

# Introduction

The inspiration for this book and the source of most of its chapters was a conference held to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the coming of the Mormon pioneers to Utah's Salt Lake Valley. In recognition of the fact that by the end of the twentieth century The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a global presence with more members outside North America than in it, Church leaders suggested that sesquicentennial celebrations might appropriately focus on local pioneers who had helped establish the Church in their respective areas. Accordingly, community leaders in Lā'ie, Hawai'i, spearheaded by Brigham Young University–Hawai'i and the Polynesian Cultural Center, decided to put on a multiday extravaganza they called "Pioneers in the Pacific: A 150 Years of Latter-day Saint History in the Pacific." Over a five-day period from October 7–11, 1997, more than three thousand people gathered to listen to nearly one hundred concurrent sessions discussing the history of the Church throughout the Pacific Islands and to enjoy major cultural performances each night in-

volving hundreds of participants. People came from all over the Pacific, from Papua New Guinea to Tahiti, from Aotearoa to Aiea, many of whom were themselves pioneers in the Church and who shared their knowledge and experiences at the conference. The enthusiasm was contagious, the Spirit palpable. Crowning the celebration was the visit of President Gordon B. Hinckley. While there, he dedicated a statue of George Q. Cannon and Jonathan Nāpela (see chapter 3, figure 2) that had been specially commissioned for the celebration and delivered a moving closing address at the conference. President Hinckley's talk opens this volume. For those who attended, Pioneers in the Pacific was an experience never to be forgotten. It is the intent of this volume to preserve some of the highlights from that remarkable conference. Not all the chapters in this book were talks delivered there, but all deal with such pioneers, and all contain valuable historical information and important gospel insights.

The chapters in this book are grouped into three sections that roughly correspond to the

volume's subtitle. Since memory, identity, and history inevitably intertwine in the presentation of past experience, readers should expect considerable overlap between sections. Nonetheless, chapters have been clustered according to their dominant orientation and approach. The lead chapter in the first section, "Reminiscences and Reflections," therefore, is President Hinckley's address. It is followed by Elder Glen L. Rudd's reminiscences of the legendary Elder Matthew Cowley. Both during and after his mission to New Zealand, Elder Rudd, now an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, enjoyed a close association with Elder Cowley, who had been his mission president and who would later become an Apostle. Perhaps no one alive better knows Elder Cowley, referred to in his day as "the Apostle of the Polynesians," than Elder Rudd. In a similar vein, BYU–Hawai'i President and Area Seventy Eric B. Shumway offers an eloquent and touching tribute to the Polynesian "generosity of soul" that he has encountered during his more than forty-year ministry in the Pacific Islands (chapter 3).

Histories by and about Pacific Islanders are never impersonal. They focus on individuals more than on institutions and on ordinary people more than the elite. The people-centered, personal-narrative character of islander discourse is apparent in many chapters throughout this book. It also provides the explicit framework for Adele Feinga's memories of the Labor Mission experience (chapter 4), Rosalind Ram and Sanoma Goodwill's treatment of Micronesia (chapter 5), and "*Olelo*: Women of Faith Speak" (chapter 6). "*Olelo*" might just as easily have been placed in the "Culture and Identity" section because cultural negotiation is a prominent part of the stories all the women share. "*Olelo*," therefore, provides an appropriate bridge to the next section, which is powerfully launched by Sister Chieko N. Okazaki, former counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. Her reflections in chapter 7 on how faithful Latter-day Saints might best engage cultural difference are per-

sonal and profound. She also addresses one of the most persistent themes in the history of the Church in the Pacific Islands (indeed anywhere outside North America)—the relationship between divine gospel and human culture. In chapter 8, William Kauaiwi'ulaokalani Wallace and Richard Kamoā'elehua Walk share the insights of a number of respected Hawaiian Latter-day Saints as they explore the compatibility discerned between native culture and the gospel of Jesus Christ. 'Inoke Funaki offers a similar, personal discussion in chapter 9 on aspects of Tongan culture that are consistent with the restored gospel. The extent to which that compatibility has been felt throughout Polynesia and the respect that Latter-day Saints historically have held for the cultures of the Pacific is epitomized by the fact that more than forty years ago The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints underwrote the founding of the now world-famous Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) in Lā'ie, Hawai'i. Its cultural treasures are detailed in chapter 10 by Vernice Wineera, a former PCC executive who has been associated with the Center almost from the beginning.

A classic example of the successful blending of local culture and gospel teaching in a formal Church setting was the annual conference of the New Zealand Mission known as the *Hui Tau*. In chapter 11, Rangi Parker and Emily Jensen provide a fascinating pictorial and descriptive examination of early twentieth-century *Hui Tau*, including several attended by Apostles. How cultures influence even the very way in which the gospel is communicated is the subject of Lowell D. Bishop and Bruce A. Van Orden's chapter (12) on the translation and transculturalization of Church literature throughout the Pacific.

Chapters in the final section, "Stories and Histories," draw on both written documents and oral tradition to present illuminating reconstructions of LDS pasts in various parts of the Pacific. The opening chapter features Richard E. Turley's rich verbal and pictorial introduction to the incomparable holdings of the Church Archives that

pertain to the Pacific Islands. Those holdings were thoroughly mined by R. Lanier Britsch in writing his classic 1985 book *Unto the Islands of the Sea*. In chapter 14, Britsch brings his work up to date. Church Archives also enabled former assistant Church Historian Davis Bitton to utilize the extraordinarily detailed diaries of George Q. Cannon to construct a picture of Cannon's life and role in the very first years of the Hawaiian Mission (chapter 15). Similarly, in chapter 16, Richard O. Cowan taps archival sources to reconstruct Elder David O. McKay's 1921 trip around the Pacific. Such sources also undergird Kathleen C. Perrin's overview of Church history in French Polynesia (chapter 17), where in 1844 LDS missionary work in the Pacific began. And Sharlene and David Furuto tell the important story of the Central Pacific Mission that reached out to Hawaiians of Japanese ancestry before and after the Second World War (chapter 18).

Several of the chapters in this section constitute the most extensive treatment in print of their respective subjects. These include the chapters by Jon Jonassen on the Cook Islands

(chapter 19), W. James Jacob and Meli Lesuma on Fiji (chapter 20), Mark James on New Caledonia (chapter 21), and W. James Jacob on Kiribati (chapter 22). Chapter 23 offers a concluding bibliographic essay highlighting the surprisingly rich and extensive literature on the LDS experience in the Pacific.

By the time readers close the cover of this volume, it should be clear, as it was at the close of the Pioneers in the Pacific Conference, that LDS pioneering in the Pacific required the same faith and inspiration, hardship and heartache, miracles and mighty works that European and United States converts in the mid-nineteenth century exhibited in crossing the North American plains. It is a legacy that beckons to every generation of Latter-day Saints in every land. To demonstrate similar "faith in every footstep" and to witness along the way what great things the Lord has done, and will do, for His people is at the heart of our Christian discipleship.

Grant Underwood  
Provo, Utah

