves to be but babes. Once we possessed active powers; now we have become impotent. Once we sustained our children; now we are sustained by them, and we are sure, our once experienced pleasure is not reciprocated. Once we were of some importance in society; now we are sunk into insignificance. Once our advice was sought and regarded; now we are passed by with neglect and younger men take our place.

79 Ibid.
80 Joseph Lathrop, The Infirmities and Comforts of Old Age: A Sermon to Aged People (Springfield, Mass.: Henry Brewer, 1805), quoted in Haber, p. 3.
The condition described by Lathrop has been classified by some scholars as a distinct period in old age when a person becomes "overaged" or "superannuated." Where age 65 is widely accepted as the statistical beginning of old age in contemporary American society, extreme old age is identified by clinical rather than chronological considerations. It is (and was) that period in an old person's life when they lose the ability to contribute to society in any meaningful way. Not everyone reached that point. For many of those who did, it was the most difficult stage of life.

Some people were not outwardly coherent enough to deal with extreme old age, which makes it nearly impossible to know what they experienced mentally and emotionally. Anthon H. Lund gave a poignant description in 1902 of the plight of one woman, recently deceased, whose mind and living conditions were less than desirable.

The people felt that she had been badly used by the woman who took care of her. She had been locked up in a room upstairs and during the cold winter she has had no fire in her room. She was suffering somewhat with softening of the brain and would not obey the urgings of nature as she used to, but passed her water in bed. Think of her wet and cold and without company in that room. Poor ________!

In 1896 C.R. Savage reported on the death of a friend

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81 Haber, p. 1.

82 Anthon H. Lund, Journal, 23 February 1902, LDS Church Archives.
whom he had known when he was a boy in England. "[D]uring an aberation [sic] of his mind escaping from the care of his friends he wandered away up to Fort Douglas - fell into a ditch and was found dead." The man was 68.

For some, like William C. Dunbar, death came as a relief. Dunbar passed away on 8 June 1905 at age 82. On that day C.R. Savage wrote, "he has been ailing for many years and waiting to be released from suffering. His prayers are answered." William S. Covert expressed his loneliness in later life. "I am very unhappy at the advanced age of 82. My family have gone off and work for themselves. I live in hopes of meeting my wife." Some people were mellowed by experiences during the last years of their lives. C.R. Savage visited Joseph Silver, who was about 69, in October 1894. The latter, afflicted with paralysis, asked that he be prayed for in the Temple. Observed Savage, "He is no longer the cantankerous apostate he used to be." Silver died nine months later, on 14 July 1895.

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83 Savage, Diary, 5 April 1896.
84 Ibid., 8 June 1905.
85 William Covert, Autobiographical Sketch (one page long), typescript copy, LDS Church Archives. He was not always so discouraged; he later wrote, "My boys are very kind to me. . . . I have lived alone for over a year. I am living with my wife Ruth's daughter at present."
86 Savage Diary, 11 October 1894; compare with his entry dated 30 April 1878. A notice of Joseph Silver's death is in the Deseret News, 15 July 1895, p. 5.
In early 1893, 73-year-old Lyman O. Littlefield expressed his desire to be at peace with the world before leaving it. At a Church meeting in Smithfield he arose and asked forgiveness of all Latter-day Saints "on both sides of the vail [sic]," for anything he had done to cause offense. He wrote to the First Presidency of the Church in March, "I ask all men to forgive my trespasses as I forgive theirs and commend them to the forgiveness and pardon of our Heavenly Father." He was dead within six months.\(^{87}\)

Old age, coupled with decline in physical activity, gave people time and cause for reflection. "Old Age is sometimes the Age of Regrets," wrote David Candland as he neared his 78th birthday. "I see the many brilliant chances . . ., placed before me, how I allowed them to pass by unimproved, is a source of continued regret." However, "As the father of 36 live children all in the faith and now 2 on missions I feel I have not altogether lived in vain." He saw himself "on The Divide" between life and death. As he looked "Yonder to the other shore," he was "uncriticising and waiting for the summons to the Inevitable."\(^{88}\)

The months following Annie Adkins Savage's death in

\(^{87}\)L.O. Littlefield, Letter, 22 March 1893, Logan [Utah] to the First Presidency, LDS Church Archives; obituary index cards, LDS Church Historical Department.

\(^{88}\)David Candland, Letter, 10 October 1897, Chester, Utah, to the First Presidency. He died on 12 March 1902.
November 1893 were difficult for her husband. He often became depressed when he thought of her, but with the arrival of spring, working in her flower garden gave him comfort. "I find great solace in attending to the flowers and plants her hands planted and her thoughts were on when Alive[.]"

In her later life, Louisa Barnes Pratt also found satisfaction in gardening. According to one biographer, the garden symbolized "her own well being—if it was flourishing, so was she." In 1880 she wrote, "We need not complain—summer will soon be gone, too soon I fear, for late planted gardens like mine." The double meaning in her entry proved to be prophetic. She died a few months later at age 78.

Mormon Church leaders taught that death should not be a time for mourning, especially among the righteous. Brigham Young instructed that there was to be "'no crying nor mourning with anyone'" at his funeral. When he died at age 76, his casket was accompanied to the cemetery by "some four thousand persons, none of whom" wore black. Wilford Woodruff gave similar counsel. "I do not wish my family or friends to wear any badge of mourning for me at my funeral

89 Savage, Diary, 19 September 1894.
91 Arrington, American Moses, p. 400.
or afterwards, for, if I am true and faithful unto death, there will be no necessity for anyone to mourn for me." He said that funeral speeches were for the living, but added that "If the laws and customs of the spirit world will permit, I should wish to attend my funeral." 92

For Woodruff the question was not if there was life after death, but what the rules would be once he got there. Those who felt they had lived well had no fear of death. They hoped for a place in a world of light, and gave specific instructions that there should be as little darkness as possible at their funerals, whether in atmosphere, dress, or song.

John C. Dowdle requested that beautiful songs be sung at his funeral, no "Solemn Funeral Hymns." He wanted everyone to be cheerful. Concerning eulogies he said, "To pleas [sic] me would be to Speak of me as I have lived." He asked that his coffin be lined with white muslin, and have enough holes in the bottom "So that there is plenty of opportunity for it to leak." He did not want a monument over his grave, "but a Simple Slab will answer."

He also urged that the first thing anyone should do before proceeding too far with his funeral arrangements was

to ascertain with certainty that he was dead. He concluded by encouraging his family to live the gospel and teach their children to do the same. "[D]o no worse than you have seen me do[,] and as much better as you can." Having done all of this, they could lay him down in peace. 93

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93 John C. Dowdle, Autobiography and Diaries, [ca. 1884]-1908. The instructions are undated; they are inserted between diary entries dated February 1865. The diary entries were apparently later copies of original entries, and Dowdle probably inserted the funeral instructions in the process of recopying. I suspect that he was about 55 or 60 when he wrote the funeral instructions; he was born in 1836.
CONCLUSION

Mormon attitudes toward old age were influenced by Joseph Smith and other Church leaders, and by scriptural injunctions to honor the elderly. Joseph Smith revered the aged, and valued their association and counsel. He inherited many of his views from his family and New England background. Old age was honored in New England, but only to the degree that the aged reinforced prevailing views about temperate, Christian living. An old person who manifested moral weakness was viewed as being particularly despicable. Joseph Smith emphasized positive qualities of old age. In a funeral sermon he delivered a short time before his own death he said, "I love bearing testimony of my aged brethren."¹

In the Rocky Mountains, Church leaders and others honored old age, but their respect was conditional. Those people who had made the journey to Utah and who still adhered to the faith of the Latter-day Saints, were honored

¹Joseph Smith, Funeral Sermon of Elder King Follett, 7 April 1844, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives, last page; mostly in Thomas Bullock's handwriting. A printed version of the sermon appears in BYU Studies 18 (Winter 1978):198-208. That version (p. 208) has Smith saying, "I rejoice in hearing the testimony of my aged friend."
as pioneers and held up as exemplars for younger
generations to follow. However, those who did not migrate
to Utah, or who left the Church after arriving, were seen
as being cursed, not blessed, with old age.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the aged were
generally held in high esteem among the Latter-day Saints.
Old Folks committees, which had recently been established
in most stakes of the Church, helped ensure that the
elderly were not forgotten. Many of the old-timers in 1900
were the same persons who had been active in settling new
communities throughout the Great Basin during the previous
half-century. They were treated well in terms of official
recognition for their age and pioneering endeavors.

Some writers used the Old Folks movement to refute
claims that the Latter-day Saints did not practice
Christian virtues. In 1882 the editor of the *Millennial
Star* wrote that if people would read the published account
of that years Old Folks Excursion, "they would doubtless be
led to further investigate a religion whose example
corresponds, at least in this regard, with its precepts".  

C.R. Savage, the father of the Old Folks movement,
promoted an attitude of benevolence for the elderly
regardless of their station or performance in life. The
Old Folks Committee repeatedly emphasized that the

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2"The Veterans of Utah," *Millennial Star* 43 (25 July
1881):473.
entertainments they sponsored were open to all persons, based exclusively on age. Savage's work for the elderly benefited many people, within and without the Church. His own father-in-law, a non-Mormon, lived in Savage's home for fourteen years.\(^3\)

The Church played a vital role in the lives of aged Mormons. Latter-day Saint theology, worship services, and social activities filled spiritual and emotional needs of many elderly people. Temple work provided a meaningful activity for many after they had disengaged from active roles in public and temporal affairs. It filled their time, and was a rite of passage which prepared them for a life beyond death; it linked them in a family chain with deceased ancestors whom they would soon join in the world of spirits.

When it came to everyday living, elderly Mormons faced many of the same problems as generations of old people which preceded and followed them. As Salt Lake City took on more attributes of a city, the problems of the aged became increasingly apparent. Their numbers were growing at the County infirmary. In 1907 the presidency of the Salt Lake Stake recommended the establishment of a local, Church-run facility as an alternative to sending aged members to the infirmary.\(^4\) The suggestion did not see its

\(^3\) Savage, Diary, 5 March 1888.

\(^4\) Salt Lake Stake Presidency, Letter, 1907 Dec 20, to (Footnote continued)
fulfillment, however, for over 50 years; the Salt Lake Home was established in about 1962.  

Nearly 60 percent of the population in the continental United States lived in country districts in 1900, and most Mormon communities were also rural. Coresidence continued to be the most common way of caring for maintenance needs of elderly people in rural areas.

An elderly person's quality of life depended on his faith, health, attitudes, mental stability, and relationships with others, especially family members. Writings of older Mormons verify that family and Church were very important to them. Other subjects which dominated their writings were social activities, sickness, and death.

Old age was a pleasing, rewarding time for some persons like George Goddard, who wrote on his 66th birthday that his lines had truly "fallen upon me in pleasant places". He continued to be active in Church and other

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4 (continued)
President Joseph F. Smith and Counselors, retained copy, Salt Lake Stake, President's correspondence.


activities until shortly before his death at age 84. He
did not experience poverty, long-term illness, or the loss
of a spouse prior to his own death.

For other people, old age was a great challenge. The
loss of a spouse, sickness, loneliness, and debility marred
the serenity which ideally came with white hair. Death
came as a welcome relief to many.

George Q. Cannon, a leader in the Mormon Church,
claimed in 1891 that a test of the degree of civilization
of a people, was the manner in they treated the aged.\textsuperscript{8} In
1903 the president of the National Conference of Charities
and Corrections expressed the same thought,\textsuperscript{9} and a modern
scholar said the same thing in 1978.\textsuperscript{10}

If a society's treatment of the aged is a test of
humaneness, then a greater test is their treatment of the
overaged, those who have lost the ability to contribute
actively to society. Mormons, like others, groped for ways
to care effectively for the overaged, but solutions were

\textsuperscript{7} Goddard, Journal, 5 December 1881.

\textsuperscript{8} Milennial Star 53 (13 July 1891) 444.

\textsuperscript{9} Homer Folks, "Disease and Dependence," National
Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1884-1911
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903), p. 11, quoted
in Michel Robin Dahlin, "From Poorhouse to Pension: The
Changing View of Old Age in America, 1890-1929" (Ph.d.
dissertation, Stanford University, 1983), p. 73.

\textsuperscript{10} Stuart F. Spicker et al., eds., Aging and the
Elderly: Humanistic Perspectives in Gerontology (Atlantic
sometimes less than satisfactory.

In a letter he wrote in 1900, C.R. Savage hinted at a motivation for his work on behalf of the elderly: "my mind goes back to the brave souls who did not have anyone to prepare the way for them, but who faced all the discouragements incident to a wilderness, whose faith saw through all their trials the golden lining-- . . . ."\textsuperscript{11} He wanted those persons to feel, at least once or twice a year, the "golden lining" which many had seen only in their dreams. In so doing, he and others brought a little-known element of civilization to a region which in 1875 was only beginning to emerge from its frontier era.

\textsuperscript{11}"Abstract of Correspondence," Millennial Star 62 (1 November 1900): 698, 699.
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Mormon attitudes toward old age in the nineteenth century were influenced by Joseph Smith and other Church leaders. Smith inherited many of his views from his New England background. Old age was honored in New England to the degree that the aged reinforced Christian values.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offered spiritual, emotional, and—in some cases—economic support to its aged members. Genealogy and temple work provided meaningful activity for many older persons. The Old Folks movement, fathered by C.R. Savage in 1875, was a significant effort to pay homage to Utah’s elderly; Savage and George Goddard were driving forces behind its success. By the turn of the century, Old Folks committees were sponsoring entertainments in most stakes of the Church.

Themes which dominated the writings of older Mormons were family, Church, socials, sickness, and death. An aged person’s quality of life depended on his health, attitudes, mental stability, and relationships with family members.

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