The connecting of the transcontinental telegraph wires took place on Main Street in Salt Lake City during October 1861. This photo shows Utah Territory's first telegraph office at the northeast corner of 100 South and Main Street. (Utah State Historical Society)

Photographic teams, such as the one pictured here that traveled with General Meade's Army in November 1863, helped to document much of the Civil War. Newspapers often printed woodcut images that were based on photographs. (Library of Congress)

CHAPTER 15

Kenneth L. Alford

UTAH AND THE CIVIL WAR PRESS

Shortly after the Civil War ended, the *New York Times* suggested that "in the Spring of 1861 South Carolina was more loyal to the Union than Utah is today"[1]—a truly staggering statement, considering that South Carolina had seceded from the Union in December 1860 and the following spring South Carolinian artillery units fired the first shots of the Civil War, a war that led to the death of over six hundred thousand people. What was it about Utah Territory that caused newspapers to express such strong views?

To understand what interested American newspapers about Utah and Mormons during the Civil War, we must look at the decade before the war. While the Latter-day Saints had never been popular in the American press, reporting took a negative turn following Apostle Orson Pratt's public announcement on August 29, 1852, regarding the practice of polygamy.[2] Interest and reports about Utah reached new heights during the Utah War (1857–58). Mormons and the Utah War captured the popular imagination of the nation and were among the most frequent news stories, second only to articles about slavery and the Kansas Territory. In 1857–58, the *New York Times*, for example, printed over 1,200 articles that mentioned Utah, Mormons, or the Utah Expedition—an average of almost two stories a day.[3] Throughout the Utah War, American newspapers reported a steady stream of "Mormon outrages" regarding polygamy, Brigham Young, and Utah's perceived disloyalty.[4]

The Utah War essentially ended on June 26, 1858, when Brevet Brigadier General Albert Sidney Johnston and his soldiers marched through Salt Lake City.[5] With the nation's interest piqued during the Utah War, news reporting about Utah Territory and Mormonism continued after the war. Camp Floyd, located forty miles outside of Salt Lake City, became the largest military post in the country and served as a Civil War training ground for military leaders on both sides of the conflict. Utah and Mormonism continued to receive harsh treatment from the press during the Civil War.

While the artillery barrage of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor during April 1861 is

This photograph shows the Confederate flag flying at Fort Sumter on April 15, 1861, following the surrender of Major Anderson and his Union soldiers. (Library of Congress)

generally credited as the official beginning of the Civil War, the first hostile Confederate artillery fire actually occurred on January 9, 1861, when a Southern battery fired upon the *Star of the West*, a commercial ship carrying needed supplies to soldiers stationed at Fort Sumter.[6] Those opening shots of the war occurred just two and a half years after the Utah War ended; it should come as no surprise, therefore, that Civil War newspapers continued to reflect the same anti-Mormon bias exhibited during the Utah War.

As should be expected, reporting of the Civil War dominated the American press from 1861 to 1865. While newspapers were focused on bringing war news to their readers, reporting also continued on a host of other issues of national and local concern. Continuing interest in Utah Territory and Mormonism ensured a steady stream of news reports on those subjects during the war.

Newspapers and weekly news magazines were the most common source of news in the nineteenth century.[7] Newspapers were hungry for news and printed much, if not most, of what they received. In the 1860s, information reached newspapers several ways—by mail, reporters, dispatches, and express riders.[8] The immediacy with which news could be delivered changed when the first transcontinental telegraph lines met in Utah in late 1861.[9] For the first time in American history, newspapers could quickly share news from across the nation.

Nineteenth-century journalism standards were different from today's standards. It was not uncommon for rumors, speculation, and editorial comments to appear intermingled in the same article. News reporters and editors

were more open with their views. And there was little attempt to hide political opinions. Stories were often published without any confirmation. Some Confederate news reporters, for example, tried to encourage rebellion and secession in Utah. This helps explain why the North Carolina *Fayetteville Observer* printed the false report in August 1861 that "Brigham Young has thrown off his allegiance to Lincoln's rump government, and declared the independence of the territory. The Mormons are arming in every direction to maintain their independence at all hazards."[10]

Brigham Young was the subject of great curiosity during the Civil War. (Utah State Historical Society)

Newspapers regularly sent bundles of previous editions to other papers so they could borrow and reprint articles of interest. Journalism standards required newspapers only to acknowledge the source of a story. There was so much borrowing between newspapers that it was sometimes difficult to determine where an individual article originated. Reports regarding the conduct and progress of the war often carried a political bias, so they were not readily reprinted between Northern and Southern newspapers, but articles and reports about Mormonism, polygamy, Brigham Young, and Utah Territory were generally outside of wartime politics. Consequently, they were easily printed and reprinted by both sides of the conflict; Utah was a good source of news. While the nation held divergent views regarding slavery, polygamy was a source of moral outrage on which most of the nation agreed. Articles about Utah Territory and Mormonism tended to focus on several recurring themes—loyalty, Utah's quest for statehood, polygamy, and Brigham Young. This essay provides an overview of Civil War reporting on those four themes.

Mormon loyalty was a national concern throughout the nineteenth century. During the Utah War, Latter-day Saints were portrayed as disloyal to the nation, and as the Civil War began, there were lingering and sincere doubts among Americans regarding the true loyalties of Utah Territory. Mormons were usually portrayed in the press as being "openly inimical to the Government of the United States" while considering themselves "steadfast adherents to the Constitution."[11] Difficult relations between Utahns and Federal officials, an important cause of the Utah War, continued during the Civil War, which reinforced previous perceptions.

Ten days after Confederate artillery fired upon the *Star of the West*, the *Daily Dispatch* in Richmond, Virginia, published a comparison of the Federal government's response to Utah in 1857 and South Carolina's secession. When Utah, "that abominable nest of murder, incest and polygamy . . . was in open rebellion against the General Government, Mr. Buchanan sent Peace Commissioners with the Army," but to South Carolina, "a sovereign State, one of the most civivilized [*sic*], virtuous, and exemplary of Christian communities," the government "sen[t] no Peace Commissioners . . . only the Sword."[12]

At the beginning of the Civil War, there were seven United States territories—Washington, Nebraska, Utah, New Mexico,

Some of the wives and daughters of Brigham Young. Newspapers across the country were fascinated by the practice of polygamy. (Utah State Historical Society)

Colorado, Nevada, and Dakota. The Southern press predicted that "in all probability they [the territories] will, with the exception, perhaps of Utah, be admitted into the Union in the course of a few years."[13] The Congress of Confederate States, which met at Montgomery, Alabama, in 1861, recognized that Utah had aligned itself with the Union. The "permanent Constitution of the Confederacy," debated in March 1861, proposed that "south of Kansas and Utah[,] slavery shall be established beyond the power of Congress or of the Northern States ever to abolish it."[14]

Southern papers often reported events and stories differently than their Northern neighbors. Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, the Union War Department ordered army units stationed in Utah to return east for service against the Confederacy. A month after Fort Sumter, the *New York Times* expressed the Northern concern that "the removal of the small force from Utah will prove a fatal blunder, as it will leave the great overland routes to California and Oregon unprotected, and invite aggression both from lawless Mormons and hostile Indians."[15] Southern newspapers reported in a different light the long-standing perception that Utah Territory was disloyal to the national government. After commenting on Utah's assumed disloyalty, a Georgia paper added this Southern sentiment: "We hope Father Brigham will give the Yankees as much trouble as possible." And not wishing to miss an opportunity to malign their Northern

enemies as well, the reporter added, "They [the North] are no better than the Mormons, though they conceal their rascality a little more."[16] Even though the South was at war with the North, Mormons were still viewed as being less trustworthy.

Eliza R. Snow, a Utah Mormon poetess, wrote war-related poetry that was published in eastern newspapers during the Civil War. (Utah State Historical Society)

After defining the Confederacy as the "self-appointed champions of the institution of slavery," a correspondent for the North Carolinian paper the *Weekly Raleigh Register* complained that under President Buchanan "the Mormons who were to be thrashed into good behavior are still as obdurately determined as ever to set at defiance the laws of God, and man, and decency" and that "the army of the United States, sent to the Mormon territory at an enormous expense, has not been permitted to carry out, or attempt to carry out, the object of the expedition."[17] Again, even while involved in a war of secession with the North, many Southern newspapers could not bypass an opportunity to publicly complain about Utah Territory.

Many political observers in the States watched closely to see how Utah Territory celebrated the nation's birthday in 1861. Explaining Fourth of July celebration events, a Utah-based reporter for the *New York Times* discussed the clearly patriotic observance of Independence Day in Salt Lake City: "The procession might have been a mile and a half long, nearly one-half of which consisted of school-children from the various Wards in the city. Flags and banners were numerous, and with varied inscriptions and devices, all intensely Mormon and strongly conservative of the 'Constitution' and the 'spirit of '76' . . . [which] magnified the 'Declaration of Independence.'" After reciting numerous patriotic events in Salt Lake City, the reporter still concluded, though, that it was "difficult to judge whether the 'North' or the 'South' ha[d] the preponderance in the scale of Mormon sympathy."[18] Newspapers across the country seemed united in the popular belief that Mormons were disloyal and could not be trusted.

In July 1861, two weeks before the First Battle of Bull Run (Manassas), the first major military engagement of the war, the *New York Times* reminded readers of the federal government's reaction to Utah's perceived rebellion in 1857 by noting that "three years ago, when the authority of the nation was contemptuously defied by the Mormons in Utah, the only safe policy consistent with the dignity of the Government was the prompt employment of such an overwhelming force for the suppression of the rebellion as removed all possibility of failure." The writer then recommended "the same vigorous and merciful policy now" to deal with Confederate secession.[19]

Reinforcing the national stereotype regarding Utah's disloyalty, Henry Martin, Utah Territory's Superintendent of Indian Affairs, announced in October 1861 in the *New York Times* that "the Mormons are seceding on their own hook, and won't have anything to do more with the National Union, and are declaring vengeance on Government trains which may be caught in this Territory

hereafter, and several other things of that sort." Several Mormon leaders "called on the Superintendent, and represented their view of matters so strongly to him, that after a great deal of unwillingness he has consented to a public acknowledgment that he told the Government a little more or less than he now considers strictly warranted by the facts in the case."[20] Occasionally, alternative viewpoints would also appear in print. In early 1862, the *New York Times* reported that "the 'crusade of '57' [the Utah War] was now generally acknowledged to have been the result of slander."[21] Stories of that nature were an exception, though, rather than the rule.

In the fall of 1861, after hostilities between the opposing Union and Confederate armies had increased, William Cullen Bryant wrote a patriotic poem entitled *Our Country's Call*. The last stanza of his poem proclaimed the correctness and ultimate triumph of the Union's cause:

> Few, few were they whose
> swords of old
> Won the fair land in which we dwell;
> But we are many, we who hold
> The grim resolve to guard it well.
> Strike, for that broad and goodly land,
> Blow after blow, till men shall see
> That Might and Right move
> hand in hand,
> And glorious must their triumph be!

Eliza R. Snow, a Mormon poet, wrote a poetic reply a few months later. Portions of Snow's poem were published by the *New York Times* in January 1862. The reporter interspersed political commentary and criticism with lines from Snow's poem as he mocked Utah's apparent neutrality regarding the war:

> Perhaps this lady's effort may be taken as a fair index of the views of the more orthodox Mormons on the present National civil struggle. Bryant is asked reproachfully why his "gifted pen" should "move to scenes of cruel war." Eliza thinks the effort vain to save the country, for
>
> *"Its fate is fixed—its destiny*
> *Is sealed—its end is sure to come;*
> *Why use the wealth of poesy*
> *To urge a nation to its doom?"*
>
> The cause of the distress and calamity which now afflict the nation is perspicaciously revealed:
>
> *"It must be so, t'avenge the blood*
> *That stains the walls of Carthage jail."*
>
> That is, the blood of the original "Joseph, the Prophet." It appears there is little hope for the country, for war, pestilence and famine are to rage
>
> *"Till every hope and every charm*
> *Shall that ill-fated land forsake."* . . .
>
> North and South are eventually to make the discovery that
>
> *"Protection is not made of steel."*
>
> Salt Lake is to be and remain the single cheering oasis amid the universal National desolation in the years to come.[22]

The American press, North and South, eagerly embraced negative reports about Utah. In August 1862, the Utah Cavalry completed ninety days of Federal service protecting the Overland Trail. This military unit was mustered by Brigham Young at the request of President

Lincoln and was commanded by Lot Smith. At the same time as the completion of this service, a Mississippi newspaper reported that the "robberies and murders on the stage route heretofore ascribed to hostile Indians, have in reality been instigated, if not actually committed by the Mormons."[23] In actuality, Mormon soldiers from Utah guarded the trail that summer.

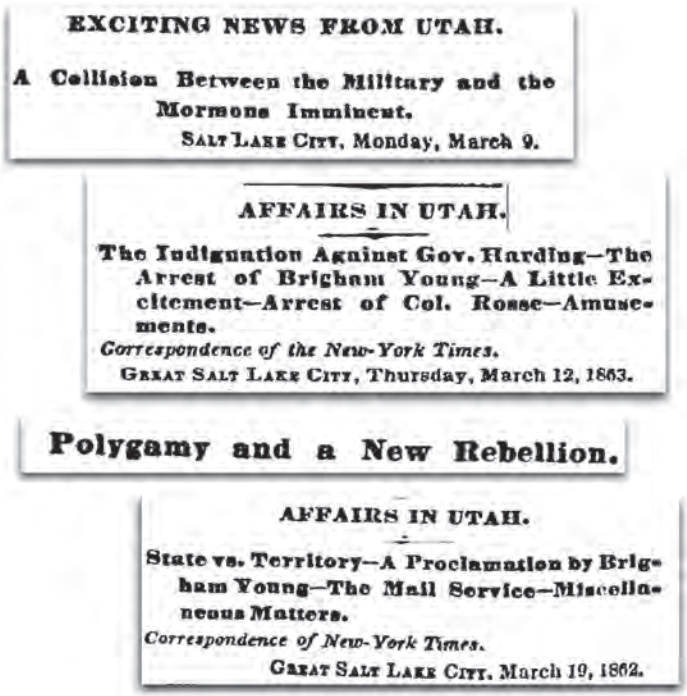
A few months after the military abandoned Fort Crittenden (formerly Camp Floyd) outside of Salt Lake City, the government ordered Colonel Patrick Edward Connor and the California Volunteers he commanded to establish a wartime garrison in Utah Territory.[24] Soon after the War Department announced that soldiers would return to Utah, the *New York Times* asked, "What are these troops needed for in Utah? There are no rebels there. . . . The Mormons and Indians are, as things go, doing respectably well at present; and it would not be bad policy to let well enough alone."[25] Connor selected a site in the Salt Lake City foothills in late 1862 and established Camp Douglas.

In June 1862, as Utah Territory's request for statehood languished on Capitol Hill, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Anti-Bigamy Law. (Wikimedia)

Northern papers portrayed Utah—not entirely without cause—as sitting on the sidelines during the war. In January 1863, Utah's governor, Stephen Harding, was quoted in the eastern press as saying that "he was sorry that he had heard so very little in the Territory, in public or in private, which sympathized with the Government in its present unhappy struggle with the rebels."[26] In May 1864, the Northern press reported that Lieutenant General Daniel H. Wells (commander of Utah's Nauvoo Legion militia and counselor in the First Presidency to Brigham Young) "thinks the present a good time to be watchful that the 'disunion, secession, direful war and general discord,' which are 'filling the land with devastation, crime and misery,' be not permitted to creep into Utah. . . . The folks up in this Territory have no idea of themselves being drawn into the vortex of war, for they think of fighting to keep out."[27]

Utahns were generally pleased with Lincoln's November 1864 reelection. During March 1865, "in common, as is presumed, with the whole of the northern portion of the Union, on the 4th inst., the reinauguration of Mr. Lincoln, was celebrated here [Utah] in grand style."[28] Mormons still considered themselves loyal to the Union. The war's end and President Lincoln's assassination shortly thereafter in April 1865 did not bring an end, though, to the questioning of Mormon sympathies as American newspapers continued to report Utah's perceived disloyalty. A November 1865 report in the *New York Times* suggested that "as to the graver matters of disloyalty and threatened difficulties, we may say that such accusations against the Mormons are not new, and perhaps are not now, any more than formerly, altogether without foundation." The news report suggested two possible reasons for Mormon disloyalty, "firstly, because more than half of the population of Utah consists of recent emigrants of foreign birth . . . and secondly,

because the long and terrible persecutions of the Mormons in Illinois and Missouri in the early days of the Church, have left behind



EXCITING NEWS FROM UTAH.

A Collision Between the Military and the Mormons Imminent.

SALT LAKE CITY, Monday, March 9.

AFFAIRS IN UTAH.

The Indignation Against Gov. Harding—The Arrest of Brigham Young—A Little Excitement—Arrest of Col. Rosse—Amusements.

Correspondence of the New-York Times.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, Thursday, March 12, 1863.

Polygamy and a New Rebellion.

AFFAIRS IN UTAH.

State vs. Territory—A Proclamation by Brigham Young—The Mail Service—Miscellaneous Matters.

Correspondence of New-York Times.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, March 19, 1862.

Sample headlines about Utah and Mormonism from Northern Civil War newspapers.

them bitter memories of the power that failed to afford protection." The reporter suggested that "there have always been annoying quarrels in progress with the Mormons, which reached the very verge of war eight years ago, and the embers of which have been smouldering ever since." Even though the nation was weary from four years of Civil War that killed over half a million people, the reporter noted that "there are folks who think the only thing to do is to fight the Saints, and reduce them to loyalty and monogamy at the point of the sword."[29]

With the end of formal hostilities between the North and South, Utah Territory returned once again to the front pages of many newspapers. In November 1865, a large front-page article in the *New York Times* announced that the Mormons "are preparing for resistance, even to war. . . . They anticipate no interference except from the United States. The burden of their speeches and sermons everywhere is to arm for the coming contest. They are arming."[30]

The physical distance between Utah Territory and the States—both east and west—as well as the religious distance between Latter-day Saints and the majority of Americans made it difficult, if not impossible, for Mormons to be perceived and portrayed as they saw themselves. An 1865 *New York Times* article showed the depth of distrust within the nation. Negatively comparing Mormons in Utah to secessionists in the Confederacy, the paper suggested that "Utah was the first to go through with the solemn farce of declaring its little self independent of the United States . . . [in] August, 1857, when Brigham Young . . . declared . . . that the umbilical cord that united this Territory with the United States was then and there cut. . . . The so-called State of Deseret . . . is in open rebellion against the United States; and the people, under the command of their leaders, are in open rebellion against the laws of the United States."[31]

Utah's extended quest for statehood was a second topic that received frequent coverage during the Civil War. Utah first applied for statehood in 1849 and submitted other unsuccessful requests prior to the Civil War. Beginning with South Carolina's secession in December 1860, eleven states eventually left

the Union. A year after the Southern states formed the Confederate States of America, Utah Territory again formally applied for statehood. As William H. Hooper, Utah's territorial delegate to Congress, noted in a letter to George Q. Cannon, "We show our loyalty by trying to get in while others are trying to get out."[32]

Unlike their Northern counterparts, Southern newspapers seldom mentioned Utah's application for statehood. By January 1862, Confederate papers grudgingly announced that "Utah desires admission into the Federal Union" and two weeks later reported "Utah demands admission into the Union."[33] Utah's 1862 statehood convention occurred in a brief period between January and July when Utah was without a federally appointed governor in residence.[34] Utah's governor, John W. Dawson (Lincoln's first appointment for Utah), was "accused of making improper advances to one of the Mormon women" and fled the territory on New Year's Eve 1861.[35] The state convention in Salt Lake City three weeks later drafted a constitution and appealed to the U.S. Congress for statehood.[36] When two associate federal judges, Thomas J. Drake and Charles B. Waite, left Utah a month after Governor Dawson, Northern reporters asked, "What is to be done with Utah? Shall she become one of the sisterhood of States, or shall she be kept out here in the cold a little longer?"[37] That question was answered in an earlier news story: "We shall have to tell Utah to wait."[38]

When news of Utah's statehood request reached the east, the *New York Times* commented that "in the stirring events of the rebellion, the Mormon territory out in the Great Salt Lake region has probably been the last thing thought of; and it is a little startling to hear that Utah is knocking at the door of the Union, and asking to be let in . . . during the present session [of Congress]." The article further observed that "Utah had dropped as completely out of mind as Pompeii or Palmyra, when, all of a sudden, a few weeks ago, a message was flashed over the wires, by the just completed telegraph from Salt Lake City, announcing to the Government that Utah was loyal to the Union, and her people ready to fight for its preservation."[39]

In February 1862, a news report observed that "Utah had for years petitioned every session of Congress for admission as a State, in vain; while Oregon, with half the population, got a State Government." The rejection came, according to the reporter, because "they were poor, d—d Mormons, and that was sufficient."[40]

Northern readers were informed of the prevalent view in Utah that "they were going to become a State" and that if their application was approved by Congress, "they would be as faithful and true as the sun to the Constitution and the Union."[41] Utahns wanted statehood. That same article concluded, "There are two things which the Mormons seem bent upon doing—entering into the Union, and erecting their wonderful temple."[42]

In spring 1862, Brigham Young was elected governor of the proposed state of Deseret. The *New York Times* reported that within Utah Territory "the feeling [was] freely expressed, that it [was] the duty of Congress to acknowledge the present initiatory steps and to straightway admit 'Deseret' into the Union 'on an equal footing with the original States.'" Writing from Salt Lake City in May 1862, the Utah-based newspaper correspondent asked, "What are we? Are we a Territory or are we a State? We have a Territorial organization,

and we have a State organization. We have a Territorial Acting Governor, and we have a State Governor beginning to act. . . . So you see the questions of 'to be, or not to be,' and what to be, are assuming an actual importance in this Territory."[43] Congress, however, took little serious action regarding Utah's statehood request. In January 1863, Brigham Young acknowledged that "Congress, during its last session, was heavily burdened with duties pertaining to the conduct of the war . . . [and] took no action upon our petition."[44] In November 1863, a week before President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Young was quoted as asking, "Who is it that calls us apostates from our Government, deserters, traitors, rebels, Secessionists?"[45] The article provided no answer.

During the 1864 Northern presidential election, the *Daily South Carolinian* predicted that "four new States will be admitted this session [of Congress] . . . Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah." With the addition of those four states, Lincoln's reelection would "be a fraud, but, as they say, a justifiable one." The reporter recognized, though, that "there may be a hitch in admitting Utah, owing to her polygamy institutions."[46] Utah's application was again denied. The general tone of reporting was clearly against granting statehood to Utah: polygamy was too large of a problem. An 1865 *Boston Herald* editorial stated, "In our judgment the nation would never sanction it [polygamy] by receiving Utah as a State until the whole thing was wiped out. The law of Congress on this subject, as all other laws, we assure them must be obeyed."[47]

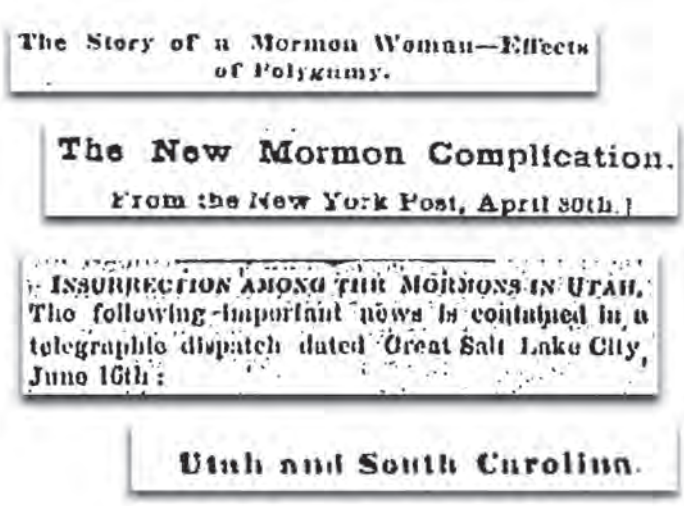
Polygamy, the third major topic of wartime reporting about Utah and the Mormons, was a source of continuing fascination and disgust for the rest of the divided nation. During the first Republican National Convention, held at Philadelphia in 1856, slavery and polygamy were jointly designated as the "twin relics of barbarism."[48] The Civil War provided the North with the opportunity to eliminate the "first pillar"—slavery—but the "second pillar"—polygamy—remained a topic of great interest, debate, and action throughout the war.

In March 1861, the month before Fort Sumter surrendered, the *Boston Herald* reported that "the doctrine of the Mormons is blasphemous in the extreme. . . . The effects of polygamy [are] extremely horrible. Woman is degraded, all her finer qualities being sunk to give place to licentiousness. . . . Most of the Mormons have two wives, but six appears to be a favorite number with the leaders. . . . The effect upon the children . . . is still more horrible to contemplate."[49]

During the spring of 1862, as Utah's latest petition for statehood was debated on Capitol Hill, antipolygamy legislation passed both houses of Congress. A June 1862 editorial in the *New York Times* suggested that "the purpose of the bill is entirely right, and commends itself to every true friend of morality and civilization, [it] will scarcely be questioned anywhere outside the circles of Mormondom. . . . A National Republican Convention has also declared war against the institution, as one of the 'twin relics of barbarism.' The duty of the Government to exert its power for the extermination of this great social evil is almost universally recognized, and we may consider that question to have passed beyond the field of discussion."[50] President Lincoln signed the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act in July 1862.

However, the same *Times* editorial expressed "grave reasons for doubting the policy" of openly confronting polygamy

"at [that] precise period of time." Only two courses of actions were envisioned—either "the law will remain a dead letter on the statute book," or if the law was enforced, there would be "another Mormon rebellion and another civil war." The editorial affirmed that civil war with the Mormons "under ordinary circumstances would be a less evil" than not enforcing the law. The *Times* noted, however, that because the nation was "engaged in a grand struggle of much larger importance," it was probably not "prudent to break up or endanger our overland communications" by going to war with the Mormons "unless the Mormons [were] insane enough to begin the struggle by harassing overland emigration, exciting the Indians to mischief, oppressing or driving out the few Gentiles residing among them, interrupting the mails and telegraphs, or in some other way compelling active military operations for the protection of American citizens and interests."[51]


The Story of a Mormon Woman—Effects of Polygamy.

The New Mormon Complication.

From the New York Post, April 30th.]

INSURRECTION AMONG THE MORMONS IN UTAH. The following important news is contained in a telegraphic dispatch dated Great Salt Lake City, June 16th:

Utah and South Carolina.

Sample headlines about Utah and Mormonism from Southern Civil War newspapers.

The *Times* concluded that "if the sacred duty of suppressing Polygamy is so immediately upon us as to justify all these risks, it is the clear duty of Congress to anticipate the consequences, and at once provide the means necessary for the enforcement of the new law."[52] A Tennessee newspaper similarly predicted that "serious trouble may yet grow out of the condition of affairs among the Mormons in Utah" because "the whole church is in deadly rebellion against this law [the Anti-Bigamy Act]."[53]

Polygamy was also used as an instrument of social satire. A February 1862 letter to the editor in North Carolina's *Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register* complained that if a proposal of the Confederate Congress to draft only single men for military service was enacted, then the remaining married men could be forced to "introduce Mormonism [polygamy] for the benefit of that portion of the community, and the good of the State."[54]

In June 1865, as the last Confederate forces were surrendering in the South, Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (and future vice president during Ulysses S. Grant's first term), visited Utah and met with Brigham Young. Of his visit, the *New York Times* reported:

> Mr. Colfax remonstrated earnestly against the barbarous institution of polygamy. The Prophet said in reply that it was no essential part of Mormonism; that it did not exist in the early days of the Mormon church; that it was not enjoined in the Book of Mormon, and that if the Lord were to give him a revelation that it should be

> stopped, he would cheerfully enforce the divine injunction. It seemed, from the Prophet's remarks, that he was in expectation of receiving such a revelation. We hope he will get it before next session of Congress, though we hardly know how he will dispose of his three score and ten wives.[55]

A vocal opponent of polygamy, Schuyler Colfax Jr. (1823–85), Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, visited Utah and met with Brigham Young in 1865. He later served as Ulysses S. Grant's vice president. (Wikimedia)

The *Boston Herald* reported that Mr. Colfax and his party did not hesitate "to express their condemnation of the system, and to say that it [polygamy] is under the ban of the entire civilized world."[56] The article equated polygamy with slavery, noting that just as slavery was practiced "by the wealthy and influential, so this peculiar vice [polygamy] is indulged in mainly by the leading and wealthy men among the Mormons. . . . Whatever opinions we may form of the men, all who know anything of the misery they suffer, must pity the Mormon women." The article concluded that "like all festering sores, the longer it [polygamy] is endured, the more difficult of removal and the more dangerous it becomes."[57]

As illustrated by a November 1865 newspaper article, the question of Mormon loyalty often boiled down to one issue—polygamy: "Our correspondent in Utah . . . declared that Young and the other hierarchs are treasonably disposed toward the United States Government; and not only this, but the Mormon people, under the advice of their leaders, are preparing . . . against any interference with what they call their religious faith—which . . . as appears from all they say and do, is reduced to but one item—polygamy."[58] The press correctly recognized the importance faithful Latter-day Saints placed on the practice of polygamy. "This [polygamy] is the only thing they talk of fighting for, and it is the only item the leaders care a rush for."[59]

Brigham Young, a fourth major topic of Civil War news reporting about Utah and Mormonism, was a larger-than-life character, and the press was fascinated by him. The unique combination of prophecy, polygamy, and power exercised in a desert kingdom hundreds of miles from the States made him a figure of great curiosity and interest. No wonder he was the subject of many profiles and articles during the war.

Much of the nation viewed Young more as a despot than a religious leader. According to the *Boston Herald*, "Unlimited obedience to Brigham Young and enmity of the Federal Government are topmost in the obligations taken" by Mormons. Readers were told Latter-day Saints considered that "this prophet has been re-elected by God, and that the three [the First Presidency] represent the Trinity. Brigham dictates the only law known among the Mormons."[60] If the Saints "would 'do as Brigham says,' they would soon become the wealthiest and most powerful people on the face of this mundane sphere."[61]

Each semiannual Latter-day Saint general conference brought renewed interest in Brigham Young. According to a November 1862 report,

Brigham was "in the habit of giving the speakers a text to "'spound and 'splain [expound and explain] during the Conference." After hearing talks on a variety of subjects—from taking care of immigrants to hauling rock for the rising temple—Brigham turned his attention to the war and reportedly commented that "the people of the States were pitied for the fix they had got into, but of course it all came of rejecting the 'Prophet Joseph Smith.'"[62]

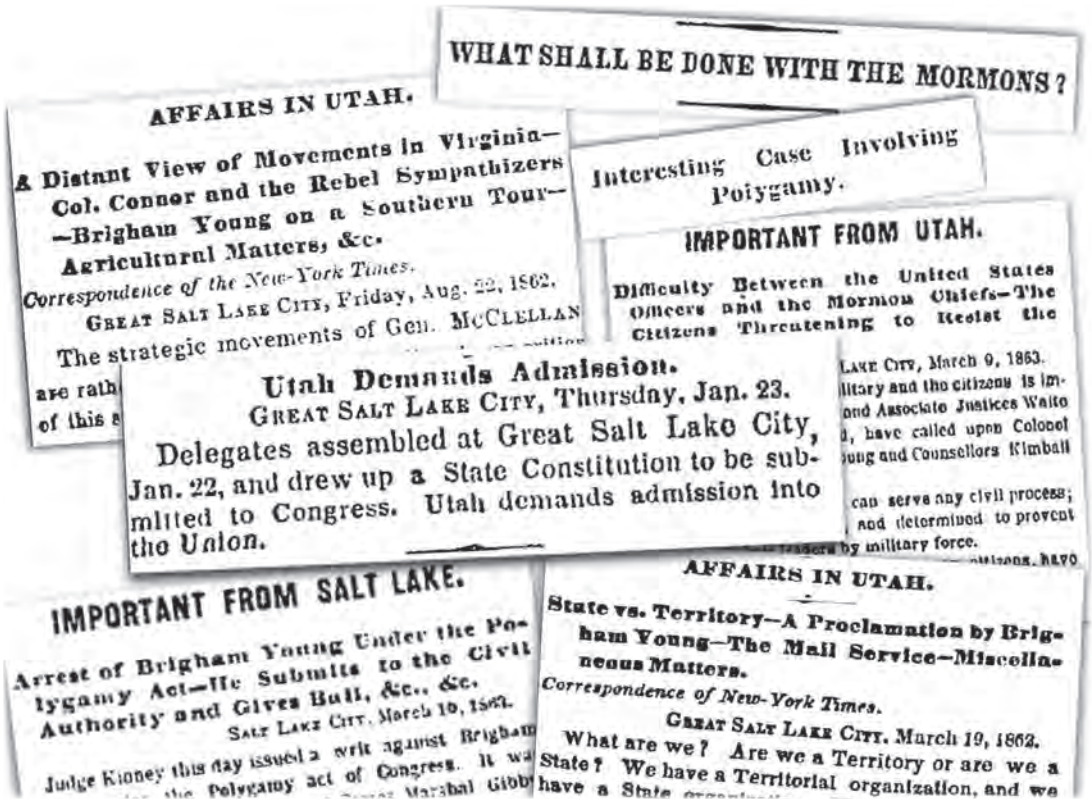
In summer 1862, Southern papers crowed that "Northern papers are predicting that their Government will soon have some trouble with the Mormons."[63] Newspapers reported in March 1863 that Young was indicted and released on bail "to answer for a violation of the polygamy act" and that "a collision is anticipated between the Mormons and the yankee military."[64] A Savannah, Georgia, paper noted that one of Lincoln's cabinet members called for "relentless severity" in dealing with Brigham Young.[65]

Southern papers reprinted Northern news reports of Mormon activities, especially those that portrayed Brigham Young as a thorn in the Union's side. A June 1863 reprint in a North Carolina paper reported that "Brigham Young, in a speech in his Salt Lake Tabernacle recently, said if the United States asked for a battalion of soldiers for the war he would see it in h—ll first. Too much female society, says the Boston Post, is impairing Brigham's sense of discretion."[66]

The *Natchez (Mississippi) Courier* reprinted an 1863 interview with Brigham Young that originally appeared in the *New York Evening Post*. The author claimed that "old women have been known to go tottering out of their cabins and touch Brigham's clothes, believing that it would restore their eyesight." The interviewer personally found "President Young an agreeable, affable gentleman, apparently not over forty-five years of age, although he is really upward of sixty. . . . Brigham sleeps alone and eats his meals alone. Whenever he wants one of his wives he sends for her."[67] President Young "conversed upon any and all subjects very freely. . . . The war, he thinks, will be continued till a great part of the North and South is used up, or, to speak more plainly, till they are annihilated, when the 'Saints' will be the people to occupy the country in peace and quietness. The desolation caused by the war, he regards as the judgment of the Lord for the persecution of the 'Saints.'"[68]

As the war entered its fourth year, the press reported that "Brigham expresses himself of the opinion that the folks eastward will make war their all-engrossing business for years to come, neglecting even the very necessary and fundamental labors of agriculture, and thus bringing upon themselves the necessity of crossing the barren plains to the deserts of Utah for bread, or at least that the widows and orphans and teetotal peace lovers will make this long and dreary pilgrimage."[69] Interest in Brigham Young remained high during the war; he was described in one 1865 newspaper account as follows:

> Brigham Young is a man of about medium height, with an immense chest, giving assurance of tremendous vital energy. His head is large, forehead high, round and broad, his hair and whiskers incline to auburn, and though he is sixty-four years of age, scarcely a gray hair can be seen and not a wrinkle detected upon his red and expressive face. His nose resembles the hawk's bill, and his lips, firmly closing, with his blue and at times flashing eyes, betoken


WHAT SHALL BE DONE WITH THE MORMONS?

AFFAIRS IN UTAH.

A Distant View of Movements in Virginia—Col. Connor and the Rebel Sympathizers—Brigham Young on a Southern Tour—Agricultural Matters, &c.

Correspondence of the New-York Times.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, Friday, Aug. 22, 1862.

The strategic movements of Gen. McCLELLAN

Interesting Case Involving Polygamy.

IMPORTANT FROM UTAH.

Difficulty Between the United States Officers and the Mormon Chiefs—The Citizens Threatening to Resist the

LAKE CITY, March 9, 1863.

Utah Demands Admission.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, Thursday, Jan. 23.

Delegates assembled at Great Salt Lake City, Jan. 22, and drew up a State Constitution to be submitted to Congress. Utah demands admission into the Union.

IMPORTANT FROM SALT LAKE.

Arrest of Brigham Young Under the Polygamy Act—He Submits to the Civil Authority and Gives Bail, &c., &c.

SALT LAKE CITY, March 19, 1862.

Judge Kinney this day issued a writ against Brigham

the Polygamy act of Congress. It wa

Marshal Gibb

AFFAIRS IN UTAH.

State vs. Territory—A Proclamation by Brigham Young—The Mail Service—Miscellaneous Matters.

Correspondence of New-York Times.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, March 19, 1862.

What are we? Are we a Territory or are we a State? We have a Territorial organization, and we have a State

During the Civil War, Union and Confederate newspapers published numerous articles about polygamy, Utah's presumed disloyalty and request for statehood, and Brigham Young.

> the great force and indomitable energy which he has always manifested. As some one said of Napoleon, "He is one of the favored few, born to command." He is also one of the shrewdest and most cunning of men, and sensible to the power money gives, and withal possessed of business talents of the highest order, he is now, it is believed, one of the wealthiest men in the nation.[70]

Regarding his reported wealth, one newspaper reported that "it is a mistaken idea that the keeping of so many wives is rendered expensive. The case is quite different, as husbands are frequently supported by their wives. Brigham Young keeps in operation quite a large workshop, with sewing machines, &c. The women were described as representing the lower order of servant girls."[71]

The *New York Times* discussed the role that Brigham Young played in Utah. "I must say," the reporter wrote, "that the tourist visits few places where more undefined impressions and emotions rush upon him than here . . . the land of the Latter Day Saints—the land of many wives and many children . . . the land of obedience, temperance and order—the land where Democracy and Republicanism are not known—the land of the one-man power."[72] The article continued by complaining that

> there are three governments in Utah, . . . in form, if not in fact—the Territorial

> Government, . . . the government of the so-called State of Deseret, of which Brigham Young is Governor; and the government of the Church, of which Brigham Young is First President. . . . The Church . . . extends to all the relations of life and business; to family affairs. . . . Nothing is beneath its care and nothing is above its power. This Church has larger and more positive powers than were ever claimed by the Church of Rome in the dark ages, . . . the voice of Brigham being the voice of God.[73]

A few months prior to the war's end, a Chattanooga newspaper humorously reported that "the prettiest girls in Utah generally marry Young."[74] Some reports claimed Brigham Young had eighty wives, sixty children, "and a prospect of more."[75]

An article in the *Boston Herald* predicted in July 1865 that "when Brigham Young sleeps with his fathers then will come the searching test before which we predict the whole Mormon fabric will be crumbled to the dust. It may, and doubtless will continue to exist as a religious sect, but as a compact and tremendously effective organization, its power will cease when Brigham Young's heart is forever still"—one of the less prescient statements made by that publication.[76]

CONCLUSION

From 1861 to 1865, even while the nation was locked in a bitter civil war, Union and Confederate newspapers continued to feed their readers a steady diet of articles about Utah, Mormonism, and polygamy. The numerous reports about Utah Territory and Mormonism that appeared in national and local newspapers across the country had no influence on the outcome of the war, but collectively they helped to set the stage for the national preoccupation with polygamy that followed the Civil War.

Americans remained curious and cautious about Utah and Mormonism throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. After Appomattox and the formal ending of the Civil War, newspapers continued to portray Utah and the Mormons much as they had throughout the war. The general views expressed were that Mormons remained disloyal, that Utah Territory should not be granted statehood, and that polygamy must be eliminated. Brigham Young also remained a powerful and interesting enigma who continued to be a source of widely read news stories until his death in 1877. The tone of news reports changed little in the decades following the Civil War, as this excerpt from an 1875 address in the Salt Lake Tabernacle by Elder George Q. Cannon illustrates: "We [Latter-day Saints] are accused, you know, of being disloyal. This has been a story told of us, a charge repeated against us from the very beginning. . . . The idea prevails in many quarters that we are scarcely as true to the government as we should be. I have heard it stated that were it not for these troops at Camp Douglas, Utah Territory would rebel. By such nonsense as this do men who oppose us seek to deceive the world at large respecting us and our motives and feelings."[77] While most news stories were negative, occasionally there was grudging recognition and puzzlement over Mormonism's success and the fact that "the means of the Mormons to convert others to their faith are as great as those of all the Christian sects put together."[78]

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NOTES

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1. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 27, 1865.
2. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 1:53.
3. Based on research by the author, for the years 1857 and 1858 more than 2,200 articles regarding Kansas and slavery appeared in the *New York Daily Times* and the *New York Times*. (The *New York Daily Times* changed its name to the *New York Times* on September 14, 1857.)
4. For example, see "The Mormon Outrages," *New York Daily Times*, May 1, 1857, and "War with the Mormons," *New York Daily Times*, May 13, 1857.
5. Salt Lake City was named Great Salt Lake City until 1868, but it will be referred to as Salt Lake City in this essay.
6. In one of the many ironies of the Civil War, Fort Sumter was commanded by Major Robert Anderson. The Confederate artillery battery that fired upon the fort was commanded by P. G. T. Beauregard, who had been Anderson's artillery student at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Beauregard also has the distinction of being West Point's shortest-serving superintendent—from January 23 to 28, 1861. See Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 167, 170; and William M. Davidson, *A History of the United States* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1902), 382.
7. Although there were popular weekly and monthly publications, such as *Harper's Weekly*, *Harper's New Monthly*, and *Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*, this essay will focus exclusively on period newspaper articles.
8. The Associated Press began sending telegraphic news in 1851. See Associated Press, "AP History—1846–1900: The News Cooperative Takes Shape," http://www.ap.org/pages/about/history/history_first.html.
9. While the telegraph shortened the time taken to disseminate the news, it did not eliminate a problem that had plagued newspapers since their creation—identifying which month a specific event occurred. This problem was solved by adding an extra word—*ultimate* or *ult.* (for references to dates in the previous month), *instant* or *inst.* (dates in the current month), or *proximo* (for dates in the following month). Readers could then read and understand, without confusion, statements such as "our correspondent at Great Salt Lake City gives us details of news from Utah to the 10th inst." ("General News," *New York Times*, October 28, 1861) or "we have details of affairs in Utah to the 12th ult., in a letter from our correspondent" ("News of the Day," *New York Times*, October 3, 1861).
10. *Fayetteville (North Carolina) Observer*, August 29, 1861.
11. "Telegraph to the Herald: From Washington," *Boston Herald*, February 14, 1863.
12. "Utah and South Carolina," *Daily (Richmond) Dispatch*, January 19, 1861, 2.
13. "Three New Territories," *Weekly Raleigh (NC) Register*, March 27, 1861.
14. "Important from the South," *Evening (Alexandria) Virginia Sentinel*, March 5, 1861.
15. "The Secession Rebellion," *New York Times*, May 24, 1861.
16. "The Mormons," *(Savannah, GA) Daily Morning News*, June 12, 1862.
17. "Ex-President Buchanan," *Weekly Raleigh (NC) Register*, March 13, 1861.
18. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, July 26, 1861.
19. "The War Department," *New York Times*, July 7, 1861.
20. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 3, 1861.
21. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, February 3, 1862.
22. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, January 20, 1862; emphasis added.
23. "The Mormons," *Hinds County (Raymond, MS) Gazette*, August 20, 1862.

24. Camp Floyd, established in 1858 by Albert Sidney Johnston, was renamed Fort Crittenden in honor of U.S. Senator John J. Crittenden after secretary of war John B. Floyd (after whom Camp Floyd was named) resigned to join the Confederacy in December 1860. The Utah military outpost is identified as both Camp Crittenden and Fort Crittenden in military dispatches.
25. "A Needless War in Prospect," *New York Times*, May 26, 1862.
26. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, January 4, 1863.
27. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, May 28, 1864.
28. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, April 27, 1865.
29. "The Mormon Question—Its Easy and Peaceful Solution," *New York Times*, November 28, 1865.
30. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 27, 1865.
31. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 27, 1865.
32. William H. Hooper to George Q. Cannon, *Millennial Star*, December 16, 1860, 30.
33. "Late Northern and European News," *Weekly Raleigh (NC) Register*, January 15, 1862; and "Northern News," *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, February 3, 1862.
34. Frank Fuller, Utah Territory secretary and a close friend of Mark Twain's, served as acting governor until Governor Stephen S. Harding arrived in July 1862. See "Frank Fuller Dead; Utah War Governor," *New York Times*, February 20, 1915.
35. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco: History Company, 1889), 604.
36. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1930), 5:3–7.
37. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, February 28, 1862.
38. "Utah Applying," *New York Times*, January 9, 1862.
39. "Utah Applying," *New York Times*, January 9, 1862.
40. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, February 3, 1862.
41. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, February 3, 1862.
42. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, February 28, 1862.
43. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, May 4, 1862.
44. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, February 15, 1863.
45. "Brigham Young on the War," *New York Times*, November 8, 1863.
46. "The Northern Presidential Race," *Daily (Columbia) South Carolinian*, April 2, 1864.
47. "Utah," *Boston Herald,* July 19, 1865.
48. "Polygamy and a New Rebellion," *New York Times*, June 19, 1862; and "First National Convention," *Chicago Tribune*, June 17, 1856.
49. "The Mormons, Their Doctrine and Their Social Condition," *Boston Herald,* March 1, 1861.
50. "Polygamy and a New Rebellion," *New York Times*, June 19, 1862.
51. "Polygamy and a New Rebellion," *New York Times*, June 19, 1862.
52. "Polygamy and a New Rebellion," *New York Times*, June 19, 1862.
53. "The Mormons and Their Positions," *Chattanooga (TN) Daily Gazette*, December 30, 1864.
54. "The Military Ordinance," *Semi-Weekly Raleigh (NC) Register*, February 12, 1862.
55. "Polygamy," *New York Times*, July 18, 1865.
56. "Utah," *Boston Herald*, July 19, 1865.
57. "Utah," *Boston Herald*, July 19, 1865.
58. "The Mormon Question—Its Easy and Peaceful Solution," *New York Times*, November 28, 1865.
59. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 27, 1865.
60. "The Mormons, Their Doctrine and Their Social Condition," *Boston Herald*, March 1, 1861.
61. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, May 7, 1861.
62. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 2, 1862.
63. "The Mormons," *(Savannah, GA) Daily Morning News*, June 12, 1862.
64. "Telegraphic: Late Northern News," *(Savannah, GA) Daily Morning News*, March 18, 1863; and "From the North," *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, March 23, 1863.
65. "Affairs in Utah," *(Savannah, GA) Daily Morning News*, April 1, 1863.
66. "Brigham Young," *Raleigh (NC) Register*, June 24, 1863.
67. "Life Among the Mormons," *Natchez (MS) Courier*, November 17, 1863.
68. "Life Among the Mormons," *Natchez (MS) Courier*, November 17, 1863.
69. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, July 3, 1864.
70. "Utah," *Boston Herald*, July 19, 1865.
71. "The Mormons, Their Doctrine and Their Social Condition," *Boston Herald*, March 1, 1861.
72. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 27, 1865; emphasis removed.
73. "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, November 27, 1865.
74. "News Items," *Chattanooga (TN) Daily Gazette*, February 3, 1865.
75. "All About—Ghosts," *Natchez (MS) Courier*, December 30, 1865; and *Daily Richmond (VA) Examiner*, November 18, 1863.
76. "Utah," *Boston Herald*, July 19, 1865.
77. George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:6.
78. "The Mormons, Their Doctrine and Their Social Condition," *Boston Herald*, March 1, 1861.