

Introduction

When most members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints conjure up images of Church history, their minds are filled with pictures of the sacred sites and peoples of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Utah. But years before Brigham Young, accompanied by the vanguard company of Latter-day Saints, declared the Salt Lake Valley to be the site of future gathering in 1847, Church members had already pushed even further west into the Pacific Basin frontier. William Barratt made his way to Australia on a mission in 1840. Addison Pratt and his evangelizing companions arrived in the Society Islands in 1844, the year Joseph Smith was martyred in Illinois. And during the early 1850s, when Saints in the Utah Territory were clawing for their physical survival in America's Great Basin, missionaries enjoyed proselyting success among the native Sandwich Islanders in today's Hawaii. Clearly, the Pacific Isles have played a major—and early—role in the unfolding of the Restoration.

In preparation for BYU's Church History and Doctrine regional studies tour to the Pacific Isles in 2008, faculty members were invited to research and write on the peoples and places of Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Australasia. For most, it was their first foray into the world of Pacific studies. Chapter 1 tells the story of how Mormon missionary Addison Pratt introduced the restored gospel to the tiny island of Tubuai in 1844. Within a short time, he had converted nearly a third of the island's inhabitants. Arnold Garr narrates the Church's history on Tubuai through the vicissitudes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries before providing a moving portrait, his own eyewitness, of the Tubuai

Saints in the twenty-first century, who remain about one-third of the island's inhabitants.

We learn in chapter 2 that Jonathan Napela taught the early missionaries to Hawaii his native language and helped George Q. Cannon translate the Book of Mormon into that language. Cannon wrote to Brigham Young, describing Napela as "the most influential man that has yet joined the Church" in Hawaii. Indeed, Napela was present and often influenced formative events in the Church's first three decades in Hawaii. Besides the Book of Mormon translation and the hosting and teaching of missionaries, Napela gathered with the Hawaiian Saints in the island of Lanai's Palawi Basin, where he was one of many deceived by apostate Walter Murray Gibson, who took control when the Church withdrew its missionaries in the 1850s due to the Utah War. After Gibson, Napela led the Hawaiian Saints in renewing their covenants, supervised part of the gathering to Laie on Oahu, and made a visit to Brigham Young in Utah, where he became the first Hawaiian to receive the endowment. Napela returned to Hawaii, where he reported to King Kamehameha V, bringing President Young's greetings and an invitation to the king to accept the principles of vicarious temple ordinances for his ancestors. When Napela's wife, Kitty, was diagnosed with Hansen's disease (better known as leprosy), Jonathan petitioned officials for permission to serve as her nurse in the remote colony of Kalaupapa on Molokai, where he presided over the Saints until his death of the same disease just days before his beloved wife. Fred Woods describes Jonathan Napela's noble life and dramatic influence on the history of the Church in Hawaii.

In chapter 3, Michael Goodman analyzes the remarkable receptivity of Tongans to the restored gospel. A higher percentage of Tongans than any other nationality belong to the Church, a fact Goodman attributes to a constellation of fac-

tors including the pioneering work of Christianity in reshaping Tongan culture in anticipation of the restored gospel. Noting that Church growth in Tonga is a recent phenomenon given early overwhelming opposition that led to the closing of the mission at the end of the nineteenth century, Goodman asserts that early Tongan Saints learned to lead the Church themselves when the stream of American missionaries dried up. Moreover, Tongans' legendary faith is inseparably linked to their culture's rejection of "obsessive materialism." They depend upon and live close to God. Such faith, together with the Church's extraordinarily effective education system, has made Tonga the country with the highest percentage of Latter-day Saints on the planet.

One of the Church's most impressive landmarks in Hawaii is the Oahu Tabernacle in downtown Honolulu with its 141-foot tower and twelve-foot Italian tile mosaic of the Savior. In chapter 4, Matthew Richardson situates the Oahu Tabernacle in the history of LDS tabernacles and tells the story of its remarkable construction and its use as a refuge for LDS servicemen during World War II and by the Hawaiian Saints for more than fifty years. The first Saints to donate toward construction of the building were those stricken with Hansen's disease (leprosy) and exiled to the beautiful but remote colony of Kalaupapa at the base of the cliffs of Molokai. Other Saints creatively raised and consecrated funds. When Elder Charles A. Callis dedicated the site in 1941, he prayed that it would be finished in peace. It was finished no sooner than when the bombing of Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II. And though it towered over nearly every other structure in Honolulu at the time, the Tabernacle was thankfully not targeted and left intact to serve as a gathering place for LDS servicemen, including Boyd K. Packer. It continues to serve as a crossroads, gathering place, and refuge for Saints who come

from many lands to join their famously hospitable Hawaiian brothers and sisters.

Drawing on the untapped memoir of Hugh J. Cannon, traveling companion to Elder David O. McKay on his 1920–21 world tour, Reid Neilson in chapter 5 paints a striking picture of the primitive communication and transportation technologies on which the travelers necessarily depended. Neilson adds a profound analytical dimension to the story based on Thomas Tweed’s theory of religion as terrestrial crossing. In this analysis, the journey was not merely geographical but institutional, as the firsthand knowledge gained by the young Apostle in 1920 shaped later Church President David O. McKay’s ministry to meet the needs of Saints in the Pacific and elsewhere. Initially upset by inefficient communication and transportation among Saints in the Pacific, Elder McKay learned that such was usual. He recommended therefore that the Church provide a ship for the Tahitian Saints. His observations were “of great significance,” Neilson asserts, “to the subsequent globalization of Mormonism.” They led President McKay to inaugurate education and building initiatives unprecedented in Church history, resulting in a temple in New Zealand, a Church college in Hawaii, and modern meetinghouses throughout the Pacific.

Chapter 6 describes how the obscure island of Pohnpei has come to host thriving branches of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By tapping into new and exciting sources, including unpublished histories, missionary letters, and interviews, Devan Jensen brings the lives of those Saints to the fore. Readers get to hear voices that would otherwise be lost to history. Jensen focuses his analytical narrative on three families baptized in 1977. His richly textured conversion narratives depict multidimensional souls. He situates the conversion process culturally, charting the outspoken opposition of converts’ families, the ostracism they face, and the powerful addictions

with which they wrestle. The Church's growing pains in Pohnpei are apparent, making its establishment among the faithful Saints there the more remarkable and worthy of attention. As the first published history of the Saints on Pohnpei, Jensen's essay begins that important work.

Dennis Wright and Megan Warner chart the challenges faced and contributions made by educational missionaries to the small island republic of Kiribati in the central Pacific in chapter 7. Since its 1977 introduction to Kiribati, the Church has become the fourth largest denomination among the nearly 105,000 inhabitants. Seeking further opportunities for his community school students, Waitea Abuita wrote to leaders of the Church's Liahona High School in Tonga, leading eventually to the Church establishing Moroni High School in Kiribati. Wright and Warner focus particularly on the "pioneering mission" of Barbara and Louis Durfee's educational mission to Moroni High in the formative mid 1980s when the school and Church were struggling to survive. Thanks to their efforts and those of whom they are typical, Moroni High is no longer dependent on volunteer teachers and the Church is well organized and thriving in the atolls of Kiribati.

In the summer of 1988, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed in New Zealand, Pacific, and Australia. Cynthia Doxey and Lloyd Newell narrate the remarkable series of events that led to the tour and analyze its effectiveness in building the Church. Beginning with the conversion of a young New Zealander, Iain McKay, whose interest in the Church began after he heard a recording of the choir and who, years later, was instrumental in making the tour happen, Doxey and Newell document several minor miracles that, combined, turn into a compelling account of what one New Zealand critic called the choir's ability to generate goodwill. The most meaningful of such testimonies is the

choir's impact on the "individual lives" described by Doxey and Newell in chapter 8.

Fire destroyed the Apia Samoa Temple in 2003 as shocked Latter-day Saints and their neighbors looked on helplessly. In chapter 9, Richard Cowan situates the event historically and illustrates that the assumption that temples are always protected is not well founded. The phenomenal faith of the Polynesian Saints is, however. Cowan describes how they responded initially with shock and sadness, then soul-searching and renewed hope, and finally joy as President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated a new and improved temple in 2005. Focusing on the symbolic significance of the gilded statue of Moroni that crowned the temple and, marvelously, survived the fire, Cowan describes how Samoan Saints interpreted the tragedy as an opportunity for faith in God rather than evidence of His absence. Subtly, as if evoking William Phelps's simile, "the Spirit of God like a fire is burning," Cowan invites readers to appreciate the flames from a divine perspective: they caused the Saints and their neighbors to forge closer ties and they caused faithfulness to increase as the Samoan Saints came to more deeply appreciate their temple blessings and renew their gospel covenants.

Chapter 10 tells how in 2006 the Church announced a 2009 closure date for its secondary school, the Church College of New Zealand (CCNZ). Scott Esplin situates the decision historically, helping readers see the admittedly sad closure "as a positive step in the forward movement of both the Church and education in New Zealand." The Church has been motivated to provide the Saints with education from early revelations' imperatives to seek learning. Esplin shows how the revealed instructions have translated into educational institutions, and how those institutions have adapted to the development of public school alternatives and prophetic decisions about how the Church should best use its resources to meet not only its

educational but other divine mandates. Locating the “extremely difficult” decision to close CCNZ in the Church’s longstanding policy to defer to public schools when they are adequate and focus instead on complementary religious instruction, Esplin helps readers understand the New Zealand Saints’ reactions to the decision that will dramatically disrupt some of their lives but will, in the end, bless many.

Kip Sperry reveals a well-kept secret with his survey of the hundreds of oral Polynesian genealogies recorded and preserved by the Church and available through its Family History Library and its branches. Such *whakapapas*, as the traditions are called at the library, are the only genealogical records for Polynesia prior to European colonization, according to chapter 11. The recorded genealogies are gold mines since many Polynesians can trace their lineages further back than Europeans. But are the oral genealogies reliable? Sperry answers that question and relates the history of the Church’s effort to record the oral genealogies. If these genealogies are gold mines, the mining still requires hard work. Sperry explains the Polynesian naming practices that make using the records problematic. He notes other eccentricities as well. He cites several specific examples to show readers what they can expect to find in, and tells them how to find, the transcribed interviews. Even as he laments that the oral genealogy is a “dying art” in Polynesia, Sperry makes that art more accessible and appreciated.

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