

Editor's Letter

“Not to know what happened before we were born is to remain perpetually a child. For what is the worth of a human life unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?”

Marcus Tullius Cicero, 104–43 BC

One of the purposes of *Mormon Historical Studies* is to provide “records of history,” not necessarily of our personal ancestors but interpretive records as well as records of those who were a part of our religious heritage. This issue contains several “records of history” for the reader to explore.

Some “records of history” tell the history of early settlements. Fred Woods gives a wonderful account of the first gathering place in Hawaii for the Hawaiian Saints on the island of Lanai during the years 1854–64. Although the settlement was not the success Church leaders in Salt Lake had hoped for, it offered the chance for growth for the Lanai pioneers during this time. Corwin L. Nimer’s “record of history” provides an interesting historical analysis of the controversial figure Sampson Avard, the first Danite. Darren Ferry has allowed us to reprint an article from *Ontario History*, published in 1997. In this paper, Ferry’s interpretive “record of history” examines Mormonism in upper Canada between 1833–43, showing how the Latter-day Saints were caught up in the middle of political debates and religious rivalries in that region of Canada during that time. Finally, David J. Whittaker tells the story of an early Mormon pamphlet published by Orson Pratt in Scotland in 1840. The pamphlet includes the first account ever published of Joseph Smith’s First Vision.

An important, printed “record of history” that helped shape the system of record keeping in the Kirtland period was the decision in 1836 to publish names of those who received ministerial licenses. Apparently, missionaries were going out at random to preach the gospel. As Joseph Smith stated on 12 February 1836, “many already have been ordained, who ought not to hold official stations in the Church, because they dishonor themselves and the

Church, and bring persecution swiftly upon us, in consequence of their zeal without knowledge. I requested the quorums to take some measures to regulate the same.” Beginning with the June 1836 issue of the *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* and running each quarter for five issues, the list of those who were called as ministers of the gospel was published. The license belonging to Hyrum Smith is included with this list of those printed names.

Kent P. Jackson and Scott H. Faulring give us a “record of history” of a unique, little-known document by John Whitmer relating to Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. For the first time ever, this particular manuscript from the Old Testament, with meticulous editorial annotations by Jackson and Faulring, is published here. The original of this important document is located in the Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri.

In our continuing effort to provide published oral-history interviews of prominent Mormon historians, we have included an interview with Charles S. Peterson, a well-respected Western and Mormon historian. The interview was conducted by his son, John A. Peterson.

Recently, the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation was instrumental in placing two historical commemorative markers. In September 2004, a marker was placed in the region known as the Palawai Basin on the island of Lanai, honoring the early Hawaiian converts to Mormonism who gathered there between 1854–64 under the direction of the Mormon missionaries. Riley Moffatt, president of the Mormon Pacific Historical Society, details the activities of the September event. The second marker was placed on the Salem, Massachusetts, home of Nathaniel Felt on 16 October 2004. Felt joined the LDS Church in 1843 and presided over the branch in Salem. Jonathan C. Felt, a descendant of Nathaniel, was instrumental in securing permission from the Peabody Essex Museum (the current owners of the home) to have a marker placed on the home, and Jonathan contributed the article on the dedication of the Felt home. Photos of these commemorations are also found in the Historic Sites section of this issue.

Finally, we have a review on another of USU Press’s women’s life writings series. Charles Hatch and Todd Compton transcribed and edited the 1884–96 diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney. This impressive book is reviewed by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel.