



## PREFACE

During my eight-year tenure as assistant Church historian and recorder for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, I taught a series of classes on the Church's global history for staff of the Church History Department. When I was teaching a section on the history of the Latter-day Saints in South America, Clinton D. Christensen, a student in the class, made me aware of a recent acquisition.

In November 2013, Clint was invited to the home of Lynn S. Richards Jr., a grandson of Apostle Stephen L Richards. The home was ready to be sold, and the family papers were boxed in the garage. Clint discovered many historical treasures, including papers of Elder Stephen L Richards, his wife Irene, and even the portraits of Irene's grandparents George A. and Bathsheba Smith that had hung in the celestial room of the Nauvoo Temple in 1846.<sup>1</sup> Among Irene's papers was a book of letters she wrote detailing her husband's three-month apostolic tour of South America in 1948. As luck would have it, Clint acquired the papers and brought Irene's letter book to the Church history class within a week of our discussion about Stephen L Richards's trip.

Given the importance of Stephen L. and Irene Merrill Smith Richards's visit to Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil in the history of the Church in South America, Clint and I decided to coauthor a volume on their travels, which marked a turning point for Latter-day Saints on that continent. Bookending the chapters on the experiences of Elder and Sister Richards are a prologue and an epilogue giving an overview of the history of the Church in South America up to 1948 and then from 1948 to 2018. Because a complete history of the Church in South America has yet to be written, the prologue and epilogue help fill a need by providing a solid introduction to the much larger story of Latin American Church history. Enhancing this historical overview is a timeline of key events in the history of the Church in Latin America.

The travel chapters include documents from Elder and Sister Richards, mission presidents, missionaries, mission records, journalists, and, to a lesser extent, local Church members. All letters replicate the originals, including nonstandard spellings and the omission of diacritical marks in Spanish and Portuguese, with the exception of spacing and other formatting details that have been adjusted for improved readability and presentation. Each documentary section begins with a daily summary describing the events of the apostolic tour followed by related documents containing bracketed clarifications and footnotes where deemed helpful. For space reasons, footnote references to the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, have been abbreviated to "CHL."

We are particularly grateful to my administrative assistant, Andrea Maxfield, and to Eileen Jenkins and Gretchen Becker, who prepared, typed, and reviewed the documents. Alison Gainer, Andrea Snarr, and Dan Holliday helped with initial editing of the manuscript. We thank the team at BYU's Religious Studies Center: publications director Scott C. Esplin; project editor Don L. Brugger and his assistants Ashlin Awerkamp, Sharai McGill, and Petra Javadi-Evans; production supervisor Brent R. Nordgren; and designer/typesetter Emily V. Strong. Gratitude also goes to the staff and senior missionaries of the Church History Department for their generous help: Matt Godfrey, Michael Landon, Matt Geilman, Jeremy Talmage, Jeff Crossley, Elena Lowe, and Richard and Rosalie Jones. LaMond Tullis and Mark Grover provided insightful reviews of the chapters on the history of the Church in Latin America. We are also grateful

for the cooperation of the families of South American returned missionaries and for a few earlier missionaries who remember the Richardses' visit in 1948 and have shared their memories, scrapbooks, and journals with us while we prepared this book.

We hope that readers of this volume will not only get a clear sense of the history of the Latter-day Saints during the time of the Richardses' visit but will also see how their travels became a milestone in the development of what is now a multimillion-member church in South America.

—Richard E. Turley Jr. with Clinton D. Christensen

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## NOTE

1. The paintings are on display in the “Heavens Are Open” exhibit at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah.