

Editor's Introduction

Visiting a house in text and print can be enlightening. . . . But visiting an original or restored building in person carries an impact unattainable in any other way. . . . Preserving old buildings, both public and private, lets us look into our past, and examining our past helps us see where we have been and, often, where we are going. Preservation is expensive, but losing our connections with our history costs far more.¹

When the historic Oneida Stake Academy (OSA) building in Preston, Idaho, was scheduled for demolition, a group of local residents began a quest to raise money to move the building and restore the structure. The Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, the publisher of our journal, was asked to help find money to save the building. Fred E. Woods, the executive director of the foundation and also a member of the advisory board of *Mormon Historical Studies*, was given the assignment to research the history of OSA and assist in getting its story out to the public. Woods' history of the Oneida Stake Academy, found in this issue, is the result of his tireless dedication to the project. The fund raising has been successful, and in a few months the building will be moved and restoration efforts will be underway.

Another paper in this issue also has ties to the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation. William G. Hartley writes about the explosion of the steamboat *Saluda* in 1852, a disaster that killed seventy-five people, including several migrating Latter-day Saints. In April of 2002, the city of Lexington, Missouri, held the *Saluda* Sesquicentennial Commemoration, at which time a memorial plaque was erected to the memory of the *Saluda* victims.

Two articles are about the evolving history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through its records and in the eyes of contemporary historians. Stephen J. Fleming looks at the place of Mormonism in the development of American religious historiography. Gary J. Bergera tells the history of the Journal History of the Church from writings of its own leaders and historians.

We have often heard the story of the brave young men who risked their lives at the Sweetwater River in 1856 in their attempts to help the handcart companies. Melvin L. Bashore reminds us that there were other equally

heroic men—teamsters heading east to assist immigrants in 1868—who faced danger and perished as they tried to ferry across the Green River in Wyoming. Bashore’s research recreates the tragic scenario and deaths of six men who drowned in the swollen, fast-moving water.

One of our papers is the result of a question asked of Alexander L. Baugh regarding whether Hyrum Smith blessed his infant son, Joseph F. Smith, during Hyrum’s 1838–39 incarceration in Liberty Jail. Baugh puts forth several ideas on this subject based on his years of researching the Missouri period of the Church.

Cynthia Doxey provides the article for the Historic Research Index in this issue. Titled “The Church in Britain and the 1851 Religious Census,” she tells the history of the nationwide 1851 Church census and provides a wonderful information database. The database includes listings such as the county in England or Wales, the registration district, the LDS branch/conference name, the parish names associated with the branches, the Family History Library film numbers for the branch/conference records, the parish name of the meeting place found in the census, and the name of the person who completed the census form. This Research Index will be a great benefit to people who have British LDS ancestors.

Two articles appear in the Documents section in this issue. Kent P. Jackson discovered a humorous set of advertising poems, found in the *New York Times*, comparing Lyon’s Magnetic Powder and Pills for the destruction of insects and vermin with the attempts to rout the Mormons in Utah during the 1857–58 Utah War. In addition, Gary Bergera provides insight into a poignant 1839 letter written by Orson Hyde to Brigham Young regarding Orson’s disaffection from the Church in late 1838 for his error in questioning the activities and decisions of Joseph Smith during the Mormon War and asking for continued fellowship with the Church.

Finally, Will Bagley’s controversial book, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, is reviewed by W. Paul Reeve and Ardis E. Parshall.

As you can see, we have a varied spectrum of subjects for our readers. We invite you to browse, read, ponder, study, and learn—but mostly to enjoy this issue.

Maurine Carr Ward, editor

Notes

1. Colleen Whitley, ed., *Brigham Young’s Homes* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2002), 212–13.