Foreword

Too few readers and researchers are acquainted with Roberta Flake Clayton's self-published *Pioneer Women of Arizona*. In her early nineties and on a meager income when she first published, she sold the majority of her books to relatives or the descendants of the women she wrote about. A few copies of her work reside in special collection libraries throughout Arizona, and photocopies of drafts of her book are in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library. Although she wanted Arizonans to know about the experiences, struggles, and triumphs of ordinary women in Arizona's early years, mainstream historians seldom cite her writings. Her 719-page work is not included in the 2010 bibliography of nonfiction resources compiled and hosted by the Arizona Women's Heritage Trail. Neither does it appear in the updated 2014 bibliography provided to attendees of the first Arizona Women's History Symposium, "Arizona Women: Hiding in Plain Sight." Her unintended exclusion from these two bibliographies has meant that Clayton's work continues to be largely hidden. Catherine H. Ellis and David F. Boone's edition of this 1969 publication will change that. Catherine Ellis, a writer of Arizona history topics, and David Boone at Brigham Young University's Department of Church History and Doctrine combine their extensive knowledge of Arizona's history and culture to revise and considerably expand Clayton's original work.

Clayton was certainly not the first to gather pioneer recollections. The Arizona Historical Society had been collecting pioneer stories since 1885. Arizona's government began officially collecting firsthand accounts, letters, photographs, and stories of pioneers in 1909 when the legislature created the Office of the Territorial Historian. Later that year Sharlot Hall became the first female to hold a paid territorial office when the governor appointed her as territorial historian, a position she kept until 1912. During those three years she interviewed pioneers, gathered documents and artifacts, and for nearly ten weeks in 1911 traversed the Arizona Strip, an area north of the Grand Canyon that contained several far-flung Mormon settlements. That same year she purchased the unpublished Joseph Fish manuscript of the history of Arizona from the author, a Mormon resident of Snowflake, Arizona.

Typical of these kinds of activities in other territories and states, nearly all of the information Hall and others collected was about men and their settlement activities. Subsequent state historians Thomas E. Farish and James H. McClintock continued the work that Hall had begun. Farish published his eight-volume work on the history of Arizona in 1916, with a focus again on men. In spite of the fact that McClintock had access to several firsthand accounts of female Mormon pioneers in the State Historians Papers, when he finished *Mormon Settlement in Arizona* in 1921 he rarely mentioned women.

Also in 1921 the *Arizona Republican*, a major Phoenix newspaper, started collecting firsthand pioneer accounts and established a formal Pioneer Day where early residents throughout the state could come to Phoenix, meet or reunite, and share their stories. This annual event resulted in the publication of numerous pioneer experiences, primarily of men, but it did at last contain the reminiscences of some women. What was unique about Clayton in comparison with

these other efforts was her gathering stories of pioneer women, the majority of whom were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). As a member of an Arizona branch of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, in the 1920s she encouraged Mormon women to write or collect stories of their own lives or those of their female ancestors.

Finally, the Federal Writers' Project of the late 1930s, a Works Progress Administration effort to provide employment for out-of-work white-collar workers, gave Clayton the opportunity and impetus to collect and write the stories of Arizona female pioneers in earnest. She contributed seventy-nine articles about the lives of individual women and numerous items about pioneer life in Navajo County. When the Writers' Project ended in 1940, she continued to collect interviews and autobiographies, stories from descendants of female pioneers, and additional information from a variety of sources. She used her research and these articles as the foundation of her 1969 publication.

As Ellis and Boone point out, there are flaws in Clayton's writings. It is sometimes difficult to tell if she wrote sketches from her own personal knowledge, from interviews with living women, from the writings of deceased women, from recollections of descendants, or from other sources. While none of these motivations are problematic, occasionally there are contradictions in the different versions of the biographies. Some of the interviews with living Mormon women and their descendants reflect what oral historians call insider/outsider perspectives. Clayton herself was a member of the Mormon Church and, because she was familiar with issues that faced many of these women in their daily lives, did not appear to ask questions that might clarify shared nuances and meanings. Questions an outsider unaware or unfamiliar with these issues might have put forward. In addition, while the Federal Writers' Project may have imposed restrictions on topics like polygamy, once she no longer worked for the Project one can only wish that she had asked questions about life under polygamy, about Mormon women's roles in the fight for women's suffrage, or about social and political changes the women had seen that had affected their lives.

That said, Clayton's *Pioneer Women of Arizona* provides a rich history of in-migration, challenges faced in settling a new often harsh land, daily work, church service, early businesses, contributions to community life, changes in women's roles, entertainment, births and deaths, and more. What makes this new edition even more significant are Ellis's and Boone's contributions. They provide historical context not present in Clayton's original writings. Their painstaking research is evident in their extensive footnotes and their additions to and clarifications of events at the end of each woman's story. Their discussion of Arizona's Federal Writers' Project provides a setting for Clayton's writings and the difficulties both she and the two authors faced in trying to make sense of the often poorly typed Project manuscripts riddled with misspellings, incorrect phrases like "hockey team" rather than "hackney team," sentence fragments, and deleted sentences. Their section on Mormon migration and settlement patterns in Arizona establishes a more intricate and complex framework for understanding the entry points into the territory and why people settled where they did.

Were the experiences of Mormon pioneer women different from those of their contemporaries? Ellis and Boone note that there were several major differences in that many came as family groups much like earlier settlers in the East and Midwest, they settled in communities with a common religious belief and culture, and many of their husbands served out-of-state missions for the Mormon church often leaving wives as the sole economic support for their families. What were their similarities? Historians can use the information in this large collection of Arizona pioneer women's stories to compare and contrast experiences both within and outside of Mormon communities, to find patterns and change points, and to place these stories in a larger historical context. The fact that Ellis and Boone have listed Roberta Clayton Flake as the primary author of this revised edition will bring her contributions to the history of women in Arizona out of the shadows.

Melanie I. Sturgeon, PhD
State Archivist, State of Arizona