

Book Review

CHARLES M. HATCH and TODD COMPTON, transcribers and editors.
A Widow's Tale: 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney.
(Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003. 902 pp. \$44.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, associate professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, and David M. Whitchurch, associate professor of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University. They are currently preparing for publication a series of letters (1854–1917) between Joseph F. Smith and his sister, Martha Ann Smith Harris.

The celebrated and much-beloved dean of Mormon history, Leonard J. Arrington, is remembered to have said on several occasions that if he had a choice of utilizing a collection of men's diaries or one woman's diary, he would choose the woman's diary every time. Arrington's observation rings true in most situations, especially for anyone interested in social history.

Maureen Ursenback Beecher's "Life Writings of Frontier Women" series, published by the Utah State University Press, is now making Arrington's thoughtful comment less consequential, as those interested in the Mormon and Utah past no longer have to choose between having only one woman's diary or several men's diaries for their research projects. This expanding series now provides us several important women's diaries, one of the most recent being Helen Mar Kimball Whitney's diaries (1884–1896), released in late 2003.¹

Todd M. Compton, author of the award-winning history, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (1997), and Charles M. "Chick"

Hatch, a free-lance editor and historical researcher, combined their efforts as editors of *A Widow's Tale: 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney*.²

Shortly after the much-anticipated release of this published edition of Helen Mar's diaries, Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel spent a day at the Special Collections and Archives, Merrill Library on the campus at Utah State University in Logan, Utah, comparing the published diary version with the originals, which are carefully preserved in the archives at USU.³

The Cache Valley air was clear and crisp on this fall day. With great anticipation, Jeni and Richard opened Hatch and Compton's book they had brought with them, relished the new-book smell, and then began selecting, at random, entries to compare with the original diaries that had been previously placed on a cart in the special collections reading room by previous arrangements with the accommodating staff.

Whitney's diaries, though well preserved, have a distinctive odor of being more than a hundred years old, like something coming out of a trunk in someone's grandmother's attic. They not only smelled old but also looked and felt old too—the tactile sensation of leafing through them added to the particular smell that naturally is associated with such primary sources. The beautiful research area and the friendly staff in Special Collections contributed to the experience that only those who have worked in this particular setting may fully appreciate.

Both Jeni and Richard have had numerous experiences in various institutions pouring over original letters and diaries, yet there is always something exhilarating when any historian sees an original document that carries the researcher back to the period when it was first composed. Additionally, they had spent considerable time getting to know Helen Mar through their early work with her public reminiscences.⁴

On this day, they felt as though Helen Mar was sitting across the table from them again—though separated by time, they felt she was speaking to them again, this time through her diaries.⁵ Of course, their purpose on this day was to determine the extent to which Hatch and Compton had carefully transcribed the originals. Obviously, purchasers of the transcribed and published materials rightfully expect that they are, in fact, reading what Helen Mar actually wrote so many years ago, even though they are reading a published transcript instead of the original holograph.

Jeni and Richard examined more than fifty random entries for comparison, some of which were extremely pedestrian and repetitious and some of which were interesting and revealing. They also took the time to check a few specific entries, such as the first week of April 1892 when the capstone of the Salt Lake Temple was put in place and April 1893 when the Salt Lake

Temple was dedicated—both public events that were captured through Helen Mar's personal experience and insight.

In each case, the transcription faithfully reproduced the original entries. Hatch and Compton should be commended for their transcription of Helen Mar's diaries. They have done a remarkable job in preserving in printed form the personal character of Helen Mar's writing style on the one hand while providing a clear, easy-to-read transcription on the other. This task is even more amazing because the printed transcription runs a remarkable 675 pages (pp. 43–718).

Transcribing holographic manuscripts demands a delicate balance between accurately preserving a writer's personality and providing an easy-to-read printed page. Erratic spelling, difficult-to-decipher handwriting, and poor grammatical construction all add to the challenge. Decisions must be made at every turn. Was this punctuation intended as a dash, or did the author mean to depict a period and simply drag her pen across the page as she moved from one sentence to the next? How many mistakes can be attributed to a late-night entry with poor lighting? Does it really matter?

Fortunately, every writer has his or her own style. Patterns do develop, and decisions based on those patterns can be made. Such is the case with Helen Mar Kimball Whitney.

The transcribers emended the original text as little as possible. Punctuation, strikethroughs, and insertions were honored; and, at the discretion of the transcribers, certain anomalies were corrected to make it easier for the reader to follow.

Helen Mar's lack of formal education, her capable writing style, her keen and perceptible mind, and her personal struggles distinctly and delightfully come across the transcribed page to reveal a powerful story of a widowed Mormon woman living in the late nineteenth century in Salt Lake City.

And although other readers cannot experience the same archive bridge with the past, handling something Helen Mar handled herself, the published diaries provide a faithful text—a text that acts as a window into her life and her world.

Reading a published edition of the diaries is somewhat different than examining the original, as described above. However, the printed version has additional value beyond the original diaries themselves—the context provided by the publisher and authors.⁶ This facet cannot be underestimated as an important part of the overall significance of having easy access to the primary sources through the published book.

USU Press printed a useful foreword and an important and well-done index. Sometimes these obligatory and generally expected features of a university press publication can either be passed over (as is the case with many

forewords) or, in the case of an index, can create a love-hate relationship between reader and index. That is, a researcher needs the index but is frustrated when he or she finds the index is illogically conceived or is incomplete. Although only a very small fraction of the printed page total, USU Press additions in the form of the foreword and index significantly augment the overall publication because they are outstanding in approach and content and therefore represent much more value than the mere percentage of pages dedicated to these two important aspects.

Maureen Ursenbach Beecher's short, but helpful, foreword provides the reader a larger perspective than the point of view of the general editor of the series. Maureen's trenchant comments reveal why she was eager to include Helen Mar's diaries in the series and therefore why anyone should take the time to plow through this dense text, both in terms of material and information (vii-viii).

The index contains 398 separate entries (pp. 875–87). As with all indexes, the topic chosen and the number of references associated with each entry are often a reflection of the concerns and interests of the compiler.⁷ USU Press's index is no different, although the emphasis on alcoholic beverages as an entry seems somewhat out of balance with other topics that are addressed in the diaries. Yet the interest in the history of the Word of Wisdom by current historians may explain why it received additional emphasis in the index—as did other themes identified by Compton, such as dreams and some other topics. Nevertheless, the index is well done and extensive, not only in terms of the number of entries but also in connection with the individual page referencing that accompanies the entries themselves. The researcher will certainly utilize this important help over and over again.

To this, the authors added seventeen revealing photographs of people, places, and events throughout the first part of the book; a well-written and well-prepared preface, introduction, and overview of Helen Mar's family and notes; and a register of the names mentioned in the diary itself.⁸ These important additions were prepared by Compton (Hatch reviewed and made suggestions).

For most readers, Compton's tireless, meticulous, and readable scholarly apparatus will not only provide a historical context but also will allow the reader to access a wealth of information based on recent scholarly activity by Compton himself and by other important working historians—providing both breadth and depth to the many contributions the diaries provide themselves. For many readers, without these helpful additions, the diaries may be unintelligible on many aspects, as they provide a myopic recitation of her daily life in so many cases.

The reader begins the first segment of the journey with a thoughtful preface (ix–xiii) that provides the how, when, and why Compton and Hatch got together, the editorial methods invoked in transcribing the diaries, a description of the diaries themselves, and the acknowledgments of those who assisted in this “collaborative process,” yet acknowledging that Hatch and Compton “are solely responsible for any flaws” (xiii).

The descriptions of the diaries housed at the LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City and those at USU Special Collections in Logan are more than just a simple physical description of the diaries. Spending time here is helpful and well worth anyone’s effort to review because doing so will help the reader experience vicariously what a historian finds when he or she goes to a repository. Some readers may prefer to have these descriptions placed in the text at the point where a new diary volume begins. A reader will miss out on the true nature of working historians’ experiences if he or she does not take the time to read these descriptions.

Particularly moving is Compton’s description of the last and final diary. The pathos of a diary with empty pages remaining untouched by the diarist is telling:

USU Special Collections, MSS 179, Box 3, Vol. 18, Tuesday, July 14, 1896, to October 23, 1896: A small notebook, 5 3/4" x 3 1/2", with canvas covers, but with brownish purple borders. On the beginning yellow flyleaf page is written, “H.M.W’s Diary July the 14th 1896–97 Salt Lake City.” The pages are ledger style, lined in blue, with three red vertical lines. Only the first thirty-four pages are written on. Helen Mar’s diary ends in the middle of page 33; Helen’s daughter Gen Talbot then finishes the page and fills half of another page. The rest of the diary, perhaps a hundred pages, is empty. On the last yellow flyleaf page is written, “Lacto Peptine.” (xiii)

The finality of finding a diary with nearly a hundred untouched pages tells of a life’s end in no more profound and visual way than Helen Mar’s last diary. She ends her own writing in October 1896 as follows: “I’d been out to the privy with assistance of Mrs. Lamborn took more cold the folks though” (October 21, p. 717). Her daughter and son provided some comments to bring the record to a close following this final entry. Orson wrote:

Sunday Nov 15, 1896 My mother Helen Mar Kimball Whitney died at her home Salt Lake City today at ten minutes past 2 p.m. I was present having gone from Logan the Tuesday evening before to see her. (p. 718)

Readers then are confronted with empty pages in the original (not in the printed version), and that is why we need to read Compton’s description and take note of the original source’s empty pages. Helen Mar could not have known when she obtained this small notebook that it would be her

last, nor could she have known that she would leave about a hundred pages untouched when her life ended.

Special mention should be made of the photographs scattered throughout the first 243 pages of the book. Some of them will be new to the reader (obtained through family members), and each has helpful caption material. None of the images were placed in the volume as an afterthought—or “eye candy” by a designer. A careful selection enhances this volume, and Compton took advantage of providing more contextual information to the reader by a wise use of caption space throughout. Three examples come to mind: Helen Mar Kimball Whitney (p. 34), Illustration from the *Representative Women of Deseret*, 1884 (p. 35), and Twenty-five sons and daughters of Heber C. Kimball, June 14, 1887 (p.243). Each is visually striking, but the caption material along with the image itself is full of additional information (in the illustration from *Representative Women*, Helen Mar is placed in a group of writers and poets).

One of the most important contributions of the printed version of the diaries is the notes section. The notes section, covering 111 pages of small print (pp. 719–810), is a “book within a book” itself. Based on years of reading and research among primary documents in major institutions, Compton illuminates a variety of subjects, events, and personalities. The massive bibliography (pp. 811–30) demonstrates his command of the secondary literature, and the notes demonstrate his willingness to go beyond those secondary sources, when necessary, to make sure he is not simply doing a “cut-and-paste” job in the notes section. For those who are not familiar with specifics, Compton provides details. For those more familiar with Mormon culture, history, and practice, yet find themselves a little fuzzy on certain aspects of the story, Compton provides clarity and focus.

For example, in one note, Compton gives a detailed and fascinating overview of the Tithing Office in Salt Lake City, including procedures and the manner in which tithing scrip worked in Helen Mar’s world (p. 720). This note will help the reader as he or she plows through Helen Mar’s diaries and finds reference to this important economic institution. Readers should remind themselves that diaries are not books that are written with a specific audience in mind. Often, diaries contain information, allusions, and hints that the author assumes will be understood—such as spaces between letters, words, and sentences that leave the reader gasping for interpretation. Here, Compton provides an invaluable help to those who do not know Helen Mar or her world.

Finally, Compton provides the reader with an up-front section entitled “Helen Mar Whitney’s Family” (pp. 37–42). How does a historian summarize a marriage of nearly forty years? Yes, Helen and Horace were young and

in love when they were married in Nauvoo. Yet, because of plural marriage, they did not experience what they may have anticipated and what many other young people experienced at the time. The labyrinth of relationships is well documented, defined, and described in this section and is necessary for anyone who takes the plunge into the genealogical pool of this Mormon family.

All of Compton's careful and scholarly efforts would be in vain if the diaries themselves were of little importance or did not provide the reader a legitimately compelling reason to read them carefully. Luckily for all involved, the contents of the diaries are worth every cent of the purchase price and more—for several reasons.

First, the diaries are the most complete diaries of a Mormon woman yet published. Literally, they contain nearly twice as many printed pages as any of the previous volumes published in the "Life Writings of Frontier Women" series. This does not in any way downgrade other wonderful diaries by Mormon women already available to the public in this important series or through other publication outlets.

To provide context for this position, we need to compare one such diary—that of Patty Sessions. Her diaries constitute about 370 printed pages. Helen's diaries run to about 674 pages in the published version. In addition, Helen's journals are compressed into twelve years, whereas Patty's are spread out over fifty years. So we have a very intense view of those twelve years.

With the publication of Helen Mar's diaries, we can confidently state that we now know more about Helen Mar Kimball Whitney than about any other nineteenth-century Mormon woman. The reason for this statement goes beyond this publication. Earlier, the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University published Helen Mar's reminiscences, *A Woman's View* (1997), which Compton said was "a landmark publication—required reading for anyone interested in early Mormon history."⁹ If the public reminiscences are a "landmark publication," the private diaries are much, much more.

With both the very public reminiscences of Helen Mar's early life and the very personal and private diaries of the last years of her life now available to the general public, we have a life open to us from two distinct, but related, types of primary sources—an outcome that is almost unknown in any other setting.

The private diary provides a different kind of view of a life—a perspective from within the walls that guard a home, not only from the natural elements but also from the gaze of noisy neighbors and intruding strangers. In Helen Mar's private diary, we read about the private struggles of a faithful and committed Latter-day Saint; the personal challenges in her and her chil-

dren's lives; the death of her husband, Horace; the death of her son, Charley; the death of her grandson, Joseph; and the unexpected and unwanted marriage of her daughter to a non-Mormon. Although *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* captures through comedy the strong feelings of any religiously committed person when a son or daughter makes a life decision that separates him or her from the defining and transforming faith of a parent, there is a real sense of loss, betrayal, and concern when such choices are made. Here is an example of Helen's real-life experiences, preserved for us in a private diary:

[Aug.] Sunday, 29th [1886]—My body was too feeble to walk to meeting. While we were at breakfast I spoke to Gen upon the subject that I'd desired to for days—I told her I thought it wrong for her to be going with Ed Talbot, and fooling him along—when she assured me that she was “not fooling him.” And to my utter astonishment she—in answer to my questions, acknowledged that they were engaged to each other. I was as much astonished at this as I was at the news of Charley's committing Suicide never having an idea that her feelings could change so towards Ed, whom she had always looked upon as nothing but a boy—When it was once rumored, by his brothers, that Ed was her admirer she appeared disgusted—I had told her last winter that I was satisfied what his feelings were toward her since he'd been so attentive and given her a book as a Christmass present—This was a surprize, & sickened her of him. She told me that his letters, which came too often, were not worth replying too. When he came up again from the mine he found Mr Hall here from Dacota, and took him to be an admirer of hers, and quit coming entirely. This made Gen feel sorry for treeting him so, and she has been going to Talbots oftener ever since. But it never entered my mind that she could ever come to like him, only as a friend—till she told me to the contrary Sun. morning. I asked her when such a change came over her—She Said She did not know, though it must have been gradual. He asked her last Thur. the evening they went home with Lile Lewis—I was dumbfounded, & heart broken & returned to my room—there I prayed and wept the best part of the day to the Lord that He would have mercy on us, & help me to acknowledge His hand in this as well as all other things, & to show me whether it was for a punishment for Gen's disobedience or if it would turn out as blessing, by Ed's joining this Church, & become, as Sol thinks maybe he will, a savior to his fathers house. Gen came to my room & put her arms around me & cried bitterly saying she wished she'd died when she was so sick since she saw how I took it, and begged me not to feel so. But my bitterness she cannot know, nor the doom that awaits those who sever themselves from this Church & its blessings, of which I have warned her of. (pp. 184–86)

Of course, the story does not end here. The diaries, unlike an autobiography or a biography, provide the reader the subtle, day-by-day development in a relationship that eventually evolved into a tender and deep one between Helen Mar and her non-Mormon son-in-law.

Helen Mar's diaries are among the best of personal accounts because Helen Mar gives an intense, detailed, vibrant view of daily life and family life—something often missed by historians interested in important people and events. And although Helen Mar's public reminiscences and private

diaries are a “gold mine” for women’s history, they nevertheless constitute an important source for other topics and are significant in so many other ways.

Second, Helen Mar is important for herself. She associated with other important Mormon families; she continued to have close connections to the Kimball, Whitney, Smith, and Young families. The diaries reveal the fascinating private challenges of her public persona through her entries. Finally, Helen Mar was an important spokesperson for the Mormon cause—principally through her writings.¹⁰

Third, the diaries are really significant as a dream diary; psychologists will certainly be interested in these primary sources for this reason alone (there are 158 citations on dreams in the index). Yet most people will be fascinated by the idea of “history through dreams”—the dreams reflect how the dreamer feels about historical events, such as the terrible period known as the “raid.” In a long Christmas entry for 1884, Helen wrote:

I had a dream, I thought our enemies had gathered together & began firing upon the houses of the Saints. Myself & family had sought refuge inside of beds laid on the floor. After the first attack was over we arose and Mary Kimball [Helen’s sister-in-law and neighbor, a liberal] came in to bid us good bye—tried to persuade me & children to go with her, over on the side of the ones who were fighting us & were bound to wipe us out she said. But I replied “No Mary, you are doing the very thing that I dreamed you did years ago—leaving us & going on the enemies side and you are now fulfilling it.” This was true. I dreamed the same thing two or three different times and felt sad over it. Mary is a good hearted woman, but has lost all the light that she ever had of the gospel and takes no daily paper but the dirty lying Tribune. (pp. 57–58)

In another series of entries, Helen not only provides the reader with a horrifying dream but then follows up with an interpretation of it:

[May] Tuesday 12th [1885]—I was forced to rise early by a hard coughing spell. Gennie is doing the kitchen work this week. Dreamed of having a dead child & was required to sever its limbs from the body—took a knife to do it, the horror of it caused me to throw the knife from me & cover my face with my hands, in anguish at the thought of so cruel an act. The head some one else had taken I could not tell who. (p. 83)

[May] Wednesday 13th [1885]. Rainy and cold—have copied my 3^d article for the News. and finished my shimmee. My back worse to day from kidney affection—The interpretation of my dream has been shown me. The body of my child represents my household—The head that had been taken, represents my husband—The severing of the limbs from the body is the separating of myself and children and which I refused to have a hand in. If there is such a thing, it will be of their own choosing. But as the act was not committed I take it that my family—at least the girls & Charley, will not be taken from me at present. I believe I am going to pass through

a severe trial in my worldly prospects, but will all come out right in the end. (pp. 83–84)

Fourth, the diaries are also an important example source in the historiography of medicine and illness. Compton provides an overview and assessment of the diaries' contribution to this subject (see pp. 22–23). Here is one revealing entry:

[Nov.] Tuesday 25th [1884] I was taken last night with deathly spells, feel very sick in consequence. We sent Dolf to get some meat at T. Off. [Tithing Office] for dinner. Not finding bro. Joseph Kingsbury came home without any. We had none, so I put on my things—Sister Samira also, I went to see if I could get any—put on my new coat to go on to the Co-op [ZCMI] to exchange it for a larger one. I got a check from clerk of \$2.00 on meat market & sent it home by Mary's Fay. [Mary is Helen's sister wife.] I exchanged my coat for one better suited to me, being prettier still, & for \$25.⁰⁰—the other was 30. It tired me out to wear it. We went into Ex. Off. [Exponent Office] to see Em [Emmeline B. Wells]. While there I had an awful bad spell, they were frightened. Em held camphire to my nose. As soon as I could I told her, I never used any thing. She was frightened, she said I looked so white. I had hard work to get home. (p. 48)

Fifth, the diaries serve as a record of a period often neglected in Church history—a transition point in Mormon history. There are numerous entries throughout the diaries demonstrating, both in a public formal setting and in a less-formal private setting, the transition from one period of Church history to another (the ebb and flow of practice and procedures in flux). Here are several example, including one that highlights one of the most important early black converts to the Church, Jane Manning:

October 11, 1885. Sunday. Pleasant still. Went at evening to Orsons—Henry Dinwoodie Jr took me and Gen in his carriage, leaving her at Sloans We enjoyed Bro. Nicholson's farewell sermon—from meeting he and a houseful of his friends went to Orsons by invitation. This was an interesting occasion. Orson announced that this was for the presentation to Bro. Nickolson of a sum of money from a number of his friends accompanied by a short address. Apostle Erastus Snow asked the privilege of speaking, and his words added to O. F.'s were so eulogistic of him, that he [Nicholson] objected to their being published in the News—He was quite overwhelmed Wine and cake was passed around to the ladies & gentleman. (p. 107)

[March] Friday 19th [1886]. Slept too little, but am enjoying myself—felt to fast that my faith might prevail with the Lord, to make me adequate to fill my mission—that I might speak this afternoon to the sisters by the power of the Holy Spirit. The folks would not allow me to fast, but I took only a little, believing that I would have a greater flow of the spirit. I felt well repaid, as my prayer was answered to which the testimony of others bore witness This meeting was truly a refreshing one, all appearing to feel warmed up by the Holy Spirit and things that were said. Sister Warburton

took me to call on her father and Aunt—had a pleasant but short interview—The latter put \$1.00 in my hand. Sister Warburton read the two visions to them, which they enjoyed greatly. We were invited to take tea with Sister De-la-Mar; where a number of sisters had come—one a daughter of Eli B. Kelsey, who was suffering from dropsy and grevous effection—She, and two other young women who were there sure to be washed and anointed tomorrow morning the latter are second wives—one Bro. Lyman's, the other Bro Lee's, both being pregnant and their husbands taken away by wicked men in the time of their great trial. We spent a pleasant evening, and I not having slept much for 2 nights, felt anxious to retire returned to Sister Warburton's, where my usual bowl of gruel was brought to me to take—then the evening prayers were attended. They never eat breakfast nor retire without family prayers. (p. 142)

Saturday 20th. We arose early to go to attend to the washing & anointing of those sisters. Presendie stayed to Sister De-la Mar's, where we found a room full of sisters. After the three were attended to, I asked for Sister Emily Warburton to be blessed. Sister Martha had been ^{^blessed^} at their home—also her babe. After Emily and all were blessed I asked to be administered to—Presendie anointed me & blessed me, asking the Lord to assist me, and heal me of all my ails, & that my right arm and hand might be healed & made strong; which had become lame & painful from much writing, etc, And that my mind brain, and all my powers might be renewed that I could perform all my duties and labors with ease, & many things were pronounced upon my head, being, at the same time anointed with oil. (pp. 142–43)

[Nov.] Sat. 5 [1892]. Another lovely day—After sewing a while took lunch & went to R. S. [Relief Society] meeting in 14 Ward—had an outpouring of the Holy spirit throughout though the house was not half filled. Jane James (Colored) spoke, & not being able to express her joyful feelings in her own tongue broke forth into a tongue She was so filled with the spirit of God that it caused me to weep. It was interpreted by Sister Zina Young. Gen[evieve] [Helen's daughter] went to Drug store & got me a 2nd bottle of Oxygenated Bitters. (p. 521)

Sixth, the diaries provide a fascinating record of city living in the 1880s and 90s. Here is one entry that many people living in close proximity to neighbors may relate to even today:

[April] Thur. 19th [1888]. Felt this morning that I'd sell out if obliged to endure nights "made hideous" by young folks "on the lawn"—at my left—through the Summer, & Autumn months, as is the prospect. But Fred Clawson is now in love with Miss Vinson—one of Mary W.'s boarders—& brings his Guitar to accompany him in pouring out the sweet strains, which—of course—are just the thing to capture the fair maiden but torture to the rest of us. (p. 296)

Seventh, the diaries provide an insight to the struggles of widowhood at the end of the nineteenth century (see pp. 8–19 and 20–22 for Compton's

helpful and poignant analysis). Helen Mar's diaries provide a better source for this subject than any other Mormon, Utah, or even Western Americana document known today. The diaries reveal the struggle many women faced when they survived their spouse, as in this entry in 1885:

[March] Saturday 7th [1885]. Slept one nap last night & layed awake a long time after—my mind troubled over many things—how we are to do Flod is tired of drudging and no prospect of any thing else. Gen, not likely to be strong enough to help, very soon. Oh! how I feel my loss—my widowhood. I wept & prayed the Lord to help us in our spirit, and to make me willing to yield up, what to me has been a haven of rest, if it must be so—my comfort and quietness sacrificed to gain a livelihood. I spoke this morning to Flod about changing her circumstances—going out to learn sewing—she leapt at it. But I'll have to hire a girl in her place if she does—Received an invitation to a surprise on Sister Rachel Grant, her birthday Went at 6 o'clock—had a very pleasant time. (p. 74)

Eighth, for the Kimballs, Whitneys, and Youngs, this will be a great source for family history. Lots of interesting little family stories pop up throughout the book. Here is one such story:

[Sep.] Tues—24th [1895]—Weather lovely—Helen's Horace aged 4 & a half and a neighbor boy—three & a half years old—ran away to D. R. G. [Denver & Rio Grande] Depot, got into the Car & rode to Provo / As the passengers left [the railroad car] & they [the two boys] were left on the car alone they [the railroad people] sent a telephone at Bingham Junction to say that these 2 little boyes were on the Car but they'd take them to Provo to meet the other train. They were met at the Depot here by Mrs Purpont who'd cried all the way there, she & Helen having hunted, & others, from the time they missed them (11 o'clock) without eating or resting till they arrived in S. L. Helen couldnt believe that they were the ones described till George brought the glad news of their arrival, he riding home on his bycicle & leaving them with Mrs P. on the street car. The boys had fasted from morning & thirsted, no one knowing of their being runaways—They never felt that they were lost but made themselves happy in the smoking car. Horace when asked his name replied "Horace donkey," the other told his name & that they lived in S. Lake. The children had practiced riding Horace and calling him "donkey"—Lily was with the baby and cried all the time till the dirty little wanderer was found. She and Helen cried for joy at his return. Lee went there & staid till he was brought home & brought us the news. (p. 678)

The diaries of Helen Mar are worth the effort of stealing some time from a busy life in order to experience another life—a life lived by a most interesting person who took the time to record that life in frank, honest details. And although we may feel somewhat awkward by intruding into Helen Mar's

private world, as if we were eavesdropping, the time will be well spent because with all the differences, Helen Mar and we are not really too different. We see the same sun, our tears of departure and reunion are the same, and we experience unexpected and unanticipated turns in life, as she did on so many occasions. Her struggles may be instructive to the reader, either by providing empathy for others or by providing hope for ourselves, knowing that heroic Mormon women experienced health, emotional, and economic setbacks, as we do from time to time.

Lavina Fielding Anderson provides three characteristics of a great diary: “(1) daily entries that report events in the writer’s personal life in some detail; (2) comments and opinions on those events; and (3) commentary on public events that touch the writer for some reason. If either those public or private events involve historical personages with a certain amount of celebrity value, so much the better.”¹¹ Helen Mar’s diaries are this and more; they are truly among the most important publications for this period of Mormon history for so many reasons, as noted above.

Compton notes that just before the reader begins the printed transcript (printed in italics to ensure that the reader knows we are not yet reading Helen Mar yet), “Helen Mar’s monumental diary begins” (p. 43). This is no promotional blurb, and it was certainly no surprise that it received the “Best Documentary Award” at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association held in Provo, Utah, in 2004. It deserved this award and more.¹²

Notes

1. The series includes Maurine Carr Ward, ed., *Winter Quarter: The 1846–1848 Life Writing of Mary Haskin Parker Richards* (1996); Donna Toland Smart, ed., *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Barlett Sessions* (1997); S. George Ellsworth, ed., *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt: The Autobiography of a Mormon Missionary Widow and Pioneer* (1998); Noel A. Carmack and Karen Lynn Davidson, eds., *Out of the Black Patch: The Autobiography of Effie Marquess Carmack, Folk Musician, Artist, and Writer* (1999); Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writing of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (2000); and Charles M. Hatch and Todd Compton, eds., *Widow’s Tale: 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney* (2003).

2. Several reviews have appeared since the book’s release in October 2004; see Janet Burton Seegmiller comments in *Utah Historical Quarterly* 72:4 (fall 2004): 375–76; Barbara J. Higdon’s comments in *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 24 (2004): 186–89.

3. The Helen Mar Whitney Family collection (MSS 179), housed at Utah State University, consists of four boxes containing one hundred letters, diaries, and other items (including eleven individual diaries) covering the period 1881 through 1896 penned by Helen Mar Kimball Whitney. Two of Helen Mar’s diaries (1884–1885 and 1887–1888) are located in the Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter referred to as LDS Church Archives.

4. Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997).

5. See Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, "Forgotten History: Recovering Helen Mar Whitney's Story of the Early Church," *Journal of Mormon History* (fall 1998): 207–33.

6. More and more, many institutions protect primary sources by making microfilm copies. Therefore, in the end, even researchers are denied real-world tactile experiences; instead, their heads swim as they move the microfilm across the screen in trying to discern the true intentions of an author.

7. For an example on what an index can reveal, see Grant Underwood, "More Than an Index: The First Reference Guide to the Doctrine and Covenants as a Window into Early Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 41, no. 2 (2002): 116–47.

8. Compton has criticized Holzapfel and Holzapfel for not including a register in their earlier volume, *A Woman's View*; the register in Hatch and Compton's volume demonstrates the validity of such criticism, as it is an important tool; see Todd Compton, "Review of *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History*," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 2 (1999): 233–34.

9. Compton, "Review," 234.

10. See Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *A Woman's View*, xxv–xxix, xli–xlii.

11. Lavina Fielding Smith's statement is printed on the flyleaf of the book cover.

12. Additionally, Hatch and Compton received the WILLA Literary Finalist Award in the category of nonfiction from the Women Writing the West organization. Rarely, do Mormon history books receive such recognition from outside our little club.