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ASSISTANT CHURCH HISTORIANS
AND THE PUBLISHING OF
CHURCH HISTORY

I WAS named assistant church historian and recorder for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on March 12, 2008—a quarter century after anyone had borne that title. Most Latter-day Saints today may be unaware of the role played by assistant church historians since the early days of the church. I would like to describe the people who have served in this role and to survey some of the contributions they made to church history.

WILFORD WOODRUFF

Wilford Woodruff was an eyewitness to church history from an early date, having been baptized at the end of 1833. He marched with Zion's Camp in 1834, went on a series of missions in the United States, and became a member of the Quorum of the

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Twelve Apostles in 1839. From 1839 to 1841 he served a mission with the quorum in Great Britain, where he worked closely with future church historian George A. Smith.¹

When Elder Smith began his service as church historian in the 1850s, he turned to his friend Wilford Woodruff for help, not just because of Elder Woodruff's involvement in the events of the early church but also because of his personal journals. The journals proved invaluable during the process of compiling the histories of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.²

On April 20, 1854, just a few days after George A. Smith was called as the church historian, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that he spent the better part of the day in the Historian's Office and lent Elder Smith four volumes of his journal covering the years 1840 to 1846.³ But Elder Woodruff did not just lend George A. Smith his journal. From time to time he also helped compile history. For example, his journal notes that he spent the week of June 20–24 “in the Historian's office with G. A. Smith & T Bullock In drawing off all the sermons & teachings of the Presidency & Twelve & of our Journey so they can be filled [filed] in the Historians office for the Church History.”⁴

In March 1856 George A. Smith and John Taylor were chosen to go to Washington, D.C., to pursue Utah's admission to the union as a state. The timing of George A.'s trip would have conflicted with his assignment as church historian, for the “History of Joseph Smith” was almost complete, as was the construction of a new Historian's Office. Church leaders felt that someone needed to supervise matters in the Historian's Office while George A. Smith was away, and so they appointed Wilford Woodruff as assistant church historian. The appointment would last twenty-seven years.⁵

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From April 1856 to May 1857, Elder Woodruff had direct charge of the Historian's Office. Over these months he supervised the move of the Historian's Office to the new building and dedicated the facilities.⁶

Wilford Woodruff was sustained as church historian in 1883 and served until 1889, when he became president of the church. Assistant church historian B. H. Roberts later offered this assessment of President Woodruff's journals: "Other men may found hospitals or temples or schools for the church, or endow special divisions or chairs of learning in them; or they may make consecrations of lands and other property to the church, but in point of important service, and in placing the church under permanent obligations, no one will surpass in excellence and permanence or largeness the service which Wilford Woodruff has given to the Church of Jesus Christ in the New Dispensation, by writing and preserving the beautiful and splendid *Journals* he kept through sixty-three eventful years—so far do the things of mind surpass material things."⁷

FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS

Franklin D. Richards, who served as assistant church historian from 1884 to 1889 and as church historian from 1889 to 1899, was the nephew of former church historian Willard Richards. In Nauvoo, Franklin D. worked for his uncle as a scribe. In 1849 he became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the young age of twenty-seven.⁸

Elder Richards served four missions to Europe before being called in 1869 as president of the Weber Stake in northern Utah. His second mission to Europe, where he served as British Mission president from January 1851 to May 1852, encompassed one of the most remarkable publication periods in the history of the

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church. During this time he published the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price, a new edition of the church hymnal, and a new edition of the Book of Mormon. He also contracted to publish a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁹

His *Compendium of the Faith and Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, first published in 1857, reflected his impressive gospel scholarship and was used by missionaries for several decades.¹⁰ The *Compendium* was reprinted twice during Elder Richards's tenure as assistant church historian, which began on April 6, 1884. The volume was considered one of the key Latter-day Saint doctrinal works of the nineteenth century.¹¹ Elder Richards also provided a chapter for George Hagar's 1888 publication *What the World Believes*.¹²

Franklin D. Richards became church historian in 1889.¹³ He also served as president of the Genealogical Society of Utah and as president of the Utah State Historical Society.¹⁴

JOHN JAQUES

John Jaques was a British convert to the church, baptized in Derbyshire in 1845.¹⁵ In 1854, while serving in the British Mission, he published his *Catechism for Children, Exhibiting the Prominent Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. The *Catechism* was reprinted the following year in Liverpool, with subsequent printings in the 1870s and 1880s in both England and Salt Lake City. It was also translated and published in Danish, Swedish, Dutch, German, and Hawaiian.¹⁶

Jaques immigrated in 1856, traveling to Utah with the Martin handcart company. He eventually found a position as a clerk in the Church Historian's Office, where he was employed from 1859 to 1863. He left that position to work on a series of

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newspapers and then returned to the Historian's Office staff. He was appointed assistant church historian in 1889.¹⁷

His duties in the office were varied. A major church historical project of the 1890s was Orson F. Whitney's four-volume *History of Utah*. Both the Historian's Office Journal and a diary Jaques kept for 1891 mention that he and church historian Franklin D. Richards spent many days in the office reading drafts of Whitney's history.¹⁸ When the Genealogical Society of Utah was organized in 1894, John Jaques became its first librarian.¹⁹ He died June 1, 1900, in Salt Lake City.

CHARLES W. PENROSE

Charles W. Penrose joined the church in London, England, in 1850 and immigrated to the United States in 1861. He returned to the British Isles on a mission in 1865. During the last two years of this mission, he helped mission president Franklin D. Richards edit the *Millennial Star*.²⁰

After returning to Utah, Penrose was active in a number of business and community affairs and edited two newspapers, the *Ogden Junction* and the *Deseret News*. As a prominent member of the community and a newspaperman, he wrote and spoke on many topics important to the church and its history.²¹

After serving another mission to Great Britain in the 1880s, he returned to Utah and became the editor of the *Salt Lake Herald*. He was appointed assistant church historian in 1896 and was first assigned to begin compiling a scrapbook of church history that would become the Journal History of the Church.²² He also worked with President Joseph F. Smith in comparing two published versions of Joseph Smith's letter from Liberty Jail.²³

On July 8, 1896, Charles Penrose received an assignment to prepare biographies of the church presidents for an *Encyclopedia*

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of *American Biography*.²⁴ Previously, in 1882, he had published a small pamphlet on the teachings of the church titled “*Mormon Doctrine, Plain and Simple, or, Leaves from the Tree of Life*”; the second edition was printed in 1897.²⁵ That same year, the presidency of the British Mission requested from the First Presidency a series of missionary tracts along the lines of this pamphlet. The First Presidency asked Charles Penrose to write the material.²⁶ In just two months he penned a series of twelve tracts titled *Rays of Living Light*.²⁷ First published in 1898 in both Chicago and Liverpool, the *Rays of Living Light* pamphlets were translated into many languages and served as the church’s basic missionary tracts for several decades.²⁸

Charles W. Penrose was released as assistant church historian near the beginning of 1899 and was appointed by President Lorenzo Snow as the editor once again of the *Deseret News*.²⁹ He became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1904 and later served as a counselor to Presidents Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant.

ANDREW JENSON

Andrew Jenson was not quite four years old when his family joined the church in 1854.³⁰ In 1866 the family immigrated to the United States, and seven years later Jenson returned to his native Denmark to serve a mission.³¹

When his mission ended, he resumed his life in Utah as a manual laborer, but he also began working on his first historical project: a translation of the history of Joseph Smith into the Danish language. After publishing the book, Jenson was called to serve a second mission to Denmark, where he put his literary skills to work as an editor, writer, and translator. He continued to pursue these roles after returning to Utah.³²

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In 1886 he wrote to church president John Taylor requesting a position on the church historian's staff. President Taylor replied that a position was not available at the time, but he complimented Jenson for his historical work. Sometime later an arrangement was made for the aspiring historian to receive a monthly stipend for continuing his labors, although he still was not made a member of the Historian's Office staff.³³

In 1888 the First Presidency assigned Jenson to tour the church's historic sites in New York, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska. Along the way Jenson conducted interviews and collected documents.³⁴ In 1889 he began an effort to record the history of each stake, mission, ward, and branch by gathering historical documents and interviewing long-time members throughout the church. His travels lasted many years and included a trip from 1895 to 1897 that took him around the world.³⁵ A summary of his local history work was published in 1941 as the *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.³⁶

Upon his return from his world tour, Andrew Jenson was appointed assistant church historian and worked on compiling the *Journal History of the Church*, begun by Charles W. Penrose.³⁷

In 1888 Jenson published a collection of some two hundred sketches of Salt Lake City church leaders as a supplement to his periodical *The Historical Record*. He expanded this effort with the *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, volumes of which were published in 1901, 1914, 1920, and 1936. The *Biographical Encyclopedia* was published on a subscription basis, and families whose members were featured in the encyclopedia were a prime audience for the books.³⁸

Andrew Jenson passed away in 1941, leaving behind an amazing collection of organized, cataloged, and indexed research

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materials. His legacy of narrative history has benefited many who have studied the history of the church.

ORSON F. WHITNEY

Orson F. Whitney, the first assistant church historian originally from Utah, was the grandson of Heber C. Kimball, first counselor in the First Presidency. He was born in 1855 and was drawn to cultural and literary pursuits at an early age. After returning from a mission in the eastern United States, he embarked on a newspaper career with the *Deseret News*. In October 1881 he was called on another church mission, this time to Great Britain, where he worked in the editorial department of the *Millennial Star* and helped edit the *Journal of Discourses*.³⁹

In 1887 Orson Whitney “prepared . . . a sketch of his grandfather’s life,” which he delivered at a reunion of the Heber C. Kimball family. The sketch was well received, and Whitney expanded it into a book-length biography that he published in 1888 with the title *Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle; the Father and Founder of the British Mission*.⁴⁰

Eventually he agreed to write a history of Utah for a project sponsored by entrepreneur John O. Williams of Colorado. Williams dropped out before the first volume was published, but Whitney continued with the work after George Q. Cannon & Sons picked up the project. While working on the history, Whitney was allowed to use a desk in the west wing of the Church President’s Office and was told that the Historian’s Office would be available to assist him. It is unclear exactly how much the Historian’s Office contributed to the project, but the history was reviewed by a committee chaired by church historian Franklin D. Richards.⁴¹

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In 1899 Whitney began working in the Historian's Office,⁴² and in April 1902 he was sustained as assistant church historian at the church's general conference. "I had held this position for over three years, without bearing the title," he wrote. "Andrew Jenson, A. Milton Musser, and Brigham H. Roberts were likewise sustained as Assistant Church Historians. Busy as ever, I wrote for various publications in and out of the Church, often preparing articles for others to sign, whose names were more widely known, more influential, and consequently more potent for good. Occasionally, articles to be signed by myself were solicited for histories, magazines and other publications."⁴³

Orson F. Whitney was released as an assistant church historian when he became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1906.

AMOS MILTON MUSSER

Amos Milton Musser was born in 1830 in Pennsylvania. In about 1837 his mother remarried, and the family settled near Quincy, Illinois. In a few years they returned to Pennsylvania, where A. Milton's mother joined the church. After being driven from Illinois with the rest of the Saints in Nauvoo, Milton found a job as a clerk in Iowa and stayed there until 1851, when he left for Utah.⁴⁴

There he found employment as a clerk in the Salt Lake City tithing office for a year before being called on a mission to India. He also served in England and Wales, returning to Utah in 1857. From 1858 to 1876 Musser served as a "traveling bishop," visiting the wards in Utah as an agent for the Presiding Bishopric and the First Presidency. In 1876 he left on a mission to the eastern states. After returning from his mission, he received a special

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commission from the First Presidency to work in the Historian's Office and keep track of all the persecutions of the church.⁴⁵

At the founding of the Genealogical Society of Utah in 1894, A. Milton Musser was elected as its first treasurer.⁴⁶ In the latter half of 1896 he accepted a position on the staff of the Church Historian's Office, and in 1902 he was sustained as an assistant church historian. He passed away in 1909.⁴⁷

BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS

B. H. Roberts's early life was not easy. He was born in 1857 in Lancashire, England. Both his parents joined the church while Roberts was an infant, but his father became an alcoholic and eventually deserted the family. His mother decided to move to Utah but could not afford to take her young son, then known as Harry. He spent four years in a difficult foster family arrangement until enough money could be obtained to bring him to the United States.⁴⁸

Roberts served four missions, the fourth one to the British Isles, where he spent much of his time working as an assistant editor of the *Millennial Star*.⁴⁹ He returned from this mission in 1888 and was called to the First Council of the Seventy at age thirty-one. In 1902 Elder Roberts was called as an assistant church historian and immediately began a project to edit and publish Joseph Smith's history, which became known as the documentary *History of the Church*.⁵⁰ Begun in manuscript form under Joseph Smith's direction in 1838, the history was a compilation of documents put together in narrative format by the church historians and their staffs in a project spanning nearly two decades. Early portions of the history had been published in Nauvoo in the *Times and Seasons*, and the history was later published in the *Deseret News* in the 1850s and the *Millennial Star* in the 1850s

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and 1860s.⁵¹ By the turn of the century, all of those earlier publications had long been out of print. B. H. Roberts edited the history and published it in six volumes, volume 1 appearing in 1902 and volume 6 in 1912.⁵²

In 1909 Elder Roberts began publishing his own history of the church, which appeared in monthly installments in the *Americana Magazine* from 1909 to 1915. Later revised, the history was published in six volumes with the title *A Comprehensive History of the Church*. B. H. Roberts published many other books during his lifetime. He passed away in 1933.⁵³

JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

Joseph Fielding Smith was born in 1876. In October 1901, as a young returned missionary, he began a sixty-nine-year affiliation with the Church Historian's Office by working as a clerk under the direction of Anthon H. Lund.⁵⁴ Just days after the young clerk started his work, President Lorenzo Snow passed away, and Joseph Fielding's father, Joseph F. Smith, became president of the church. In addition to working in the Historian's Office, Joseph Fielding Smith served as his father's personal secretary and confidant.⁵⁵

Ten months after beginning his work in the Historian's Office, Joseph Fielding Smith took a field trip to Massachusetts to gather genealogical information on the Smith family. His research on the trip led to his first publication, *Asahel Smith of Topsfield, Massachusetts, with Some Account of the Smith Family*. A second trip in 1904 took him to Missouri, where he visited church history sites and gathered information for the church archives.⁵⁶

Two trips in 1905 added to Joseph Fielding Smith's understanding of the church's historic sites. In September he accompanied his father on a trip to the Mormon colonies in Mexico. That December he was part of a larger touring group that visited

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church sites in New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Ohio in conjunction with the dedication of a monument at the Prophet Joseph Smith's birthplace in Sharon, Vermont. The following year he published a small pamphlet describing the trip.⁵⁷

Joseph Fielding Smith was an ardent defender of the church. One of his major assignments was to compile information useful to Reed Smoot during his confirmation hearings in Congress. The church at the time experienced criticism not just from politicians in Washington but also from Smith relatives in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Joseph Fielding Smith had several spirited discussions with his cousin, future RLDS president Frederick M. Smith, in 1905 and also engaged in a written debate with Richard Evans, a counselor in the RLDS First Presidency. These activities led to two pamphlets published in 1905, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage: A Discussion/Correspondence between Elder Joseph F. Smith, Jr. and Mr. Richard C. Evans* and *The "Reorganized" Church vs. Salvation for the Dead*.⁵⁸

Joseph Fielding Smith was called as an assistant church historian in 1906. The following year he published another pamphlet, *Origin of the "Reorganized" Church: The Question of Succession*. Active in genealogy throughout his time in the Historian's Office, he served as secretary of the Genealogical Society of Utah starting in 1907, and within two years added the responsibilities of treasurer and librarian. He helped found and initially edited the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* and became the society's president in 1934.⁵⁹

Joseph Fielding Smith was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1910. With his call to the apostleship, his church assignments also changed, although he continued to serve as assistant church historian until his call as historian in 1921. He served

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as church historian until 1970, when he was called as president of the church. His book *Essentials in Church History*, first issued in 1922, and many other writings published while he was church historian have been widely influential within the church.⁶⁰

A. WILLIAM LUND

A. William Lund was born in 1886, the son of Anthon H. Lund. He served a mission to Great Britain from 1906 to 1908 and, after returning, found his dream job working with his father in the Church Historian's Office. When he began work on September 21, 1908, his father was second counselor in the First Presidency, as well as church historian and recorder.⁶¹

On April 9, 1911, twenty-four-year-old William was sustained in general conference as an assistant church historian. While he did participate in some limited publishing ventures, including the production of a map showing church trails in the United States and a reprinting of William Clayton's *Latter-day Saints' Emigrants' Guide*, A. William Lund's work mainly involved answering questions and helping people do research in the Historian's Office collections.⁶² He had a sharp memory and could remember not only various facts about the history of the church but also where to find additional information. He became adept at reading manuscripts and suggesting avenues for further research.⁶³

He interrupted his work in the Historian's Office to serve as president of the British Mission from 1928 to 1932. His familiarity with the records of the church led to assignments as a director of the Genealogical Society of Utah and as a member of the Deseret Sunday School Union general board.⁶⁴ Brother Lund believed first and foremost in furthering the interests of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was generous in sharing his knowledge and expertise with anyone who he felt had the best

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interests of the church at heart, and he was less helpful if he felt the information would be used to the church's detriment.⁶⁵

JUNIUS F. WELLS

Junius Free Wells was born in 1854 in Salt Lake City, the son of Daniel H. Wells, lieutenant-general of the Nauvoo Legion and future second counselor in the First Presidency. Junius served a mission to the British Isles from 1872 to 1874.⁶⁶ He was called by Brigham Young in June 1875 to organize the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA). In December 1876 the YMMIA was organized on a general church level, and Junius, who had just returned from another mission, was called to be its president.⁶⁷ In 1879 he founded the *Contributor*, a monthly magazine issued on behalf of the YMMIA. He was editor of the magazine for thirteen years.⁶⁸

A visit to Vermont in 1894 heightened Junius's interest in the Prophet Joseph Smith's birthplace. He wrote his impressions in a *Contributor* article published in February 1895. The idea of honoring Joseph Smith on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth took hold of him, and in 1905 he put his ideas into action. Over the course of the year he researched the site of Joseph Smith's birth, purchased the property on behalf of the church, and oversaw the construction of a granite monument that was dedicated by President Joseph F. Smith on December 23 of that year.⁶⁹

In 1911 a monument to Oliver Cowdery was erected under Junius Wells's direction in Richmond, Missouri.⁷⁰ Seven years later he supervised the construction of a granite shaft to honor Hyrum Smith in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.⁷¹

In 1919 Wells was called on a mission to Great Britain, where he worked as the associate editor of the *Millennial Star*. While on his mission he was sustained at the April 1921 general conference

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of the church as an assistant church historian. Joseph Fielding Smith was sustained at that conference as church historian and general church recorder. From April to August 1921, Junius continued to edit the *Millennial Star*.⁷²

After returning to Salt Lake City, he participated in a variety of activities in the Historian's Office. He was skilled in acquiring historical data, old photographs, and other materials useful for the church's historical collections.⁷³ He also authored articles on church history, including some that were published in church magazines. Especially noteworthy is the series of articles he wrote for the *Improvement Era* on the history of the YMMIA, as well as his *Instructor* article on portraits of Joseph Smith. He was active in planning the 1925 jubilee celebration of the YMMIA, and his articles on the history of that organization were a major contribution to the celebration.⁷⁴

Before becoming associated with the Historian's Office, Wells had worked to have a monument placed at Martin Harris's gravesite. That work came to fruition in 1925 when President Heber J. Grant dedicated a granite shaft in honor of the Book of Mormon witness at the cemetery in Clarkston, Utah.⁷⁵

Active as an assistant church historian for nine years, Junius F. Wells passed away in 1930.

PRESTON NIBLEY

Preston Nibley was born in 1884 in Logan, Utah. His father, Charles W. Nibley, was called to be Presiding Bishop in 1907 and second counselor in the First Presidency in 1925.

From 1903 to 1905, Preston served a mission to Germany and later attended the University of Chicago. He wrote for newspapers in Logan and Salt Lake City and was a prolific author of articles for the *Improvement Era*, beginning with the 1909

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publication of “Lincoln and the Latter-day Saints” and ending with the 1963 publication of “Charles J. Thomas: Early Guide on Temple Square.”⁷⁶ He also wrote a number of historical articles that appeared serially in the *Church News*.⁷⁷

His church service was not limited to his writing. He served on the YMMIA General Board from 1919 to 1929 and as president of the Northwestern States Mission from 1937 to 1940. In February 1946 he became a member of the church historian’s staff, and in 1957 he was sustained as an assistant church historian.⁷⁸

Preston Nibley’s most lasting contribution to the church may well be the many books he wrote. Most of his books were published before he was a member of the Historian’s Office staff, with only one published after he became assistant church historian. For eight years, from 1940 to 1948, he produced at least one volume a year, a prolific publication output. The enduring value and popularity of many of these titles is reflected in the numerous reprints of several of his books. *The Presidents of the Church* was an important compilation of biographies of the church presidents; he updated and reprinted it every few years.⁷⁹

Preston Nibley retired as assistant church historian in 1963 but continued to serve on the church’s historic sites committee until his death in 1966.⁸⁰

EARL E. OLSON

Earl E. Olson was born in Salt Lake City in 1916. He graduated from high school in 1933, when jobs were few because of the Great Depression. He found employment working as a typist for his grandfather Andrew Jenson in the Church Historian’s Office, and he remained there until his retirement in 1986, with interruptions to serve a mission to Denmark from 1937 to 1939 and to serve in the United States military in World War II. Earl worked

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as a historical compiler, librarian, and archivist; was sustained as an assistant church historian in October 1965; was appointed church archivist in 1972; and became the assistant managing director of the Church Historical Department in 1974.⁸¹

Earl Olson was not trained as a writer or historian, although he did author a few articles on the Church Historian's Office and its collections.⁸² From the beginning of his tenure he focused on the acquisition, organization, and preservation of historical documents. As his career advanced, he became involved with national and international archival organizations, keeping abreast of developments in the field.

He was particularly interested in compilations of information. Perhaps the most visible result of the work he directed is the compilation of early church statistical information published in the *Church Almanac*. Now in his nineties, Earl Olson lives in Bountiful, Utah.

JAMES B. ALLEN

James B. Allen was born in 1927 in Logan, Utah. He graduated from Utah State University in 1954 with a degree in history. During his senior year at Utah State University, he became acquainted with Leonard Arrington when they both took a graduate seminar from George Ellsworth. Jim Allen's paper from that seminar was published the next year in the *Utah Historical Quarterly*.⁸³

After graduating from Utah State, he taught seminary and pursued a master's degree in history from BYU. He later was an Institute of Religion director while working on his PhD at the University of Southern California.⁸⁴

After earning his doctorate, he joined the faculty of Brigham Young University. He coauthored a small volume, *Mormonism in*

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the Twentieth Century, with Richard O. Cowan in 1964. Long interested in the foundations of the church, James Allen published two thought-provoking articles on the First Vision. From 1970 to 1982, in collaboration with the Mormon History Association (MHA), he began editing a feature for *BYU Studies* titled “The Historians Corner,” which focused on little-known, significant documents in church history. From 1972 to 1973 he served as MHA president.⁸⁵

With Marvin S. Hill, he edited a compilation of scholarly essays titled *Mormonism and American Culture*, which included two essays by Leonard J. Arrington and was published in 1972.⁸⁶ That same year Leonard was appointed church historian and tapped Jim to work with him as an assistant church historian. Leonard Arrington, James Allen, and assistant church historian Davis Bitton together administered a program of church history that included significant contributions from a number of professional historians. Jim also worked personally on several historical projects. With Thomas G. Alexander, he edited the 1840–42 journals of William Clayton for publication.⁸⁷

A major project of the Church Historical Department was the publication of a volume intended to replace Joseph Fielding Smith’s *Essentials in Church History* as a basic survey of the history of the church. Jim coauthored the book with Glen M. Leonard, and it was published in 1976 under the title *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*.⁸⁸ A revised, enlarged, and updated second edition was published in 1992.⁸⁹ That year Jim also published *Men with a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837–1841*, coauthored with Ronald K. Esplin and David J. Whittaker.⁹⁰

After seven years as an assistant church historian, Jim left the Church Historical Department and returned to teaching

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full-time at BYU, where he served six years as chair of the Department of History. He then held the Lemuel Hardison Redd Jr. Chair in Western American History for five years.

James B. Allen's historical writing has won many awards. *Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon* won the prestigious David and Beatrice Evans Biography Award in 1986. The book was republished in 2002 with the title *No Toil nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton*.⁹¹ In 2000 Jim published *Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997: An Indexed Bibliography*, with Ronald W. Walker and David J. Whittaker as coauthors. This invaluable bibliography, which received a special citation from the Mormon History Association in 2001, continues to be updated and is available online at mormonhistory.byu.edu.⁹²

In 2008 Jim received the Leonard J. Arrington Award for his distinguished service to Mormon history.⁹³

DAVIS BITTON

Davis Bitton was born in Blackfoot, Idaho, in 1930. While on a mission to France, he served as the editor of *L'Etoile*, the church's French-language magazine. Having taken first place in his home state of Idaho in a piano competition, he enrolled in piano during and after his mission. He gave concerts and many recitals in his lifetime. Following his mission Davis earned a bachelor's degree in history at BYU and received his master's and PhD degrees from Princeton University.⁹⁴

After teaching at the University of Texas and the University of California at Santa Barbara, he joined the faculty of the University of Utah, where he taught for twenty-nine years until his retirement in 1995. Although his PhD was in modern European history, he remained active in Mormon studies, serving as president of the Mormon History Association from 1971 to 1972.⁹⁵

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In 1972 he was called as an assistant church historian to work with newly called church historian Leonard J. Arrington. Davis was a skilled reviewer and provided valuable critiques of articles and books that were proposed for publication.⁹⁶ He worked for some time with a number of students and research assistants to compile a bibliography of Mormon diaries and autobiographies, which was published in 1977.⁹⁷

In the 1970s the Church Historical Department sought to produce a one-volume history that could be published by Alfred A. Knopf, a major trade publisher. The book would be a companion project to *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, written by James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard for a Latter-day Saint audience. Davis Bitton and Leonard Arrington collaborated on the volume for several years before it was finally published with the title *The Mormon Experience* in 1979.⁹⁸

When the History Division of the Church Historical Department was transferred to Brigham Young University, Davis Bitton, who had remained a faculty member at the University of Utah, returned to full-time teaching. He continued working in church history for the rest of his life, writing numerous books and articles.⁹⁹ He coauthored the book *Mormons and Their Historians* with Leonard Arrington, and with Maureen Ursenbach Beecher he edited *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*.¹⁰⁰ His biography of George Q. Cannon, published in 1999, received the MHA Best Book Award and the David and Beatrice Evans Biography Award.¹⁰¹

Davis was a visiting professor at BYU–Hawaii from 2005 to 2006. In 2007 he passed away in Salt Lake City. Later that year he posthumously received the Leonard J. Arrington Award in recognition of his many contributions to Mormon history.¹⁰²

CONCLUSION

The assistant church historians who preceded me performed invaluable service in laying the foundations for church history. We are indebted to these men for their diligence and dedication to the work. Collectively, they helped fulfill the charge given to the church historian in Doctrine and Covenants 69:3, 8 to “continue in writing and making a history of all the important things which he shall observe and know concerning my church, . . . preaching and expounding, writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining all things which shall be for the good of the church, and for the rising generations.”

NOTES

1. A brief sketch of Wilford Woodruff's life can be found in Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), 20–26.
2. The original Wilford Woodruff journals are housed in the Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. They are conveniently published in *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–85).
3. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, April 20, 1854, Church History Library.
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5. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:41; Howard Clair Searle, “Early Mormon Historiography: Writing the History of the Mormons, 1830–1858” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1979), 133–353; Woodruff, Journal, April 7, 1856.
6. Searle, “Early Mormon Historiography,” 133–35, 139, 142; Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 179–80.
7. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1930), 6:355.
8. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:115–21.

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13. Franklin L. West, *Life of Franklin D. Richards, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1924), 244.
14. James B. Allen, Jessie L. Embry, and Kahlile B. Mehr, *Hearts Turned to the Fathers: A History of the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1894–1994* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, Brigham Young University, 1995), 267; West, *Life of Franklin D. Richards*, 245.
15. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:254–55.
16. Flake and Draper, *Mormon Bibliography*, 2:559–60.
17. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:254–55.
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19. Allen, Embry, and Mehr, *Hearts Turned to the Fathers*, 46.
20. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:256–58.
21. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:258–59; Kenneth W. Godfrey, “Charles W. Penrose: His Life and Thought,” n.p. [2002], 189–91, copy located at the Church History Library; Charles W. Penrose, *Blood Atonement, As Taught by Leading Elders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884); Charles W. Penrose, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre: Who Were Guilty of the Crime?* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884).

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26. Journal History of the Church, August 5, 1897, 2, Church History Library.
27. Journal History of the Church, October 1, 1897, 2.
28. Flake and Draper, *Mormon Bibliography*, 2:71–78.
29. West, *Life of Franklin D. Richards*, 245; Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:261.
30. *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), 4.
31. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:261–62.
32. Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 43–44; Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:262.
33. Keith W. Perkins, “Andrew Jenson: Zealous Chronologist” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 77, 93.
34. Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 46; Perkins, “Andrew Jenson,” 79–92.
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39. Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 56–57; Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:658–62.
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44. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:381.
45. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:381–83.
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49. Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and Their Historians*, 72–73; Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:205; *The Autobiography of B. H. Roberts*, ed. Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 164–65.
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