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**More Than Faith:
Latter-Day Saint Women as Politically Aware and Active Americans
1830-1860**

By

Kim Michaelle Davidson

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Kim Michaelle Davidson

May 9, 2017

More Than Faith:
Latter-Day Saint Women as Politically Aware and Active Americans
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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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May, 2017

Abstract

I explore the political ideology and activity of female members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints from 1830 to 1860. Looking at personal sources such as diaries, letters, and poetry, this study posits Mormon women as intellectually active, politically engaged, and culturally aware *in addition to* religiously devout. This thesis first examines the ways in which early LDS women exhibited Democratic political ideology in the ways in which they viewed themselves and the ways in which they viewed the world around them. Looking at concepts such as “common woman” ideology, producerism, freedom rhetoric, Mormon-American exceptionalism, and Manifest Destiny within Mormon women’s personal writings, I demonstrate that many of these women joined countless other antebellum Americans in their embrace of Jacksonian political ideology. Finally, I explore early Mormon women’s political activity through Relief Society meetings, petitions, and patriotic celebrations, demonstrating that these women often prized democratic rhetoric while endorsing cultural and intellectual conformism to broader LDS policies and norms. By proposing that the Latter-Day Saint foremothers engaged in political thought and action in similar ways as LDS men and non-LDS Democrats, this thesis challenges historical views of Mormon women and the early LDS Church.

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The origins of this thesis lie in the “needs and opportunities” section of my undergraduate capstone research paper, a passing comment by my advisor about the quality of my graduate school application writing sample, and the momentous growth of twenty-first century Mormon women’s political activity. My topic and arguments went through several iterations, and I owe a mountain of debt to the village of support whose inquiries, recommendations, and encouragement inspired this final product.

None of this would have been possible without the feedback, suggestions, and vast knowledge of my committee members. Jared Hardesty believed in my work from the very beginning, coached me through archival research, and helped guide my panic into solid, well-evidenced research when a summer of reading nineteenth-century diaries took my thesis in new and entirely unanticipated directions. More than anything, Jared taught me what it meant to find the *significance* of my work, to value my academic voice amid the historiographical sea of PhDs, to feel indignation at the current state of the field, and to seek to change it through quality scholarship. For this, I will be forever grateful. Hunter Price’s work on the Second Great Awakening was a key factor in my decision to attend Western Washington University, and his expertise and insight shaped this thesis in countless ways. Hunter’s graduate seminars inspired the way I think and write about political culture and American religion, and every chapter of this thesis contains inquiries I developed in his seminars. Through hours of counsel and critique, Hunter patiently helped me craft fragmented streams of consciousness into historical arguments. This thesis and the future of my research is better for his wisdom. Holly Folk agreed to work with me at the last minute, and challenged my ideas in ways that I could not have conceived of alone. Her feedback and questions have particularly shaped the way I see Mormon women’s scholarship and faith in the academy. A special thanks also goes to the archivists and librarians at the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University and the Church History Library without whose assistance I could have never accessed critical sources, and to the WWU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, who funded my research travels.

Finally, I extend the greatest appreciation to my wonderful support system of family and friends. To my parents, who have supported my academic adventures even when they have taken me thousands of miles from home. To the ‘16, ‘17, and ‘18 history and ARM cohorts at WWU who listened patiently as I spoke endlessly of Mormon women and who sent me cat pictures when they sensed I was overwhelmed. And to James, whose brilliance, love, and endless conversation has made me a stronger thinker and a better person. This is for you.

Table of Contents

Abstract	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
<i>“She prov’d her worth— She’s not the Queen of Earth”</i> : Common Woman Ideology Among Latter-Day Saint Women.....	14
<i>“The Love of Liberty... Inspires My Soul”</i> : Latter-Day Saint Women’s Embrace of American Exceptionalism, Freedom Rhetoric, and Manifest Destiny.....	43
<i>“As Sisters in Zion, We’ll All Work Together”</i> : Latter-Day Saint Women and Rugged Collectivity.....	70
Epilogue.....	100
Bibliography.....	109

Introduction

Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy left behind an invaluable document. Over fifteen thousand words, her autobiography is one of the only sources of her life which survived. Addressing the violence against Mormons in Nauvoo, Illinois, she presented a view common east of the Mississippi, even among some of the Mormon detractors.¹ Like many non-Mormon Americans who hailed the Jeffersonian vision of the incorruptible yeoman farmer, she echoed the popular view that a limited government in the hands of the people was superior to a large and potentially oppressive one, writing “The government could not possibly let us alone... our people knew they were strictly obedient to the laws of the land.” Still, U.S. troops “laid in ashes” “the hard-earned substance” of the Saints.² As she fled thirteen hundred miles from home, she inexplicitly embraced and perpetuated a democratic political ideology of self-rule, liberty, and willingness to employ violence to protect freedom. She was a “common woman,” one with few resources except for those provided by the Church, a limited education, and a poor background. Though her autobiography encapsulates the centrality of faith to her life, she also conveyed that Mormons in the west, most of whom had little or no political experience, could capably oversee the territory. Likewise, Tracy suggested that she, an ordinary woman, could competently judge their quality of governance.

¹ Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012), 117.

² Joseph Ellis writes that a central issue of identity in the early American republic was the paradigm of virtue and corruption. This idea effectively meant that those not within government have a civic duty to resist corruption and prevent corruption from occurring. One way to prevent personal corruption is to provide for oneself and one’s family through self-sufficient farming. This, in theory, divorces the individual from the potential corrupting forces of dependency upon employers and others who provide essential goods and services. This vision served many frontier agrarians as an important lens through which to see the early republic. Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 136. Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, *Narrative by Mrs. N. N. Tracy*, MSS SC 918, Women’s Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. Nancy Tracy’s autobiography is a short manuscript currently available in its full form in the Women’s Manuscript Collection in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University. While pieces appear on LDS.org, it is yet officially unpublished.

Her diary is an important window into the mind of many early Mormon pioneer women who, despite their sex and distance from eastern cultural centers, engaged with antebellum American political thought.

Nancy Tracy's writings demonstrate a broader intellectual and cultural phenomenon within Mormonism and Jacksonian America. As a pioneer woman who embodied certain American values, she engaged in many cultural and intellectual developments emblematic of the Second Great Awakening and the glorification of Jacksonian democracy. While historians of religion and the American frontier have long concurred that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was crucial to the rise of white settlement in the west, the invaluable contributions of Latter-Day Saint women as multifaceted individuals has been long overlooked. Historians have ignored them as cultural, intellectual, and political agents during the antebellum period. They have disregarded the fact that although on some of the scarcest populated frontier, early Mormon women brought and actively perpetuated certain worldviews shared by many in the United States. While scholars have long considered Mormon men as participants within nineteenth-century American political and cultural discourse, Latter-Day Saint women heretofore have not been envisioned as such. Despite a substantial body of evidence suggesting their participation, their engagement with Jacksonian ideologies including nationalism, manifest destiny, the glorification of common whites, and anti-intellectualism, has been left almost entirely unexplored.³ This project seeks to fill that

³ Important to note is that much more scholarship exists regarding the political engagement and activity of Mormon women in the later nineteenth century, when polygamy in Utah became a national issue of freedom of religion and women's suffrage. See Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The Liberty of Self-Degradation: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (Dec. 1996): 815-847, Dave Hall, *A Faded Legacy: Amy Brown Lyman and Mormon Women's Activism, 1872-1959* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press), 2015, Lawrence Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Mormon History* 6, (January 1979): 3-21, and Christine Talbot, *A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture 1852-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

gap by exploring ideological perspectives of female Mormon pioneers. As patriotic Americans, they were nationalistic and longed for a golden age of Jeffersonian idealism from which they believed America had declined. Meanwhile, they embraced a “common woman” ideology and anti-intellectualism, believing that through hard work, simple values, and faith, all women could become queens and deities. Finally, they embraced the rugged, antiestablishment ideology of Jacksonianism from within the staunchly communitarian environment of the LDS institution. Indeed, they strengthened that community through their own association with the larger Mormon Church. This study contributes an original perspective by viewing Mormon women as intellectually active, politically engaged, and culturally aware *in addition to* being religiously devout. Considering these women’s intellectual, political, and cultural contributions allows us to see them as true historical agents whose lives mirrored the broader American experience. In short, by studying Mormons, we can draw larger conclusions about the religious and civic lives of women the antebellum United States.

This project contributes to and integrates the historiographical fields of women and religion in early America, antebellum democratic intellectual, cultural, and political ideology, and the expansion of American institutions, bringing fresh perspective to disparate fields often studied separately. Ultimately, my work expands scholarship which demonstrates that mainstream American women’s religiosity reflected wider philosophical movements by discussing how Mormon women embraced the hardworking, common-man, and democratic ideology of both the LDS Church and of Jacksonian America.⁴

⁴ Catherine A. Brekus, *Sarah Osborn’s World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 84.

Most importantly, this work is also in conscious opposition to many who study Mormons in general and who study Latter-Day foremothers. While scholars have spent hundreds of pages situating “Mormons” within their cultural and political environs, “Mormons” has heretofore been an unspoken code for LDS men. Indeed, there has been no shortage of scholars placing Mormon men in the context of the social, economic, and political world of nineteenth-century America.⁵ Women, meanwhile, have been written somewhere in the spectrum between “women of faith” and “women under oppression.”⁶ More egregiously, many scholars have, perhaps unintentionally, posited Mormon foremothers as examples for modern Mormons to follow, useable pasts to inform present

⁵ Some scholars have remarked that the Book of Mormon reflects the social, cultural, economic, and political anxieties of New York between 1826 and 1840. This idea has been carried forth to situate the early LDS practice of treasure hunting within the greater context of American evangelicalism and anxieties about incipient capitalism. See Alan Taylor, “The Early Republic’s Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780,” *American Quarterly*, 38 no. 1. (Spring 1986): 6-34. Others have analyzed the post-revolutionary valorization of the common man, pro-democratic sentiment, and disdain for centralized government and formal institutions along the northern frontier. See Gordon Wood, “Evangelical America and Early Mormonism,” *New York History*, 61 no. 4 (October 1980). Importantly, Wood asserts that Joseph Smith’s humble and morally questionable past helped, rather than hindered the Church’s credibility. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Harvard: Yale University press, 1989), 113 notes that Mormonism expressed “religious populism, reflecting the passions of ordinary people and the charisma of democratic movement-builders.”

⁶ For “women of faith” see Brittany Chapman Nash and Richard E. Turley Jr, eds, *Fearless in the Cause: Remarkable Stories from Women in Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2016), Brittany Chapman Nash and Richard E. Turley Jr., *Women of Faith in the Latter Days* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2014), Karen Lynn Davidson and Jill Mulvay Derr, *The Life and Faith of Eliza R. Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 2016), Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russel Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1992), Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed, *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), Nicolas G. Morgan, ed, *Eliza R. Snow: An Immortal: Selected Writings of Eliza R. Snow* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas G. Morgan, Sr. Foundation, 1957). Morgan discusses Snow’s personal poetry collection which she entitled *Poems: Religious, Historical and Political*, by stating that her work was a collection of “spiritual themes... Written with a pen that had been dipped in the well of eternity,” thereby neglecting her vast array of historical and political work. See Morgan *Eliza R. Snow: An Immortal*, 125. For “women under oppression” see Marilyn Bushman-Carlton, as told by Connie Saddler, *Worthy: A Young Woman from a Background of Poverty and Abuse Falls Prey to a Polygamous Cult. A Biography of Connie Saddler* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 2016), Jon Krakaur, *Under the Banner of Heaven* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997).

troubles rather than real women as they were.⁷ While this is perhaps understandable within the context that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints employs devoutly Mormon scholars to write histories of early Saints, sources which address LDS foremothers as “useable pasts” have become the core canon on these women. Thus, scholars who wish to write on Mormons from an areligious perspective must be wary of the volumes of Church publications on pioneer women. Though scholars have lent agency to these women as actors within the faith, Mormon women are ultimately left hanging as submissives, either to their patriarchy or to their God.

While this work will only address political ideology in the Mormon context, a dearth of scholarship exists within the exploration of Democratic women writ large. Heretofore, historians have almost entirely neglected the concept of “Jacksonian women,”—women who explicitly embraced and supported the largely patriarchal ideologies of antebellum Democrats-- focusing either on men who exhibited Jacksonian ideologies or women who were politically aware and active in northern Whiggish communities.⁸ A few lone aberrations about anti-bank, pro-democracy liberty-rhetoric wielding women stand out as significant

⁷ See Karen Lynne Davidson and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Eliza: The Life and Faith of Eliza R. Snow*, viii, who state “Sometimes a legend can seem so distant in time, in circumstances so unlike our own, and the life so impossibly heroic, that we wonder whether the woman behind the legend can really offer us anything to inspire and enrich our own lives.” Likewise, Kenneth and Audrey Godfrey and Jill Mulvay Derr write regarding their collection of short biographies, “we have been made better because of their courage, their faith, their love, and their deep devotion to their families, their faith, and themselves. We believe they represent the very best of Mormonism and womanhood. We hope you find as much satisfaction in reading what they wrote as we did” Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Women’s Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1982), viii. The most recent publication on the Relief Society by Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook explicitly notes that “in addition to being a scholarly history, this book provides a resource for contemporary church members as they study, speak, teach, and lead,” Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook, *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-Day Saint Women* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2017), 4.

⁸ See Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America’s Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

patches in the vast hole in the historiography.⁹ Women's historians have written about the effects of the Age of Jackson *upon* women and the ways in which these women negotiated personal and public spaces within this new political culture, but female democratic cultural and political agents are still absent from scholarly pages.¹⁰ Therefore, the issue of silencing Jacksonian women appears to be more than a Mormon problem.¹¹ By analyzing the marriage of religion and politics in antebellum America, I assess what it meant to embrace Jacksonian values and interpret how those values interacted within a Mormon setting.

To better reconstruct the political lives of early nineteenth-century LDS women, this thesis relies heavily on the personal writings of Mormon pioneer women. Many of these sources exist only in archives belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and are crucial to my argument that these women engaged with Jacksonian ideals even when geographically divorced from Jacksonian America. Mormon women saw great value in

⁹ See Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), Elizabeth J. Clapp, *A Notorious Woman: Anne Royall in Jacksonian America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016). Elizabeth J. Clapp's 2016 monograph, *A Notorious Woman*, emphasizes the Jacksonian ideology of Anne Royall, a public figure who rallied for an end to government corruption, the national bank, and evangelical revivalism but rejected the patriarchy inherent in Jacksonianism. Scholars have also defied odds by functioning within the misogyny of Jacksonian America. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) and Catherine Clinton, *Half-Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). Largely, however, female democrats who espoused Jacksonian rhetoric and engaged in the ideology of anti-feminist Herrenvolk democracy in the antebellum era still have yet to find a substantial place in academic writings. Certainly, a vast scholarship exists of female and non-white populations who appropriated Jacksonianism, but there is very little work on women who embraced Jacksonianism without appropriating ideas for pro-female purposes.

¹⁰ See Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *American Studies* 10, no.1 (Spring 1969): 5-15, Norma Basch, "Equity Vs. Equality: Emerging Concepts of Women's Political Status in the Age of Jackson," *Journal of the Early Republic* 3 no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 297-318.

¹¹ Meanwhile, however, colonial and Early Republican women of varying religions have been interpreted as cultural, intellectual, and even political agents, while Jacksonian women—women who embraced the patriarchal and inherently exclusionary ideals of Jacksonianism—do not seem to exist in the historiography at all. See Simon Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Newman's work is not a history of women or of religion, but he lends agency to both, arguing that marginalized commoners' participation in public festivities helped shape political culture on the national level. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's seminal work *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982) likewise seeks to explore women's activity in the colonial era.

chronicling their lives. As members of the “last dispensation,” they felt that they were important and active participants in Heavenly Father’s final work on Earth. Many were written for posterity, as Patty Sessions indicated by dedicating journal to her daughters and as Sarah Rich demonstrated by addressing her “dear reader” throughout the work.¹² Moreover, LDS leaders considered records “sacred” and encouraged men and women to keep personal journals and to create Books of Remembrances when family members died.¹³ The writings of “Zion’s poetess” Eliza R. Snow, who kept a meticulous diary and composed a massive collection of religious, historical, and political poetry is perhaps of the greatest significance to my argument. As a pioneer, plural wife, and Relief Society leader, she is representative of many early LDS women, and as an astute diary keeper and creative writer, the documented window into her world is unique. Her poetry and discussions of day-to-day life are framed in explicit Jacksonian rhetoric. Likewise, Patty Bartlett Sessions, a midwife, plural wife, and missionary widow with little education who saw great value in her hard work and faith and of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney who prized faith over science, are further instances of LDS pioneer women’s agency this project explores.¹⁴ The minutes from early Relief Society meetings and other documents from institutional gatherings of Mormon women help to demonstrate the ways in which these women’s views translated into collective action. Finally, sources which explore the nature and meaning of Jacksonian ideology outside of the Mormon context are also significant. Taken together, these sources reveal early Mormon women’s cultural and political activity within a quite literal “wild west” milieu. Though they

¹²Godfrey, Godfrey and Derr, *Women’s Voices*, 21.

¹³ Sandra Ailey Petree, “The Power of the Word: Self- Inscription in the Journals of Nineteenth-Century Mormon Women” (PhD diss., University of Arkansas, 1999), 3 and 230.

¹⁴The term “missionary widow” was employed by LDS pioneers to describe a married woman whose husband was sent to evangelize. See George S. Ellsworth, ed. *History of Louisa Barnes Pratt* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1998), xxii.

strived to be “in the world, but not of the world,” they remained firmly entrenched in the rhetoric of Jacksonian America.¹⁵

Before moving forward, I must set some parameters for the ways in which this work uses variants of the term “Jacksonian ideology.” While Jacksonianism was never a hegemonic belief system and finds no common definition between two scholars, the broad view that this thesis discusses rejected government elitism and the potential for corruption through centralized power above all else.¹⁶ Importantly, Jacksonian rhetoric presented a lens of democracy, bounded by race, through which to view the world. It gave individuals of varying levels of affluence the confidence that they retained an inherent worth which did not come from education or family name, but from within.¹⁷ It praised the “common man”— the non-affluent farmer or laborer who worked with his hands rather than by supervising hard workers without exerting himself.¹⁸ This common man was a producer, rather than a parasite,

¹⁵ John 15:19, also speech given by Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses* 16:230-231.

¹⁶ My work is founded on a basic idea that Andrew Jackson’s time in the political spotlight occurred during, or perhaps inspired, a marked shift in political culture. Here I contend with Feller, who argues that political change does not always correlate directly to socio-cultural change, especially among ordinary people, by suggesting that the elections of 1828 and 32 did indeed initiate a palpable shift in political thought among many ordinary Americans. See Daniel Feller, “Politics and Society: Toward a Jacksonian Synthesis,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 136. I suggest, as Joseph Blau has, that “the term Jacksonianism may be used...[to] consider ideas rather than party labels. In this use, Jacksonianism is a general name for a current in American social thought... which, more or less consciously, pushed back the boundaries of democratic thinking.” “Jacksonian Social Thought: Who were the Jacksonians?” in *Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy: Representative Writings of the Period 1825-1850*, ed. Joseph L. Blau (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1954), xi. These ideas are what Meyers calls the “exhaustive repertory of the moral plots” which engaged antebellum Americans: “equality against privilege, liberty against domination, honest work against idle exploit, natural dignity against factitious superiority, patriotic conservatism against alien innovation.” Jacksonian ideology in Meyers’s view looked to a mythical golden past in which “liberty and progress were joined inseparably with simple yeoman virtues.” Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 6 and 8. See also Arthur Meier Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 1957), 12.

¹⁷ Jacksonians were often suspicious of the formally educated, putting trust in gut feelings and often the supernatural. Gordon Wood writes of this era of increasing political democracy that “the truth itself became democratized.” See Wood, “Evangelical America,” 369.

¹⁸ Daniel Walker Howe writes that “Jacksonian Democracy reflected not only the old Jeffersonian reverence for the agrarian life and those who led it, but also a perception of the people as honest, hard-working, moral and self-reliant.” Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 138. For more on the egalitarian myth and “common man” ideology, see Edward Pessen “The Egalitarian Myth and the American Social Reality: Wealth, Mobility, and Equality in the ‘Era of the Common Man,’ *American Historical Review* 76 (October 1971): 989-1034.

who contributed tangible goods to his family and, sometimes, society at large.¹⁹ He envisioned himself as free from the corruption of high politics, possessed an innate “natural dignity:” he was intelligent and capable without formal training.²⁰ Therefore, “common men” were the best political participants, as their distance from politics meant that they could see policies through an apolitical and uncorrupted lens. This ideology used the rhetoric of freedom to argue that the federal government should remain small but should protect individuals from domestic threats such as Native Americans and angry mobs which might impede commoners’ livelihoods.²¹ In the Jacksonian view, this small government should also facilitate land acquisition for small farmers so that hardworking poor whites might embrace the yeoman image and actively participate in their dispersed local governments.²²

Jacksonian America, in the cultural Jacksonian view, was therefore a nation of hardworking common whites which was constantly threatened by elitist corruption.²³ It was,

¹⁹ Meyers writes that Jackson and his supporters fostered a definition of virtue which took “much of its definition from callings which involve some immediate, responsible function in the production of goods.” Virtue flowed from calloused hands, while vice entered those whose hands were idle. See Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 22.

²⁰ While the concept of “natural dignity” has many origins, in the context of the Second Great Awakening and antebellum America, it was perpetuated by many protestant sects and groups who advocated for greater American democracy. This is indicative of Arminian theology, which emphasized free agency over election. That is to say, people could get to heaven by choosing to follow Christ. Carl Fish writes that “self improvement—the duty of man to control his conduct and that he possessed the power to mold his character...” took on ever more significance in the Jacksonian Era. As followers of Andrew Jackson viewed him as a self-made man, they were inspired to improve themselves and accomplish new feats through personal industry. Carl Russell Fish, Arthur M. Schlesinger and Dixon Ryan Fox, eds, *A History of American Life Vol. VI: The Rise of the Common Man, 1830- 1850* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), 10.

²¹ Joseph Blau writes, “Freedom, [Jacksonians] thought,” came by self-government. “By self-government the Jacksonians meant a resolution of the tension of freedom and authority in which the authority was exercised freely by free men; in which control was not from above [as in a monarchy], but rather from oneself. Joseph L. Blau, *Social Theories*, xx.

²² See footnote 2 for a definition of the “yeoman image.”

²³ This “cultural Jacksonianism” played out in a number of ways among Americans. “Acquisition for ascent,” the producerist view of Jacksonian self-improvement is evident through Francis Grund’s observations in *The Americans*, while Jacksonian free-trade and “equal liberty” ideology is seen through the work of William Leggett. see Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 127, 184 and 196. A culture of Jacksonian democracy wherein members of the same gender and race were envisioned as equals made other ideas, such as using pseudo-science to treasure hunt and to claim authority when interpreting golden plates with questionable ancient script possible. John Largely, Mormon men agreed with racial assumptions which grew ever more entrenched during the Jacksonian era. Seth Rockman writes that “The Jacksonian era witnessed what historians typically

like the commoners who inhabited it, inherently good and could be improved with the increase of “freedom” (land and decentralized government structures) afforded to its white male citizens.²⁴ America was something Jacksonians celebrated, even when U.S. policymakers initiated legislation which limited commoners’ access to land. “Corrupt” legislators such as Lilburn Boggs, who ousted the Mormons from Missouri, did not embrace American values and were therefore not a part of the “America” that Jacksonians praised.

In that way, Jacksonians were also intensely nationalistic and patriotic. Though they often saw the country within a declension narrative, “America” was inherently noble and honorable, despite corrupting forces which might occur within it. Jacksonian rhetoric framed the country in terms of freedom and oppression and Jacksonians fought ardently to preserve whatever rights they felt could be violated by government overreach.²⁵ Jacksonianism looked toward a future where a limited government of virtuous, common men, uncorrupted by

call the hardening of racial ideology,” that Northern states “projected a future in which the descendants of slaves would always be marked as alien or erased altogether,” and that free Blacks lived in constant danger “within a fundamentally hostile society.” Meanwhile, whiteness offered poor immigrant laborers “racial privileges the dulled the indignities of class oppression,” maintained through racial antagonism. See Seth Rockman, “Jacksonian America” in *American History Now*, eds. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 67-69. African-Americans in the LDS Church have held consistently inferior roles to their white counterparts, though their presence in the Church has always been numerically marginal. Church authorities have pointed to a divinely ordained racial hierarchy in which God cursed dark-skinned people for the sins of their ancient ancestors. After a few were granted the priesthood under Joseph Smith, Black men were denied the priesthood until 1978, a privilege which white boys could begin attaining at the age of twelve. See Newel G. Bringhurst and Darron T. Smith, *Black and Mormon* (Chicago: The University of Illinois, 2003), 13-34. Brigham Young arrived in the Salt Lake Valley with three slaves and delivered a discourse in 1852 which stated “inasmuch as we believe in the Bible, inasmuch as we believe in the ordinances of God... we must believe in slavery.” See *The Teachings of the President Brigham Young, Vol. 3 1852-1854*, ed. Fred C. Collier (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing Co, 1987), 26-29.

²⁴ John Murrin explores the particular brand of American exceptionalism which embraced white maleness and land acquisition. Ultimately, he argues that the yeoman vision persisted as a widespread image of American virtue well beyond Jefferson’s presidency. John Murrin, “The Jeffersonian Triumph and American Exceptionalism,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring, 2000): 1-25.

²⁵ Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 15, Jules Witcover, *Party of the People: A History of the Democrats* (New York: Random House, 2003), 138.

wealth or bureaucratic influence, oversaw a nation of individuals who flourished in a state of salutary neglect.²⁶

Ultimately, then, Jacksonian ideology pitted common, virtuous white men against what Jacksonians envisioned as the corrupting forces of wealth, big government, and elitist institutions. It inspired thousands of Americans to break down deferential beliefs about expertise and to believe they could attain greatness through personal industry and merit. This cultural Jacksonian rhetoric, so often envisioned by scholars and students as the exclusive realm of antebellum white men, is what Mormon women absorbed and perpetuated on the Western frontier.

In the development of this thesis I have sought to demonstrate that Mormon women embraced the Jacksonianism described above in several ways, applying this rhetoric in the ways they viewed themselves and the world around and the ways in which they employed activism. Acknowledging that these women's faith was fundamental to nearly every element of their lives, I explore their cultural, intellectual, and political engagement, which has received little scholarship, within broader American trends. Looking at early Latter-Day Saint women on their own terms, I demonstrate that they were pioneer keepers of culture who perpetuated the Democratic rhetoric of antebellum America west of U.S. borders.

Mormon women's embrace of Jacksonian ideology was first demonstrated through the fundamental ways in which they viewed themselves, their inherent worth as individuals, and their value to society. Believing in what I call a "common woman ideology," they embraced

²⁶ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 381. Importantly, Jacksonians envisioned Jacksonian America as run by men in the most literal sense. Jacksonianism was inherently patriarchal and did not offer women active political roles outside of the home. Rather, women would embrace a sort of "Republican motherhood" wherein they would instruct their children in basic morality and the virtue of hard work; for no matter how poor the family was, the boys could likely vote in future elections. See Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise*, 153-157 and Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *American Studies* 10, no.1 (Spring 1969): 5-15.

a Jacksonian democratization of individual worth and natural dignity. This meant that they trusted in their own intellectual, physical and spiritual abilities without the intervention of the formally educated while mistrusting elitist secular education and scientific innovation. Though they rejected what they saw as the arbitrary rule of kings and corrupt leaders in the here-and-now, they wrote of the boundless potential of posthumous exaltation to queenship and godhood for women who chose to live virtuously.²⁷ The “common woman ideology” and anti-intellectualism of female Mormon pioneers, then, combined to create a feminized version of Jacksonian democracy on a personal level.

Secondly, this thesis explores Mormon pioneer women’s embrace and perpetuation of a Jacksonian vision of America and of their place within it. It examines the contradiction that Mormons, exiled from the United States into Mexico, remained intensely nationalistic and patriotic. These women consistently asserted that Mormons were better Americans than the oppressors who ousted them and emphasized LDS peacefulness, productive contributions to society, and law-abiding ways. Voicing one of many flavors of American exceptionalism, they continued to value U.S. symbols such as the flag and the Constitution. In addition, Mormon women embraced a territorial and ideological Manifest Destiny, envisioning that the Saints would eventually form a religious empire laying claim to the land, hearts, and minds of North and South America as well as Western Europe. The rhetoric with which these women wrote of the meaning of liberty, their place as Americans, and their home on the frontier, then, was filtered through a Jacksonian prism.

The final chapter describes the ways in which LDS women worked in solidarity to enact the intellectual, cultural, and political views discussed in the first two chapters. These

²⁷ As this thesis seeks to explore early LDS women on their own terms and in the way in which they conveyed themselves, I will employ the terms that they used such as “Heavenly Father” and “queenship.”

women formed a “rugged collective,” envisioning their roles as wives and as workers in the Church system as necessary components in the broader community and Church structure. Through formal and informal gatherings, Mormon women emphasized their commitment to democratic principles while fostering often undemocratic unity among the sisterhood. Unlike many women’s rights activists in the East, these women promoted conformity to the broader purposes of the LDS Church rather than working toward greater individual rights. In rejecting the American hierarchy and participating in the early development of the Church, LDS women partook in the greater antebellum explosion of moral reform and religious free associations while emphasizing their own unique religious mission.

An analysis of the ways in which these westering women exercised agency within Church parameters, particularly in the ways in which they interpreted and engaged with elements of American political culture, exposes the range of ways Mormon women participated in the Mormon community and the larger American intellectual and religious world. These women actively participated in the development of American values emblematic of Jacksonian Democracy on the frontier by embracing common woman ideology, anti-intellectualism, and anti-establishment ideology, freedom rhetoric, patriotism, and manifest destiny. In short, the west provided a space in which these women could engage in greater American cultural, intellectual, and political discourse without persecution. Mirroring debates regarding American intellectual and cultural ethos and institutional developments of the Second Great Awakening, these women present a lens through which to view antebellum American values, religion, gender, and institutions.

Chapter One:

“She prov’d her worth— She’s not the Queen of Earth”

Common Woman Ideology Among Latter-Day Saint Women

In the opening pages of her autobiography, Eliza R. Snow wrote regarding her search for a true religion that “I was told...I must feel myself to be the worst of sinners, and to acknowledge the justice of God in consigning me to everlasting torment, the common-sense with which God had endowed me, revolted, for I knew I had lived a virtuous and conscientious life, and no consideration could extort from me a confession so absurd.”¹ Snow came from a Baptist Ohio family in the Age of the Jackson when a vocabulary of anti-elite politics shaped much frontier political ideology. Thus, a self-deprecating theology made no sense within her worldview. Though a common woman with no formal education, she trusted in her own ability and felt that she could distinguish correct religion from falsehood. She continued defending her natural, rather than learned, abilities throughout her life and promoting faith in God and the self over science. Yet, Snow was not alone in her trust of her own “common-sense.” Rather, countless other LDS women mirrored her perspective, believing that God-given abilities gave them competence in a variety of matters.

Though part of the unique Latter-Day Saint religious context, Mormon women such as Eliza Snow were highly reflective of cultural Jacksonianism in the manners in which they viewed themselves. As Snow demonstrated by cherishing the virtues with which “God had endowed” her, they valued their inherent dignity as “common women” and did not chastise themselves for Eve’s mistakes. They viewed themselves as literal children of heavenly parents and looked forward to becoming eternal queens and goddesses themselves. Embracing their own talents and abilities, they rejected the opinions of trained professionals and trusted in faith and personal feelings. Oftentimes this anti-intellectual trust in faith was not backed by official doctrine or scripture, but rather how these women believed or

¹ Eliza R. Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” in *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 9.

imagined Heavenly Father's will to be.² These women used their talents and belief in inherent value to labor, both physical and spiritual, believing that hard work, rather than formal degrees, was essential to exaltation in the afterlife.

Within this Jacksonian political and cultural milieu, Latter-Day Saint women interpreted and lived their religion through the prism of increasing democracy and the praise of the common American. Though the link between Latter-Day Saint agency rhetoric and Jacksonian common-man ideology has been made for "Mormons," it has yet to be explored as embodied by women.³ Considering the scholarship of Second Great Awakening historians who have analyzed the religious and political environment of the Burned-Over District, I address the ways in which Mormon women interpreted the cultural climate of antebellum America.⁴ This chapter builds on the work of historians who have discussed the impact of

² It is important to note that "common woman" ideology was not destined to descend upon Mormon women—the Mormon scriptures, many of which were understood to have been revealed to Joseph Smith as direct answers to his inquiries, are fraught with admonitions toward study of "all good books," both expository and scriptural texts and against the trust in one's own understanding. See D&C 90:15, 109:7, 109:14, 88:118, 2 Ne. 4:34 and 28:31, D&C 1:19. Though the field of history is not wont to speculate or present alternate histories, the timing and placement of LDS Church's founding is interesting. If the Book of Mormon had transpired not in Upstate New York in 1830 (which some scholars argue is impossible, as Joseph Smith needed Jacksonian culture to be accepted as a prophet), perhaps these women would have valued formal education, science, and skepticism to a greater extent. See Whitney Cross, *The Burned Over District* (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1950), 143.

³ See Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780," 38 no. 1 (Spring 1986): 6-34, Gordon Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History*, 61 no. 4 (October 1980): 338, Eugene Campbell, "Pioneers and Patriotism: Conflicting Loyalties," in *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, eds. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 302-322, Benjamin Park, "Early Mormon Patriarchy and the Paradoxes of Democratic Religiosity in Jacksonian America," *American Nineteenth Century History* 21, no. 2 (June 2013): 183-208, Cross "The Prophet," in *The Burned Over District*, 138-150. Each of these sources situates "Mormons," which I argue has really meant "Mormon men" within Jacksonian America. Taylor discusses mid-nineteenth century ideas of natural dignity and anti-elitism as an idea inherent in LDS treasure-hunting, Wood places Mormonism within the broader culture of religious democratization, natural dignity, anti-elitism, and white male suffrage, Eugene Campbell explores elite Mormon men's patriotic sentiment in Deseret before the Mexican-American War, and Benjamin Park discusses the paradox of prophethood and democratic religion inherent in LDS theology within the context of mid-nineteenth century America.

⁴ Cross, *The Burned-Over District* and Randolph Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

common-man ideology on the development of American Christianity while incorporating antebellum women's influences and perspectives of their own religious and cultural landscapes.⁵

This chapter will argue that Mormon women embodied Jacksonian "common man" ideology in three major ways. First, they embraced a belief in natural dignity. As literal children of God, they were competent in a variety of matters without formal education or official titles.⁶ Natural dignity was the basis upon which Early LDS sisters exhibited "impatience with limitations on one's own will," and this democratic ideology included the notion that individuals of the same race and sex were essentially the same.⁷ In the words of one scholar, "the Jacksonian was a leveler," and though variations on inherent worth existed between Jacksonians throughout the nation, "Jacksonian equality worked to undermine... distinctions of wealth and nativity, of moral stature and of social power, distinctions within what seemed to be human nature itself."⁸ Mormon women expanded upon this Jacksonian idea, believing that through exercise of the will, they could literally become exalted to queens and goddesses in the afterlife.⁹ Manual labor, particularly of the agricultural sort, translated

⁵ See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

⁶ LDS theology embraces an idea that every human who has or will ever live on earth was literally conceived and born to heavenly parents as spirits. These spirits need bodies, provided by human parents on earth, in order to follow the "plan of salvation" (faith, baptism, temple ordinances, spiritual endurance) and ultimately return to Heavenly Father after death. See "The Great Plan of Salvation," in *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2011), 206-16

⁷ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 330.

⁸ John Ashworth, "The Jacksonian as Leveller," *Journal of American Studies*, 14 no. 3 (Dec. 1980), 409.

⁹ A major tenet of the LDS Church since its inception is the concept of agency. As demonstrated in the Book of Mormon, "the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16). Given this divine internal compass, individuals are "free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death." (2 Nephi 2:27). Should one choose the way of evil, he or she cannot blame the Devil, having "the spirit of Christ" which gives individuals "a perfect knowledge" of the difference between good and evil. Humans are therefore responsible for their own actions. Mormons fully reject the concept of predestination and embrace the view that individuals can "choose the right" in any situation. See also Henry A. Tuckett and Joseph L. Townshend, "Choose the Right," *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Hymnal* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1985), 239.

into spiritually beneficial work and early Mormon sisters hailed the virtues of personal industry. Finally, Mormon and non-Mormon Jacksonians often rejected the expertise of educated elites, particularly those with formal degrees in Enlightenment-based science and medicine.¹⁰ As Daniel Walker Howe writes, “a large segment of the American population shared in Jackson’s... trust in natural rather than acquired abilities.”¹¹ They relied on “gut feelings” or spiritual knowledge which came through meditation, rather than book study. Therefore, through examining how these women’s beliefs in natural dignity in the here-and-now, exaltation in the afterlife through hard work on earth, and anti-intellectualism, this chapter exemplifies how early Mormon women reconciled their faith and Jacksonian rhetoric and applied it in their own world.

An investigation of early LDS women’s journals and poetry reveals a confluence of anti-elitism and pro-Enlightenment thought. Though more literate than many of their frontier counterparts, these women emphasized the value of spiritual intelligence, which derived from prayer, revelation, and personal experience over formal education. For them, intelligence and knowledge came from personal introspection and contemplation rather than book learning or exploration of the natural world. While they mistrusted the judgement of Enlightened elites, they appropriated Enlightenment ideas such as individualism and reason to make sense of the world and their place within it.

The appropriation of Enlightened ideas was not isolated to Mormon women, but rather extended to Americans of multiple religions, sexes, and regions. One scholar noted

¹⁰ By “Enlightenment-based,” I am referring to the value of empiricism, rational thought, and the Scientific Method over religious belief, tradition, or personal feeling. Nineteenth-century Mormons often distrusted doctors and scientists with formal academic degrees because they appeared elitist and disconnected with the experience of ordinary people.

¹¹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 330.

that in Jacksonian America, a strange social phenomenon occurred wherein common people came to obtain knowledge which had previously been the domain of universities.¹²

Meanwhile, Democratic advocates argued that untrained knowledge was just as valuable as that of educated elites. “Under such egalitarian circumstances,” another scholar wrote, “truth itself became democratized, and the borders that the eighteenth century had painstakingly worked out between science and superstition, naturalism and supernaturalism, were now blurred.”¹³ This nineteenth-century Village Enlightenment included trust in one’s unlearned self, instinct, and feelings, especially as it pertained to science and medicine. Knowledge of the cosmos and of how the universe came to be, for example, could be obtained by looking within and reflecting upon personal insight. Likewise, Mormons often considered the best medical practice to be a matter of human will. Faith and effort often determined what was good medicine; by believing and asserting effort one might bestow health upon another through the laying on of hands or spontaneously realize an herb or ointment with healing properties.¹⁴

Scholars have demonstrated that Mormon men’s anti-intellectual expressions of Jacksonian “common man” ideology went in tandem with other Americans’. In one instance, Martin Harris, a leading associate of Joseph Smith failed to obtain “professional” and “scientific” verification of the golden plates which allegedly contained the Book of Mormon.

¹² Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 36.

¹³ Wood, “Evangelical America,” 368-369.

¹⁴ For an extended analysis of faith healing among LDS women from the 1830s into the twentieth century, see Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, “Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism,” *The Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Winter 2011): 1-85. Significantly, they note that Brigham Young praised women who could “take care of... children... pray, lay on hands, anoint with oil and baffle the enemy” without Priesthood assistance. Stapley and Wright, “Female Ritual Healing,” 9. Mormons considered women capable of healing, as described by Church President Wilford Woodruff, “there is no impropriety in sisters washing and anointing their sisters [to heal]” if they could muster enough faith. Stapley and Wright, “Female Ritual Healing,” 16. Zina D.H. Young emphasized that expectant mothers ought to be blessed and anointed by “good faithful sisters” Stapley and Wright, “Female Ritual Healing,” 15.

But this mattered little, as “ordinary ploughmen had as much insight into such things as did college professors.”¹⁵ Others have demonstrated that Brigham Young’s qualities as “young, uneducated [and] physically robust” made him an ideal leader for the LDS Church. With those characteristics, he exemplified the common man in the Age Jackson.¹⁶ Yet, for Latter-Day Saint women specifically, this trend has been left unexplored, despite substantial evidence in primary sources to suggest their engagement.

An investigation of Mormon pioneer women’s journals and poetry demonstrates their embrace of appropriated anti- elite village Enlightenment thought. Predominantly, Eliza Snow’s vast poetry exemplified and glorified trust in the self over formal science while other women’s journals argued the supremacy of faith over medicine with anecdotal evidence from personal experience. Together, these writings are reflective of many other mid- nineteenth century Americans’ use of “traditional Enlightenment ideas in new contexts and in new combinations to construct or validate new religious worldviews.”¹⁷ Mormons, like other ordinary folk, used Enlightenment ideas to make claims about the world around them and to reject elite Enlightenment-based institutions.

A major theme of LDS anti-intellectualism was the concept of receiving intelligence or knowledge through sensation and revelation, or by simply being. After her baptism, Eliza R. Snow wrote that she laid in bed and felt a warm feeling wash over her. She “sought to know the interpretation, and received the following, ‘The Lamp of intelligence shall be lighted over your path.’”¹⁸ Rather than seeking to discover the source of her feeling through

¹⁵ Wood, “Evangelical America,” 382.

¹⁶ John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2012), 31.

¹⁷ Craig Hazen, *The Village Enlightenment in America: Popular Religion and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 6.

¹⁸ Eliza R. Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” in *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 9.

scriptural reading or even prayer, she received knowledge simply through seeking it. Moreover, the knowledge that transpired was that she would continue to receive “intelligence,” not through books or the exploration of the natural world but through divine revelation, illumination, and feelings.

Years after her baptism, Snow wrote again of the exceptional value of personal reflection, glorifying the simplicity of heartfelt personal expressions over the knowledge of educated elites. She wrote about the special feeling stirred by her own home in Nauvoo and of her eternal home in the Kingdom of God. Her 1842 poem, “My Own Home” stated,

“Home, charming sound unknown to fame—
Has more feeling in the *name*
Than all the studied lore
That stoic brains have ever thought,
Or stoic genius ever taught
To all the world before”¹⁹

According to Snow, the simple word “home,” which she emphasized in italics, aroused feelings which superseded the learned inspirations of educated professionals. Her comparison between the humble pleasure of home to the “studied lore/ that stoic brains have ever thought/ or stoic genius ever taught” is particularly significant, as it contrasted the virtues of simplicity with formal education. In this poem, the inspiration that the work of “stoic brains,” presumably scientists, medical doctors, and the like, evoked is less powerful than the feeling of being in one’s own living space. Snow could have used anything as a foil for the warm comforts of home, but she specifically targeted academia. Though this poem ultimately carries a religious theme, it makes a perhaps unintentional political statement. This

¹⁹ Eliza R. Snow, “My Own Home” in *Poems: Religious, Historical and Political*, Vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Latter-Day Saints’ Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1877), 71-72.

embrace of simple, ordinary pleasures and the rejection of elite analysis exposes Jacksonian anti-intellectualism to the fullest degree.

After the Mormon migration to Utah, Eliza Snow again wrote poetry in which she cited science as a foil, this time against faith. Though many religious sects have exhibited anti-elitist and anti-scientific sentiment, Snow's discussion was distinctly Jacksonian. She did not assert that scientific progress was evil, but rather that ordinary, uneducated people could know greater truths through faith and revelation than formal education could provide. She wrote in her poem "Our Religion,"

"[Our Religion] holds the heav'n-acknowledged claim on Truth—
All Truth—all truthfulness, and all that's true
In nature, science, policy, and art:
It tests and circumscribed all creeds and all
Religions—knows their origins and sees,
And can define their future destinies"²⁰

The above assertion of the Latter-Day Saint monopoly on Truth is particularly interesting when juxtaposed against Snow's previous discussions of receiving intelligence by looking within. That monopoly was democratized to members of the Church through natural dignity and the agency of choosing to be faithful Latter-Day Saints. If one could, as she asserted that she did, receive knowledge through "illumination," so, too could other faithful sisters.²¹ Thus, through "Our Religion," "all truthfulness," even that in "science, nature, policy, and art" could be understood by the ordinary Saint. Snow demonstrated a parallel idea

²⁰ Eliza R. Snow, "Our Religion" in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 78. Mormon women were certainly not the only poets to discuss the importance of their worldly home. Puritans such as Anne Bradstreet compared her home to a piece of heaven on earth. See Jeannine Hensley, ed. *The Works of Anne Bradstreet* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 319. Scholar Rosemary Radford Ruether writes of Victorian-era America that "a new religious ideology imagined the home as a magic circle of pure womanhood and innocent childhood, an unfallen garden of Eden set against a sinful male world of business and politics." See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the making of the Modern Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 103. The idea of home as a refuge from the world was certainly not new, however, Snow's explicit comparison of home to formal science is unique and particularly political.

²¹ Eliza Snow, "Sketch of My Life," in *Personal Writings*, 9.

of knowledge through personal reflection in her letter to Mary Lightener giving advice regarding the operation of Relief Society. It read, “Let [the sisters] seek for wisdom instead of power and they will have all the power they have wisdom to exercise!!!”²² Again, by *seeking* wisdom, in the same way she “sought to know” the meaning of her post-baptism feelings, she asserted that LDS women could increase their knowledge of the world around them. Recent scholarship has affirmed this phenomenon, emphasizing the early Saints’ acquisition of knowledge through revelation: “The sisters enjoyed the gifts spoken of in the New Testament as the ‘Word of Wisdom’ and the ‘Word of Knowledge’: that all-important gift to *know* by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ.”²³ Though the LDS faith was largely exclusionary, suspicious and paternalistic toward non-whites and rejecting of non-Euro-American culture, the anti-intellectual tradition which appeared throughout Jacksonian America allowed ordinary white Americans to feel that they could attain great knowledge and intelligence from above and from within.²⁴

While early Latter-Day Saint women expressed belief in their own capacity to know without formal education, they also expressed disdain at educated professionals.²⁵ This was not specific to Mormons, but rather of democrats throughout America. As one example,

²² Letter from Eliza R. Snow to Mary Elizabeth Lightner, May 27, 1869, MS 752, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Collection, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²³ Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 2010), 35.

²⁴ Nathan Hatch refers to the idea of the democratization of spiritual knowledge the “crisis of authority,” and the “individualization of conscience” wherein individuals sought and obtained eternal truths without the assistance of a trained intermediary. See Hatch, *The Democratization of Christianity*, 41.

²⁵ Importantly, Mormons may have been particularly critical of doctors, coming out of Joseph Smith’s mistrust of doctors after his brother Alvin’s death. He wrote, “Doctors won’t tell you how to go to be well. They want to kill or cure you or get your money.” See *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, vol. 5, 357. Robert Divett writes that “the Saints did not take kindly to full-time medical practitioners. They felt that every man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and doctoring was not the sweat of the brow,” and that Brigham Young had encouraged the Saints to only employ the laying on of hands to cure sickness. Robert T. Divett, *Medicine and the Mormons: An Introduction to the History of Latter-Day Saint Health Care* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2010), 117

Samuel Thomson, a self-taught herbalist, advanced what Nathan Hatch called “democratic medicine,” writing that “in medicine, as in religion and politics [people should] act for themselves.”²⁶ Using powerful democratic themes, Thomson and Thomsonians flouted nineteenth-century medical elites while linking at-home experimentation to the “egalitarian rhetoric of the Revolution.”²⁷ This made sense to many outside the medical profession, as antebellum medicine could sometimes be deadly. Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin, for example, died of mercury poisoning after taking doctor-prescribed calomel.²⁸ In “medicine...religion and politics,” then, many mid-century anti-elite democrats touted a confidence in the self over learned professionals.

While Snow used scientists and doctors as foils to her faith and personal reflection in broad and theoretical ways, other women expressed anti-educated elitism through powerful personal experiences. Margaret Pierce Whitesides Young, a wife of prophet Brigham Young, wrote in her memoirs about experiencing sickness in her youth. Close to death, a pair of Mormon missionaries knocked on her door, stating that they had been directed there by “the spirit” and asking if there was sickness in the house. Margaret’s mother took them to Margaret’s bed, and the missionaries blessed her. She “was healed, and the next morning [she] was on [her] feet.”²⁹ At this point, Margaret’s story of faith healing mirrored that of so many others. Not particularly Jacksonian or anti-intellectual in any respect, it merely attests to the validity of her faith. However, it took a decidedly anti- intellectual turn with the entrance of a doctor. She wrote that her doctor arrived to check on her, and seeing her

²⁶ Hatch, *The Democratization of Christianity*, 29.

²⁷ Hatch, *The Democratization of Christianity*, 29.

²⁸ *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, vol. 5, 357.

²⁹ Margaret Pierce Whitesides Young, *Journal*, 1823-1907, MSS SC 68, Women’s Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1.

glowing health exclaimed, “that medicine was really effective!” However, Young continued, she had not taken any of the doctor’s medicine but rather “put her faith in God.” Young concluded, “When the doctor heard this, he exclaimed, “What! Have the Mormons been here?”³⁰

Margaret’s narrative discredited the medical profession in two significant ways. First, she attested to the power of faith healing—a common practice among many religions. Then, she stated that the doctor rejected his own prescription upon hearing that Margaret had been healed through faith. Moreover, the doctor did not stop at hearing of her faith in God, but exclaimed, “have the Mormons been here?” It was as if he knew that that the LDS faith was of greater healing value than formal medicine. Margaret indicated that the doctor was not himself a Mormon, yet he could attest to the healing power of ordinary, uneducated LDS missionaries. Her assertion that a non-LDS medical professional would reject his own training and lend credence to the ability of uneducated religious folk to cure sickness is explicitly Jacksonian. She hailed the power of the “common man”—the missionaries—while discrediting trained elites. In essence, professional and scientific knowledge bowed in the face of ordinary faith. Like so many antebellum Americans, Young rejected the medical profession’s monopoly on knowledge of the human body and indeed encouraged Americans to “doctor themselves.”³¹

Margaret Young’s dichotomy of medicine versus faith was mirrored by Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, another early pioneer. She wrote in her autobiography that in a temporary camp while fleeing from the 1839 Missouri Extermination Order, her younger brother “fell

³⁰ Margaret Young, *Journal*, 1.

³¹ Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 92.

into the kettle” and was badly burned. Her mother immediately anointed him with consecrated oil and began silently praying. Her brother cried out, "Pray loud!" with conviction that his mother’s emphatic prayers could heal. She obeyed him and in a few minutes he was sound asleep. He never cried from the burn after the oil was administered and it was healed from that moment. Whitney concluded this anecdote, stating “What a pity we cannot always have faith like a little child, and instead of calling upon doctors who have no faith in the ordinances, call on the Great Physician, who giveth freely to all and upbraideth not. When we can do this, there will be less suffering and fewer graves to weep over.”³² Anecdotes such as these allow us to locate Mormon women within the larger trend of the democratization of knowledge. Indeed, Whitney’s mother engaged fully as an agent of this trend, healing her son without the assistance of medical professionals.

Whitney reflected Snow and Young’s proposals that faith is was not only a legitimate method of healing and went further by suggesting that medical doctors—and those who would call upon them-- were weak and faithless. Situating herself within what Wood called the “egalitarian circumstances” of Jacksonian America wherein “the borders... between science and superstition, naturalism and supernaturalism [became] blurred,” she made this claim explicit, arguing that people ought to “call upon the Great Physician *who giveth freely*.”³³ This intentional contrast between secular and divine physicians make it clear that medical degrees become unnecessary when ordinary folk, through faith, may obtain all the healing power in the world.

³² Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Autobiography*, MSS SC 2964, Women’s Manuscript Collection, L. Tom. Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, UT, 1.

³³ Wood, “Evangelical America,” 369 and Whitney, *Autobiography*, 1.

The writings of Eliza Snow, Margaret Young, and Helen Whitney, which spanned from the early years of the LDS Church through its entrenchment in the Salt Lake Valley, manifest a Jacksonian rejection of elite education. To these women, intelligence and knowledge were derived from personal introspection and contemplation rather than formal study or exploration of the natural world, and they often mistrusted secular acumen and scientific innovation. Meanwhile, they engaged in the democratization of knowledge and acted as agents of that trend by healing others. Thus, a personally reflective view of human egalitarianism drove much of the democratic rhetoric within these women's writings.

This view of individuals' inherent worth without formal education exemplified in certain LDS women's documents translated into a belief of moral and spiritual value within physical labor. Personal industry and a strong work ethic made natural dignity tangible and meaningful both temporally and eternally. Mormon women, like many of their non-LDS counterparts, believed in putting their hands and hearts to work, improving themselves and their position in the afterlife through physical labor and personal religious adherence.³⁴ It was this kind of Democratic self-improvement which viewed human nature as essentially good

³⁴ Daniel Walker Howe has credited the nineteenth-century notion of "self-improvement" to the Whigs, who "assumed human nature was malleable" and sought to make American society more virtuous, unified, and devoid of social ills by instituting greater moral controls in society. Through tax-funded public schools and "good government", Whigs hoped to give Americans the tools to exercise educated and Enlightened free will. Democrats, Howe contrasts, rejected the Whig idea of self-improvement, finding the type of culture public schools implemented "artificial impediments" to the "natural man and his freedom to act." See Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 37- 39. While Whig visions of improvement were "benevolent and restrictive" to the whole society, Democrats were not wholly excluded from the discourse of improvement. Rather, they saw the "natural man" as inherently good and capable of further development by self- improvement, rather than societal improvement. Democratic self-improvement occurred through rugged individualism and honest, productive work rather than formal education, book learning, or publicly-funded social institutions. See Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 128. These notions of self-improvement have deeper American roots, however. Benjamin Franklin wrote extensively about his pursuit of improving his "rough, rude and rustic" community through individual improvement and social cooperation. Franklin defined "virtue" in utilitarian and consequentialist terms, seeing virtuous acts as one which promote socially useful industrious habits. See Alan Houston, *Benjamin Franklin and the Politics of Improvement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 26 and 40.

and asserted that personal development occurred through the employment of natural-born faculties that Mormon women embraced in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Though often compared to New England Puritans for seeking a space of Christian refuge, having strong leadership and creating a highly disciplined community, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints differed from its Calvinist progenitors in their view of human nature.³⁵ As adherents to a form of Arminian theology, Mormons accepted a version of Adam and Eve's "Fall" but unlike the Calvinists of the previous century, did not scourge themselves for being born in sin and deserving Hell for innate depravity. Rather, they believed that humans were more or less equal by nature and could improve their lot through the exercise of agency-- making good choices and working hard.³⁶ Latter-Day Saints were, like many Second Great Awakening Protestants, inspired by messages which emphasized the efficaciousness of faith and works exercised through agency. Methodists and other Arminian groups grew in number, while many individuals left organized Christianity to discover Christ on their own terms.³⁷ Mormons viewed Earth as a trial within which individuals would prove their worth and use their inherent dignity to magnify their virtues and Christ-like qualities. Even the afterlife, in the LDS view, was one eternal progression into increasingly greater comfort and glory from the difficulties of Earth wherein the morally depraved would still be "glorified" and the faithful would become gods themselves.³⁸ Mormons conceived of

³⁵ See Karl C. Sandburg, "Mormonism and the Puritan Connection," *Sunstone Magazine* (February 1994): 20-34 and Val Dean Rust, "Generational Connections" in *Radical Origins: Early Mormon Converts and Their Colonial Ancestors* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 140-153.

³⁶ See John Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 200-205.

³⁷ Specifically, Hatch notes William Smyth Babcock, Abner Jones, and Lucy Mack Smith. Hatch, *The Democratization of Christianity*, 42-43.

³⁸ The LDS afterlife, known as the Kingdoms of Glory, or "Heaven," was broken into three kingdoms: The Telestial, Terrestrial, and Celestial. The Telestial kingdom, where morally corrupt and depraved people go after death, was described as a place which would temporarily suffer the "wrath of God" but "Telestial glory" would still surpass "all human understanding" in its majesty. Morally upright non-Mormons were to spend eternity in

eternity, then, as a positive progression upward whereby anyone, through hard work in the here-and-now, could rise to Divinity. One's placement in the afterlife depended upon agency and personal choice *in addition to* grace, not grace alone.³⁹ Unlike seventeenth-century Calvinists, "Perdition" or Hell was not a major fear of faithful Mormons, who could feel confident that they would be in or near the presence of God as long as they did not commit heinous sins such as murder. Therefore, labor to achieve glory in the afterlife was performed of a positive desire for exaltation rather than a negative fear of eternal torment.⁴⁰ The power to become divine was literally in one's hands, if only he—or she—would use them to labor for eternal purposes.

Many LDS women wrote of the temporal and eternal value of hard work. Manual labor, midwifery, and agrarian work featured predominantly alongside these women's desires to become or maintain self-sufficient. Often, they defended the value of their labor,

The Terrestrial kingdom, where they would enjoy a better life than on Earth and "receive of God's Glory but not his Fullness." Finally, the Celestial kingdom, where faithful Mormons would spend eternity with Heavenly Father and, potentially, "through the Atonement and their own faithfulness" as gods themselves. The Christian image of Hell, "Perdition," or "Outer Darkness" was a place reserved not for murderers and rapists (who would go to the Telestial Kingdom) but rather for those who learned of the Latter-Day Gospel Truth, were fully converted, and later "crucif[i]ed] the savior unto themselves" by rejecting it. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:84, 76:89, 76:76, 76:58, 132:19-20, 76:34-36.

³⁹ One of Joseph Smith's revelations, found in Doctrine and Covenants 29:39, reads "the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet." Smith and leaders since him argued that agency was essential to exaltation. While God could have forced humanity into submission to all of His laws, humans had to experience the pain of difficult choices and sin in order to appreciate the sweetness of divine eternity. The Celestial Kingdom could never feel like a "heaven" without the pain of iniquity. Significantly, the only options proposed in the LDS texts for the existence of agency are full agency (which, scriptures state, God chose) and full bondage of the will. The idea that one might act in both righteous and sinful ways but be part of an "elect," as in the Calvinist tradition, is not addressed in Mormon scripture. See Doctrine and Covenants 29.

⁴⁰ Kathryn Lum writes that "Smith's revelations about the afterlife struck a responsive chord," as he assured the Saints that their persecutors would face judgement but that non-LDS family members would not go to hell unless they were "as evil as Judas" and that those who died in childhood would reach the Celestial kingdom. In this context, a new convert could move to the Salt Lake Valley assured that they were in control of their own salvation but without fear of their family's eternal damnation. See Kathryn Gin Lum, *Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 147. John Brooke explains that the "Mormon doctrine of salvation made the gift of grace through faith in Christ's atonement a *necessary* condition for salvation but not a *sufficient* condition." Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 203.

comparing it to white-collar work, which they found lacking in the particular virtue inherent in physical work. Mormon women blended Jacksonian anti-intellectualism with the value of uneducated labor to express nineteenth-century yeoman ideals which incorporated elements of both the village Enlightenment and the Second Great Awakening.⁴¹

One key example of innate dignity and the value of hard physical labor over formal education was the Patty Sessions, an early convert and pioneer. Sessions, who kept a near-daily journal of her patients and their infants, was a midwife who delivered for the rapidly-growing LDS population from the earliest years of the Church through its secure establishment in Utah. Some scholars have even credited her with delivering 3,997 babies.⁴² A newlywed at age seventeen and entirely unfamiliar with obstetrics, she helped a fellow woman in Bethel, Maine through a difficult delivery when the local midwives were unavailable. The mother and child survived, and Patty found the vocation in which she would

⁴¹ By “Village Enlightenment,” I am referring to the phenomenon which David Jaffee, Craig Hazen, and Gordon Wood discuss wherein some scientific knowledge became available to ordinary folk in unprecedented ways. Non-elites often used this knowledge to substantiate religious or anti-intellectual worldviews. See David Jaffee, “The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (Jul. 1990): 327-346, Craig Hazen, *The Village Enlightenment in America*, 15-65, and Wood, “Evangelical America,” 368-369.

⁴² Richard Lyman Bushman and Claudia Lauper Bushman, *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 61. This statistic is potentially problematic and points to a larger problem in LDS history wherein religious folklore becomes indistinguishable from that which is historically verifiable. Richard and Claudia Bushman report this statistic with no citation. Donna Toland Smart, who compiled and edited Sessions’s writings notes that “her extant diaries do not support that many,” and that the number 3,997 is drawn from *Our Pioneer Heritage*, a publication of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers from 1964 which states that “it is recorded that Patty delivered 3,997 babies.” See Patty Bartlett Sessions, *Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*, ed. Donna Toland Smart (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 8 and Kate Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958-1977), 58. From whom “it is recorded” is left unanswered, as the source from which that statistic is drawn is not cited either. No primary sources in existence use this number. Meanwhile, the direct assertion of this statistic is found, throughout LDS scholarly literature and in non-LDS work which incorporates some LDS individuals such as Patty Sessions. See Honey M. Newton, *Zion’s Hope: Pioneer Midwives and Women Doctors in Utah* (Springville: Cedar Fort, Inc, 2013), 12, *Mormonism: A Historical Encyclopedia*, eds. W. Paul Reeve and Ardis E. Parshall (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 175, and Chris Enss, *The Doctor Wore Petticoats: Women Physicians of the Old West*, (Guilford: Twodot, 2006), 63, although there are many others. Like the issue of women’s personal views being ignored in favor of their spiritual reflections, it appears as though basic factual evidence is ignored in favor of “heritage” with regard to Latter-Day Saint foremothers.

be employed for over sixty years. On the long pioneer trek from Nauvoo to Salt Lake City, she delivered hundreds of infants in the direst of circumstances. Some of the babies she delivered were born to her fellow sister wives, of whom she was resentful. Though Sessions' work was often mundane, thankless, and bloody, each act of endurance was part of a journey to eternal glorification.⁴³ Like Eliza Snow and the mainstay of early Latter-Day Saint women, she felt that the exercise of God-given agency through industriousness would have positive eternal consequences. Consistent throughout her journal is gratitude that she was physically capable of work, as in one entry from 1863 which read, "I do feel thankful to my heavenly Father that he gives me health and strength and a disposition to work... And I also feel thankful that I had a mother that put me to work when I was young."⁴⁴ Emotionally draining and physically laborious work defined Patty's life. Midwifery, not deep analysis of the scriptures or monthly temple attendance, was the manner in which Sessions could use her unique abilities to serve God.⁴⁵ Thus her writings on daily tasks, her belief in her own self-taught ability as a midwife, and her impatience with her sister wives' idleness embodied both immediate and posthumous significance.⁴⁶

Significantly, Sessions dedicated her journal to her daughters, signifying that she expected at least a few members of her family to read it. Yet, her writing was organic in form,

⁴³ Sandra Ailey Petree, "The Power of the Word: Self Inscription in the Journals of Nineteenth Century Mormon Women," (PhD diss., University of Arkansas, 1999), 100.

⁴⁴ Sessions, *Mormon Midwife*, 323.

⁴⁵ Though devout Saint, Sessions was nevertheless unapologetic about occasionally choosing work over church attendance. She wrote on numerous occasions, "I did not go to meeting," instead attending births or teaching young girls the fundamentals of midwifery. See Sessions, 135, 106, 130, 116, 116, and 148.

⁴⁶ Patty was particularly impatient with David Session's second wife, Rosilla. Patty Bartlett Sessions, in *Mormon Midwife: the 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*, ed. Doanna Toland Smart (Logan: Utah State University press, 1997). Patty wrote, "she would not go to work...she must suffer the consequence for [David is] not able to maintain her in idleness," 63. "She came into the tent but will not work I cook she eats... I... asked her to clean the dishes I waited 3 hours she then went over the river and never touched them," 65. "Rosilla took hold and did ^part of^ the work" 76.

misspelled and inconsistently spelled, and grammatically problematic. It contained run-on sentences and stream-of-conscious thoughts. Most importantly, however, her words contained her continual labors, which were the actions by which she defined herself.⁴⁷ Sessions was unlike the Rousseauian women of the previous century who apologized for their grammatical inadequacy and sought to write in the style of sentimentalism, but rather focused on the content of her writing—her labor.⁴⁸ She, like many who embraced democratic ideology during the Age of Jackson, wrote in a style of her own which was unregulated by the growing number of American English grammarians.⁴⁹ Part of the LDS world, she saw herself as a member of an immensely significant people, and as a “mother of Israel” she predicted that her work would be read. Yet, she was entirely devoid of acknowledgement or apology that she lacks proper writing conventions. Though her fight was one of spiritual and physical endurance rather than of military warfare, her diaries are reflective of a type of culture which produced the 1824 Jacksonian campaign slogan “John Quincy Adams who can write, Andrew Jackson who can fight.”⁵⁰ One who lived by “common woman” ideology, Patty Sessions embraced her very ordinariness by displaying a strong belief in natural dignity and always asserting the value of self-motivated industry.

In the same manner as Patty Sessions, many women who left behind only snippets of their lives demonstrated their belief in the long-term benefits of personal industry. Mary Ann Elizabeth Stokes Rich’s daughter wrote regarding her mother’s fear of mental trouble in old

⁴⁷ Petree, “Power of the Word,” 101.

⁴⁸ See Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009) 310-327. Goodman argues that many “Rousseauian women” strived to perfect their writing and handwriting making both flowery and sentimental. This often led to engagement with a strange balancing act wherein either content or style suffered at the expense of the other, as in the case of Sophie Selvestre Bonnard.

⁴⁹ Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise*, 92.

⁵⁰ John Bach McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States: From the Revolution to the Civil War*, vol. 5 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1900) 68.

age. Mary “made this a matter of earnest prayer and in answer to her prayer she received a prompting that if she would keep interested and busy she would not get into that condition.” In obedience to that prompting, she continued working in the charity of others by knitting, quilting, and working with all kinds of textiles to keep her family and friends warm.⁵¹ Thus, for Sister Rich, working hard through the end of her life, even when it was no longer required was important, valuable, and good for her health. Though not explicit, Sister Rich essentially posed the Jacksonian dichotomy of producer versus parasite.⁵² As any good Jacksonian would, she found virtue and fulfillment in continual productivity, even until the end of her life.

Early Mormon women like Sessions and Rich attributed varying moral value of different types of labor. The yeoman ideal was generally meaningful to Jacksonians of all stripes, and LDS women were no exception. One historian noted that a key element of the Jacksonian persuasion was that it looked to a future in which ordinary folk could “...re-establish continuity with that [Jeffersonian] golden age in which liberty and progress were joined inseparably with simple yeoman virtues.”⁵³ Andrew Jackson himself argued that

⁵¹ Mary Ann Elizabeth Stokes Rich, *Biography*, MSS SC 260, Women’s Manuscript Collection, L. Tom. Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, UT.

⁵² Meyers describes this dichotomy in *The Jacksonian Persuasion*. Rather than fully pitting the poor and middling against the wealthy, Jackson emphasized the importance of “honest, useful work” which resulted in the production of goods over idle “financial manipulation and special privilege.” Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 23-24. Likewise, William Sutton engages Jacksonian producerism in a Methodist context. “The intended result for the worker in the producerist tradition was to gain his ‘competence’—the ability to achieve meaningful skills levels and economic nondependence—an idea that reflected in turn a sense of limited, reasonable advancement.” By gaining a competence through physical labor, one could learn useful and productive skills without elite university education. Personal industry was also “seen as organically connected to community welfare,” and all would benefit from individual producerism and the producerist ideal. See William Sutton, “To Extract Poison from the Blessings of God’s Providence’ Producerist Respectability and Methodist Suspicions of Capitalist Change in the Early Republic,” in John H. Wigger and Nathan O. Hatch, *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001), 229. These concepts were wholeheartedly reflected in the LDS context, with individuals laboring for their families and community and feeling greater pride when the result was tangible. Patty Sessions’s midwifery, Sister Rich’s knitting, and Nancy Tracy’s spinning all demonstrate producerist competence-gaining, self-sufficiency, and community enrichment.

⁵³ Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 8.

“Agriculture, the first and most important occupation of man” created “a hardy race of free citizens.”⁵⁴ Within the Jacksonian context, independent farmers could be more virtuous than city workers as they could remain uncorrupted by employers and humbled by the unpredictability of nature. Eliza Snow embodied the confluence of hard work, agrarian labor, and common-man ideology in her poetic depiction of Joseph Smith. Her poem “The Gathering of the Saints” fits squarely within the LDS Jacksonian “common man and woman” ideology.⁵⁵ She emphasized that he who would usher in the last dispensation and restore the Church of Christ to its former glory was “not of a kingly race” and of “humble birth.” Smith was worthy of prophethood even in his penniless state. Snow then pointed to the active part of the “common man” ideology—it was not enough just to have inherent value, one had to work hard and attain greatness through industry and merit. Smith’s parents were “honest, upright, [and] industrious” *in addition to* poor. Likewise, Joseph Smith was called “from the plough”—as a virtuous agrarian laborer—to become a prophet. Though ordinary men were viewed in Jacksonian rhetoric as less corrupt and corruptible, simple poverty did not directly correlate to virtue. Rather, one’s natural dignity was magnified by hard work. Industry was

⁵⁴ Andrew Jackson, “Message to Congress: December 6, 1831” in *Annual Messages, Veto Messages, Protest &c. of Andrew Jackson, President of the United States*, Second Edition (Baltimore: Edward K. Coale & Co, 1835), 71.

⁵⁵ The portion of the poem to which I will be referring is expressed in full below. See Eliza R. Snow, “The Gathering of the Saints and the Commencement of the City of Adam-Ondi-Ahman,” in *Poems*, Vol. 1, 20.

Was he an earthly Prince—of royal blood?
Had he been bred in courts, or dangled on
The lap of wealth and luxury? Or was
His name emblazon’d on the spire of Fame?
No, no: he was not of a kingly race,
Nor could he be denominat’d great,
If balanc’d in the scale of worldly rank
Though not unlike Jesus in a manger born,
He was of humble birth: his parents were
Honest, upright, industrious, and poor,
And grac’d the narrow sphere allotted them.
His father was an husbandman, and he
Was call’d, like old Elisha, from the plough,
To be a Prophet of the living God.

the essence of “common man” ideology, and Snow’s equation of hard, agrarian labor with godliness was the epitome of the Jacksonian work ethic.

Importantly, this work ethic was not limited to nineteenth-century frontiersmen. Though historical exploration of Jacksonian women has been almost nonexistent in scope, many LDS women cherished the yeoman ideal and the moral value of attaining self-sufficiency through improving the land. As one example, Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy exemplified the Jacksonian value of yeoman independence. She wrote regarding her new marriage, “When spring came, of course work began for us. [My husband] to the plow; I to the spinning wheel. We determined to be self-sustaining as much as possible, and I felt to thank grandmother for teaching me how to do all kinds of work, for now it was of great use to me. I could knit, sew, spin, and weave and do common cooking and could yet learn.”⁵⁶ Tracy’s emphasis upon her *determination* to be self-sufficient was particularly reflective of her adoption of yeoman ideal. Elsewhere, corruption and infringements upon freedom ran rampant, but the residents of the Tracy farm were self-governing and self-sufficient. Tracy ended the sketch of her life by stating, “My life, ever since I became a Mormon, has been made up of moving about, of persecutions, sacrifices, poverty, sickness, and death. Now I wanted rest if it were possible. [But] I continued to be self-sustaining.”⁵⁷ Even in her hold age, Tracy noted her continued self-reliance. Her words are highly reflective of Jackson’s representation of the “real people, ” who praised “simplicity and stability, self-reliance and independence, economy and useful toil, honesty and plain dealings.”⁵⁸ Though her words

⁵⁶ Tracy, *Life History*, 4

⁵⁷ Tracy, *Life History*, 51.

⁵⁸ Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 24.

were not explicit, Nancy Tracy's repetition of her own autonomy in the context of Jacksonian America implies a pride in her freedom and inherent value as a member of the plain folk.

Glorification of the "real people" and yeoman virtues continued in the diaries of other non-elite LDS women. Elvira Egbert Carson, an early LDS convert, wrote about her family's life before joining the Church. She embodied the idea of natural dignity and common folk ideology in her discussion of her childhood home in Sullivan County, Indiana.⁵⁹ Carson drew a parallel between being "close to the soil," which is to say, everyday hardworking farmers, and of appreciating the divine miracles of nature. The "frontier folk" of her home were virtuous and knowledgeable about two specific things: The Bible and significant moments in American history which benefitted ordinary farmers. Her statements of historical and political awareness were specific—they did not encompass Alexander Hamilton, the Adams presidents or other American policies which ordinary farmers saw as potentially elitist and alienating to common folk. Rather, she recalled Virginia Dynasty presidents and Andrew Jackson himself. Elvira Carson fits into what one scholar has called as the "hardy race of independent republicans, engaged in plain and useful toil" who were drawn to Jacksonian rhetoric for its promise of "stable government of equal laws to secure their equal rights."⁶⁰ She defended the dignity of frontier folk and lent credence to their natural faculties and simple morality. Hard work, virtue, and Democratic civic awareness fused between the pages

⁵⁹ Elvira Carson wrote, "These frontier folk were close to the soil, a God-fearing and fundamentally religious people, most everyone had the Bible, and they read it. They were governed by the teachings of faith, honesty, and virtue. They were acquainted with the miracles of life in the birth and growth of their children; in the clearing of the forest, and springtime mysteries. They were familiar with the stories of the birth of their nation, of Washington, and the American Revolution, and of Thomas Jefferson; also of the War of 1812, and of Andrew Jackson, now president of the United States." Elvira Egbert Carson, *Autobiography*, 1901, MSS SC 169, Women's Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, 5.

⁶⁰ Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion*, 26.

of Carson's Autobiography to convey that personal industry and self-sufficiency were held greater moral value than book learning and white collar work.

Women such as the ones discussed above embraced a notion of manual labor shared by many of their American counterparts. Trusting in their own uneducated faculties, they took pride in their work and asserted its value over formal education or lofty penmanship. Exercising one's agency and choosing to labor in earnest was valuable and character-building. Many of these women hailed the agrarian ideal, echoing a nineteenth-century version of Jefferson's empire of liberty wherein virtuous farming families could self-sustain undisturbed by encroaching governments or enemies. By embodying common woman ideology in these ways, early Mormon women were reflective of larger Jacksonian ideas of inherent value and personal industry. These ideas of morality and work were not limited to labor performed with calloused hands, however, and extended to a view of the efficaciousness of works. The virtuous qualities of physical work and strict moral behavior united to create the possibility of exaltation in the afterlife. As supporters of Andrew Jackson hailed his political rise through merit and personal initiative, Mormon women also looked forward to posthumous positions of royalty through the exercise of agency, manual labor and spiritual alignment in the here-and-now.⁶¹

The themes of natural dignity, industry, and exaltation combined in many early Mormon women's writing to produce the concept of rising, through merit, to godhood and queenship. Royalty as a divine reward for hard work is particularly intriguing, as royalty in nineteenth-century Europe and in LDS scriptural texts was passed through lineage. Likewise, Mormons and Jacksonians were often explicitly anti-elite, favoring leaders without political

⁶¹ Meyers, *Jacksonian Persuasion*, 4.

experience over experienced officials precisely because of the perceived corrupting influence of formal and elite institutions. However, the idea that one might attain royal status exclusively through the exercise of agency and the decision to labor earnestly without formal religious or secular education, is highly reflective of Jacksonian “common-man” ideology. Indeed, Andrew Jackson himself created an image that Americans could achieve success by employing their inherent value and industriousness, rather than asserting their bloodline.⁶² One scholar cited a New Hampshire school boy who wrote that his teachers encouraged them with “wealth, honors, offices and distinctions...were certainly within [their] reach,” if they would only work hard enough. He called this belief pattern among ordinary Jacksonians “acquisition for ascent.”⁶³ Mormons took “acquisition for ascent” to a higher level, asserting that labor could produce not only honors and distinctions, but posthumous royalty.

The concept of royalty-through-labor was demonstrated by numerous early Mormon women who expressed an expectation that they could achieve more advantageous positions in heaven in reward for virtuous works performed on Earth.⁶⁴ Sally Carlisle Randall, an early convert wrote, “I want father and mother to be baptized themselves and when the temple is

⁶² Andrew Jackson was satirized for his executive orders as “King Andrew the First.” This was an effective insult, as Jackson was heralded as the common-man president for the common man. See Jules Witcover, *Party of the People: A History of the Democrats* (New York: Random House, 2003) 148. There is, however, no link between the “King Andrew” cartoon and LDS posthumous royalty. As explored in chapter two, Mormons generally held a negative personal view of Andrew Jackson, as he had denied the Missouri saints protection against paramilitary ruffians. LDS identification with Jacksonian and Democratic ideology was largely reflective of their views of themselves, such as natural dignity and “common man ideology” and their views of the world around them, such as American exceptionalism and manifest destiny.

⁶³ Meyers, *Jacksonian Persuasion*, 127.

⁶⁴ These women’s vocabulary of royalism derives from the Mormon view of the afterlife. Joseph Smith revealed in 1844 that God was once a man on Earth who had, after death, been exalted. Therefore, “all the spirits that God sent into the world” were also “susceptible of enlargement.” Through adhering to the “principles of the Gospel” and the “keeping of covenants,” LDS members may “be Gods” and rule, as royalty, over their own planets. See Doctrine and Covenants 132: 19-20 and April 7, 1844 Discourses by Willard Richards, William Clayton, and Wilford Woodruff. Therefore, godhood and eternal royalty are interchangeable in the LDS context; both come after a faith, baptism, repentance, and good works in life. John Brooke explains that these are reflections of “critical themes of hermetic theology,” in which humans, who are also gods in the making are “dually spiritual and material.” “Spirit and matter,” he continues “were pervasively linked rather than divided by a chasm negotiated only by grace and atonement.” See John Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 202.

done come here and be baptized for all of their friends. They can save their progenitors clear back to the apostles' day and if they don't do it some other one will and take their crown.” She continued, stating “It is my privilege to be baptized for all of our friends that are dead.... And the more I do the greater will be the crown.”⁶⁵ To Randall, Earth was a race against others to fulfill God’s commandments. If her parents performed baptisms by proxy for their dead ancestors, they could secure a royal spot in the heavens before someone else. Likewise, the more proxy baptisms Randall performed, the greater her own glory as divine queen could be.⁶⁶ Divine royalty was therefore a state which could not only be attained by ordinary folk through industry but was a condition to be fought over by the most industrious.

Eliza R. Snow addressed the idea of ordinary women rising to royalty through hard work in her poem “The Ultimatum of Human Life,” she emphasized the natural dignity of ordinary women and their capacity to attain exaltation in even the lowest earthly state. Snow asserted that Eve, the first woman on earth, became a “Goddess and Queen” through simple obedience to heavenly decrees. The fulfillment of sacred requirements—works—allowed her to “prove her worth,” even when she was in her “lowest [earthly] state,” as a “fiftieth wife.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Sally Carlisle Randall, in *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900*, eds. Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey and Jill Mulvay Derr (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982), 144-145.

⁶⁶ The Latter-Day Saint concept of baptism for the dead relies on a belief that those who died without converting and being baptized in the here-and now (whether before or after the founding of the LDS Church) exist in a sort of limbo called “spirit prison.” There they are ministered to by missionaries and have the opportunity to convert, but, as bodiless spirits, cannot be baptized. They therefore require the living to perform baptisms by proxy in special temple ceremonies. See “The Spirit World,” in *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1997), 279-284.

⁶⁷ John Brooke contextualizes a critical moment in LDS history in which Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon wrote that “they who are priests and kings, who have received of [God’s] fullness, and of his glory... are gods, even the sons of God.” As John Brooke explains, this was a “radical departure from traditional Protestant Christianity. The Mormon cosmos announced universal salvation for humanity and promised divinity to the Mormon faithful.” Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 200. Elaine S. Dalton, a Young Women General President of the twenty-first century has expanded upon these ideas, arguing that each individual has a “royal birthright,” a “divine heritage.” Therefore, every woman and girl is “literally [a] royal daughter of our Father in Heaven... born to be a queen.” This line of argumentation comes out of the LDS view that during a period of time before Adam and Eve known as the “preexistence,” every individual on earth was literally conceived and birthed by heavenly parents as spirit children in the Celestial Kingdom. Each spirit child must wait in heaven until an

Snow used Mother Eve's example to demonstrate that all women could become literal queens through hard work and obedience.⁶⁸ The idea of laboring and expecting little in the here-and-now was reflected in the words of Andrew Jackson himself, who said "laborer[s] all know that their success depends upon their own industry and economy, and that they must not expect to become suddenly rich by the fruits of their toil...[They] are the bone and sinew of the country."⁶⁹

Snow further developed the concept of natural dignity magnified by industry in her poem "Man Capable to Higher Developments." In it, she described inherent worth as the "germ of the Deity" within every individual, which endowed them with "capacities needful to rise." Humans harnessed these capacities to exercise agency and "freedom to choose." Ones who acted wisely did so by "improving [themselves] and improving the earth." At death, all "earn what [they] receive" by being "judged by [their] *works*, not by what [they] *believe*."⁷⁰ Snow's poem importantly intertwined the existence of natural dignity and agency with the value of both physical and spiritual labor. Specifically, she reflected other LDS

infant is born on earth, when one spirit may gain a body and exercise a lifetime of agency which will determine his or her eternal place in the heavens. Christ cannot reign on Earth in the Millennium until all spirit children have entered the world as individuals with human bodies, one of the reasons for which Mormon families tend to have more children than other religious groups. See D&C 76, Abraham 3:24-27, and Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 201-202. Dalton continued, describing Emma Ray McKay, wife of mid-century prophet David O. McKay. By Emma's "years of hard work, of faithfully enduring trials with optimism, trust, strength, and courage... unwavering devotion and fidelity to her husband, her family, and the Lord... faith, repentance, and honoring covenants," Dalton "*knew* she was a true queen" (italics hers) whose beauty was the "only kind of beauty that lasts" beyond this lifetime. While Emma McKay would never be royal in this life, Dalton argued that her lifetime of good works made her into an eternal queen after death. While we have a greater volume of this ideology in the present, as the LDS establishment has grown substantially since 1860, these ideas derived from the early Mormon Church.

⁶⁸ The LDS vision of the Adam and Eve story varies slightly from that found in most Protestant and Catholic texts. Though Adam and Eve disobeyed and ate the "forbidden fruit," this was ultimately a positive, as it allowed the first humans to experience "free agency," the pain of disobedience, and the joy of obedience. Adam and Eve were then able to appreciate the fullness of joy which comes from choosing the right in the face of temptation. See Moses 5:11.

⁶⁹ Andrew Jackson, "Farewell Address" in *Voices of the Marketplace*, ed Annie C. Rose (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 39.

⁷⁰ Snow, "Man Capable to Higher Developments," in *Poems* Vol. 2, 101-103.

women's argument that agricultural labor was of particular moral value. One's "ordinary" status did not hinder them from reaching Celestial glory; it was the conscious productive effort expended through physical and spiritual means in life that mattered the most.

Mormon women's writings which described royal exaltation as earned through physical, often agrarian, and spiritual labor reflected a larger Democratic view which posited public leadership as attainable through merit. In a manner similar to how "King Andrew I," a derisive insult Whigs launched at Andrew Jackson for his ruthless exercise of agency, appealed to voters through emphasizing his rise through merit, Mormon women could expect literal royalty and goddesshood after a lifetime of hard work.⁷¹ Sally Carlsie Randall and Eliza Snow were just two examples of Mormon women's views of the eternal value of physical labor and adherence to gospel principles. Reflective of Democratic views of labor and carried further in the Mormon context, these women embraced and perpetuated Jacksonian views on the American frontier.

Early Mormon women embraced a common woman ideology to assert their competency in a variety of matters. While not formally educated, they claimed competence in medicine, and as new converts, they claimed knowledge of eternal truths. Though more literate than many of their frontier counterparts, they emphasized the value of spiritual intelligence, which derived from prayer and personal revelation, over formal education and knowledge of the natural world. They generally thought themselves to be essentially equal to the wealthy and learned, but still deferred to men within their own faith. From this view of fundamental equality of whites, they believed in personal improvement through the exercise of agency, physical labor and the production of tangible goods. Hard work in the here-and

⁷¹ See Howe, *Political Culture*, 87-90.

now had divine implications, as LDS women envisioned their eternal position in the heavens to be the result of choice and something anyone could earn through merit, rather than through heredity. Posited heretofore as two-dimensional “women of faith,” the Latter-Day Saint foremothers were clearly culturally, intellectually, and politically aware and engaged even as they moved thousands of miles from established cultural centers. Their writings express more than faith—they express democratic self-perceptions and worldviews which ultimately affected the ways in which these women shaped white settlement on the American frontier. Therefore, with early Mormon women’s introspective Jacksonian views established, this thesis will next explore how these women wielded democratic ideology to critique U.S. politics and enter the wider stage of antebellum political engagement.

Chapter Two:

“The Love of Liberty... Inspires My Soul”

Latter-Day Saint Women’s Embrace of American Exceptionalism, Freedom Rhetoric, and
Manifest Destiny

“I am willing to be governed by them that can govern themselves...they will fight for their [United States] rights” wrote Orpha Everett from Saint George, Utah in 1855.¹ Her words to her parents on the Eastern Seaboard were simple, grammatically problematic, and incredibly reflective of certain elements of antebellum political culture with which she—explicitly and consciously or not—likely aligned. Everett’s letter appears in no published collection of LDS women’s writings and though it asserts the Biblical soundness of polygamy, it contains no personal testimony, affirmation of her faith, or reflections on eternity. It is merely a discussion of her feelings regarding the political happenings between the Saints and the U.S. federal government. Everett framed rhetoric regarding the U.S. government in terms of liberty versus tyranny. Her strict constructionism, tendency to revere American symbols while disparaging the U.S. Government and desire for territorial expansion, revealed through personal letters, indicates that Everett, like many other female LDS pioneers, embraced Jacksonian views and perpetuated them on the Deseret frontier.

Everett’s assertion of American rights and nationalism seems strange considering her treatment at the hands of American citizens and United States authorities. While information from her hand is limited, her letters and her husband’s diary indicate that she was in some of the earliest wagon trains and fled from Missouri to Illinois and finally to the Utah territory.² She endured governor Lilburn Boggs’ “Extermination Order,” which encouraged the Missouri state militia and ordinary citizens to expel or kill any Mormons within state lines, during which vigilantes brutally gang-raped a few LDS women without reprimand.³

¹ Orpha Marie Everett, “Letters,” MSS SC 2878 Women’s Manuscript Collection—1130 HBLL, L. Tom. Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, UT, 2.

² Addison Everett, *Diary*, MSS 1054 Manuscript Collection—1130 HBLL, L. Tom. Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, UT, 3.

³ Andrea R-M, “Eliza R. Snow as a Victim of Sexual Violence in the 1838 Missouri War- the Author’s Reflections on a Source,” *Juvenile Instructor* (March 7, 2016).

Still, the Mormons rebuilt. Everett and her fellow Saints built a life in Nauvoo, where they contributed to the local economy, participated in the increasingly democratic political culture, and built the second of many holy temples. Just five years after the Mormons moved to the “city beautiful,” she grieved Joseph Smith’s murder at the hands of Illinois state authorities and watched the Nauvoo temple burn to the ground.⁴ Orpha Everett then joined the long trek westward—a brutal thirteen hundred -mile journey to what was, in 1846, Mexican territory. Poverty, starvation, and sickness followed the Saints as they moved farther away from what Smith prophesied as the Promised Land in Jackson County, Missouri. Orpha, like many women, travelled without her husband, as Addison Everett led Brigham Young’s ox team in the first company to reach the Salt Lake Valley. Amid their exile west of American territory, over 500 Mormons, 20 of whom were women, volunteered to participate in the American effort in the Mexican-American War and to bring Utah territory into the United States.⁵ Again, however, U.S. federal troops invaded Salt Lake City just a few years after the Mormon migration to Utah and the Saints temporarily fled their Zion in the west.

Yet, Orpha Everett continued to follow those who would “fight for their rights.” She was engaged in a larger community of women who produced nationalist writings throughout the trek and into Utah which extolled the virtues of liberty and virtue, praised the Founding Fathers, and upheld what they viewed as American values from her new home west of American soil. Orpha was a “common woman,” about whom we know very little aside from the words contained in this letter to her parents. Yet, her attitudes resonated within many

⁴ LDS founder Joseph Smith named the Mormon city in Illinois “Nauvoo,” which meant “the city beautiful” in Hebrew. See Bushman and Bushman, *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 28.

⁵ Bushman and Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*, 39

other LDS women's diaries, suggesting that she was representative of many others. Everett and many early Mormons retained a resilient sense of nationalism and American exceptionalism, despite their geographic and ideological distance from the many Americans with whom their political views were reflective.

Heretofore, historians have almost entirely neglected the concept of “Jacksonian women,”—women who explicitly embraced and supported the largely patriarchal ideologies of antebellum Democrats—focusing either on men who exhibited Jacksonian ideologies or women who were politically aware and active in northern Whiggish communities.⁶ A few lone aberrations about anti-bank, pro-democracy liberty-rhetoric wielding women stand out as significant patches in the vast hole in the historiography.⁷ Meanwhile, however, there has been no shortage of scholars placing Mormons in the context of the social, economic, and political world of nineteenth-century upstate New York.⁸ Scholars have some consensus, then, that Mormon men were Americans. Though unique Americans, to be sure, Mormon

⁶ See, for example, Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

⁷ See Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), Elizabeth J. Clapp, *A Notorious Woman: Anne Royall in Jacksonian America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016). Elizabeth J. Clapp's 2016 monograph, *A Notorious Woman*, emphasizes the Jacksonian ideology of Anne Royall, a public figure who rallied for an end to government corruption, the national bank, and evangelical revivalism but rejected the patriarchy inherent in Jacksonianism. Largely, however, female democrats who espoused Jacksonian rhetoric and engaged in the ideology of anti-feminist Herrenvolk democracy in the antebellum era still have yet to find a substantial place in academic writings.

⁸ Some scholars have remarked that the Book of Mormon reflects the social, cultural, economic, and political anxieties of New York between 1826 and 1840. This idea has been carried forth to situate the early LDS practice of treasure hunting within the greater context of American evangelicalism and anxieties about incipient capitalism. See Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780," *American Quarterly*, 38 no. 1. (Spring 1986): 6-34. Others have analyzed the post-revolutionary valorization of the common man, pro-democratic sentiment, and disdain for centralized government and formal institutions along the northern frontier. See Gordon Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History*, 61 no. 4, (October 1980). Importantly, Wood asserts that Joseph Smith's humble and morally questionable past helped, rather than hindered the Church's credibility. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Harvard: Yale University press, 1989), 113 notes that Mormonism expressed "religious populism, reflecting the passions of ordinary people and the charisma of democratic movement-builders."

men were part of the evangelical, frontier, and Jacksonian discourses which marked the antebellum United States. Therefore, the issue of silencing Jacksonian women appears to be more than a Mormon problem.⁹ Women's historians have written about the effects of the Age of Jackson *upon* women and the ways in which these women negotiated personal and public spaces within this new political culture, but female democratic cultural and political agents are still absent from scholarly pages.¹⁰ By analyzing the marriage of religion and politics in antebellum America, I assess what it meant to embrace Jacksonian values and interpret how those values interacted within a Mormon setting.¹¹

Though early Mormon women often wrote of feeling proud to be American, they, like many antebellum Democrats, expressed patriotism in often nebulous ways.¹² They loved America despite American persecution but rarely conveyed any firm sense of why. Scholars have demonstrated this among non-LDS men, illustrating that Jacksonian national feeling was embodied by “slogans, epithets, meaningless phrases, the shout of crowds—not issues, programs, policies.”¹³ However, expressions of manifest destiny and freedom rhetoric, varied as they stood, were significant elements to Jacksonian national feeling. Moreover, expansionism and liberty from government intrusion were formulated within the discourse of

⁹ Meanwhile, however, colonial women of varying religions have been interpreted as cultural, intellectual, and even political agents, while Jacksonian women—women who embraced the patriarchal and inherently exclusionary ideals of Jacksonianism—do not seem to exist in the historiography at all. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's seminal work *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982) is a key work which explores women's activity in the colonial era.

¹⁰ See Gerda Lerner, “The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson,” *American Studies* 10, no.1 (Spring 1969): 5-15, Norma Basch, “Equity Vs. Equality: Emerging Concepts of Women's Political Status in the Age of Jackson,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 3 no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 297-318.

¹¹ See Arthur Meier Schlesinger Jr, *The Age of Jackson* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 1957) and Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

¹² The historian of nineteenth-century American politics Daniel Walker Howe notes that “nationalism turned out to be a concept that aroused strong feelings but could mean different things to different people” and that Andrew Jackson would encourage another kind of nationalism, based on territorial expansion, that embraced... strict constructionism.” Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 24.

¹³ Arthur Meier Schlesinger Jr, *The Age of Jackson* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 1957), 45.

democratization and the value of the “common man” essential to the Jacksonian ideal.¹⁴ To many Jacksonians and early Mormon women, then, what it meant to be “truly” American was to find pride in national symbols, to extol the Constitution and uphold a Jeffersonian vision of it, and to seek a future of expanded American land holdings.¹⁵ Significantly, historians have largely neglected Mormon women’s embrace of Jacksonian nationalism, despite the strange and interesting paradox of its very existence.

Like many other American groups, the Mormon vision of American nationalism was an exceptionalist one. Mormons viewed the LDS demonstration of “Americanism” in the west as the true embodiment of American values. They saw themselves as the best type of U.S. citizens who would create a truly more perfect union, despite, or perhaps because of, being forced out by corrupt citizens and U.S. authorities.¹⁶ Utah, therefore, became the

¹⁴ Nicole Eustace has written regarding the early nineteenth century that national feeling was marked by a shared desire of filling the wide, open spaces of the American frontier with white, native-born Americans. See Nicole Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 32.

¹⁵ Important to my argument that Mormon women embraced Jacksonian values is the fact that they largely sustained the distinctly patriarchal elements of Jacksonian nationalism by working within a divinely male-dominated religion. Scholars have documented that LDS women generally deferred to male leaders in secular and religious issues, and rarely challenged their roles as “helpmeets” in any public fashion. Benjamin Park, “Early Mormon Patriarchy and the Paradoxes of Democratic Religiosity in Jacksonian America,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 21, no. 2 (June 2013): 183-208. A key counter-example of this is Joseph Smith’s first wife, Emma, who spoke out against polygamy in Relief Society meetings and ultimately left the LDS Church.

¹⁶ The historiography of Mormons as exceptional and, conversely, as mainstream Americans, has mirrored that of other American exceptionalist groups. Early scholars of Mormon history asserted that Mormons truly were, as their pioneer diaries and sermons claimed, a “peculiar people.” Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (New York: Knopf, 1992), Richard Bushman and Claudia Bushman, *Building the Kingdom*. Bitton, Arrington and the Bushmans’ work are surveys of LDS history and demonstrate an exceptionalist view that Mormons were especially unique and were uniquely oppressed within the greater context of American history. Marvin Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989) likewise pits Mormons against the masses of other Americans. Countless biographies depict exceptionalist views of individual Mormons with the overriding theme that these people were situated within a particularly unique and laudable community. See Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Random House, 2005) and Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986). This laudatory biographic pattern among LDS scholars is not limited to the writing of male authorities’ lives; it extends to the discussion of prominent women as well. See Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1994) and Karen Lynn Davidson and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Eliza: The Life and Faith of Eliza R. Snow* (Deseret: Salt Lake City, 2014).

nineteenth-century incarnation of the “city upon a hill” wherein the Latter-Day Saints could demonstrate the blessings of the Latter-Day faith to their anti-Mormon opponents.¹⁷

The Mormon embrace of American exceptionalism was therefore not exceptional at all. It was one of many ways in which Mormons, alongside many other U.S. factions, self-identified as “true” citizens who somehow embodied “American values” more fully than other Americans.¹⁸ Given the unknowns of the newly independent United States as a political experiment, Americanism, American values, patriotism, and nationalism were opaque concepts which left much room for a proliferation of interpretations.¹⁹ Often in direct

¹⁷ The parallel between the Mormons westering for religious refuge and the early Puritans’ settlement in Massachusetts is not a new one. Likewise, both Puritans and Mormons saw themselves as modern enactments of Israel entering the Promised Land. See Arrington, *Brigham Young*. In the same way that Mormons themselves grappled with balancing their uniqueness with their essential Americanness, recent scholarship has emphasized the distinctly “American” qualities of the LDS faith. While plenty of non-LDS religious scholars have noted the cultural phenomena of the Second Great Awakening’s effects on the formation of the Church, historians within LDS circles have recently framed their discussions of the early Saints in terms which place them in parallel cultural trajectories with many other U.S. groups, rather than emphasizing their exceptional faith and unity. See Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012) and Ethan Yorgason, “The Shifting Role of the Latter-Day Saints as the Quintessential American Religion” in *Faith in America: Changes, Challenges, New Directions*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (Westport: Praeger, 2006), 141-150. The most important non-LDS works which discuss LDS beginnings as part and parcel of the Second Great Awakening are Whitney Cross *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1850) and John Brooke’s *The Refiner’s Fire*. Antebellum Mormon historiography has encountered a similar clash of viewpoints to that of, as just one example, the white antebellum South in which scholarly debate centers on how mainstream or non-mainstream each respective culture was. While white Southerners, like Mormons, often asserted their cultural difference from the rest of the nation, alignment with the American founders’ original intent, and moral superiority, so too did countless sectors of nineteenth-century American society. For works on Southern exceptionalism, see John Reed, *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), Carl N. Degler, *Place Over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). For works on Southern cultural integration, see Charles Grider Sellers, ed., *The Southerner as American* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960) and Grady McWhiney, *Southerners and Other Americans* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

¹⁸ See Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics & the Creation of the American Union 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

¹⁹ David Waldstreicher has examined early Americans’ demonstrations of nationalism as ways to “protest their exclusion from [the] Revolution’s fruits.” The court-country paradigm played out as high Federalists such as Daniel Webster emphasized continence in “behavior and appearance” as the embodiment of “national virtue.” Meanwhile, supporters of Jefferson “claimed... To be the true representatives of ‘the people’ and the nation... against a real and imagined aristocracy.” Some immigrants, likewise emphasized their “especial fellowship” with white native-born Americans and their embrace of “true patriotism and universal philanthropy” David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3, 73, 24-25, 220. Meanwhile, African

opposition to each other, native-born individuals and immigrants, blacks and whites argued that they embodied American values more than their opponents. Therefore, Mormons' expressions of American exceptionalism should be viewed within this greater context of American assertions of belonging.

Like many non-Mormon Democrats, Latter-Day Saint pioneers were intensely occupied with ideas of religious freedom and equal rights. Specifically, they desired self-rule and freedom from government intrusion into their daily lives, except when it served to protect their rights to live, work, and worship without oppression.²⁰ They pointed to the U.S. Constitution (which they interpreted strictly) as a preserver of their rights to free worship and assembly and saw the American flag as a symbol of those rights.²¹ Indeed, President Andrew Jackson himself spoke of “men who love liberty and desire nothing but equal rights and equal laws” as “the great body of the people of the United states; they are the bone and sinew

Americans in the antebellum North likewise emphasized how American they were in contrast to their racist oppressors. They sought to “fulfill...American political values” by emphasizing their community’s sobriety, self-control, civic virtue, and moral character. See Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 5. At the same time, however, pro-slavery white Southerners asserted that they were true Americans who were living as the Founding Fathers had intended. The Williamsburg Weekly Gazette encouraged voters to vote Democrat so that “the legacy of Washington and his co-heroes and sages” must not be “thrown or bartered away.” See William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 67.

²⁰ John L. O’Sullivan captured Jacksonian freedom ideology in 1838, writing “the VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE, the principle of freedom” asserts that human society has a “far more perfect and harmonious result” with limited and restricted government than “if the government, with its ‘fostering hand’ undertake to disturb, under the plea of directing, the process.” Jacksonians often feared tyranny and prized the Jeffersonian ideal of a limited government which does little more than protect the rights of its citizenry. John L. O’Sullivan, “The Democratic Principle,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, I (January, 1838), 2-15 in *Ideology and Power in the Age of Jackson*, eds. Hennig Cohen and Jon William Ward (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 308.

²¹ A “strict” interpretation of the Constitution “provides that the powers of the federal government listed in Article I should be ‘narrowly construed.’ This interpretation means, for example, that the “necessary and proper” clause of the Constitution does not give the federal government the authority to, for example, create a national bank or produce laws limiting religious practice. Proponent of strict constructionism, most notably Thomas Jefferson, sought to ensure that federal authority remained small in order to protect the citizenry from a potentially tyrannical government. See Peter Zavodynik, *The Age of Strict Construction: A History of the Growth of Federal Power, 1789-1861* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 1.

of the country.”²² Meanwhile, some non-Mormon Democratic reformers used the Mormon plight to argue for greater personal and religious liberty for all Americans.²³ The LDS concern with freedom from government interference and an overall desire to be left alone, with government protection only in the case of mortal danger, then, is remarkably indicative of antebellum Democratic sentiment.²⁴

Through liberty rhetoric, patriotism, and manifest destiny, then, female Latter-Day Saint pioneers displayed a sense of American exceptionalism and political Jacksonianism. Women’s diaries and poetry often expressed desires for freedom from government pressures alongside assertions of government-assured rights. Their writings engaged the polarities of liberty and domination and morality and corruption while arguing that the Jeffersonian ideal which had once defined America had declined into iniquity. They aligned nationalism and spirituality, finding religious meaning in American symbols such as the flag, Constitution, and founding fathers. Finally, they praised the rural west as more virtuous than crowded eastern cities and felt a sense of divine providence in their territorial and cultural expansion. In these ways, Mormon women interacted in the greater American political culture. Though distinctive in their unique faith and mass involuntary pioneer experience, the documents these women left behind demonstrate that they were remarkably politically conscious and engaged in manners which mirrored those of other American Democrats.

Certainly, liberty and freedom from oppression were values on which members of many American political persuasions could agree. Freedom rhetoric harkened back to a

²² Andrew Jackson, “Farewell Address” in *Voices of the Marketplace*, 39.

²³ Matthew J. Grow, “The Suffering Saints: Thomas L. Kane, Democratic Reform, and the Mormon Question in Antebellum America,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2009), 697.

²⁴ Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 167.

central point of contention within political debates from the eighteenth century through the present—that of the true meaning of the American Revolution. While the Jacksonian Democrats did not have a monopoly on patriotic, Constitutional, and liberty-minded rhetoric, their intense mistrust of the very government institutions made possible by the Constitution alongside their zealous devotion to the governing document is unique. Though many who embraced Whiggish ideology saw the Constitution and the American republic as means to facilitate unity and efficiency among the citizenry, many others saw government actions in the forms of tariffs, banks, and even railroad proposals as steps toward eventual tyranny. In the 1830s and 40s, Mormons actually experienced the great Democratic fear: denial of their rights to property, a lack of governmental protection, lethal government oppression, and exile from their birth nation. While non-Mormon factory workers in the North lobbied for “measures intended to check the tendencies which they felt were turning the working classes into the outcasts of the land,” Mormons became *literal* outcasts of the United States.²⁵ Jacksonian ideology was made up of multiple opposing dynamics such as freedom vs. tyranny, aristocracy vs. the people, and corruption vs. virtue. As Mormons actually experienced many events which Democrats sought to protect against, liberty rhetoric as enunciated by the Latter-Day sisters took on a particularly Jacksonian tone.

Using the ideas of Jacksonian freedom rhetoric, Mormon women articulated that the Saints were the type of citizens the Founders had intended Americans to be. Eliza Snow’s journal and poetry were highly reflective of these political views. Indeed, her “Ode to

²⁵ Schlesinger, *Age of Jackson*, 32. J. Spencer Fluhman writes, “hardly an imported religion, Mormonism staked the limits of homegrown religious activity.” While the Constitution and the courts did not define religion or the limits of religious practice, “nineteenth-century Americans were confident that Mormons embodied what religion was *not*.” Mormons, though English-speaking and largely native-born Americans, apparently held spiritual and social beliefs so deviant that they were cast into a category generally reserved for non-whites and immigrants. J. Spencer Fluhman, “*A Peculiar People: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 18.

Liberty” demonstrated the idea that true freedom was being able to act unencumbered by government or social pressures.²⁶ In a similar way, her 1846 “Song for the Pioneers No.2: The Camp of Israel” asked, “Where is freedom? Where is justice? Both have from this nation fled.”²⁷ Considering that she wrote this song as the pioneers were moving into Mexican territory, it is likely that Snow intended a double meaning for “both have from this nation fled.” Clearly she felt that American citizens and authorities who ousted hardworking, law-abiding white Americans, had been corrupted and were now operating counter to Snow’s vision of American values. This is evident in her diary with relation to the oppression in Missouri in which she demanded that the “advocates of equal rights” address the violence perpetrated against the Saints and “redeem the cause of insulted Liberty.”²⁸ For Snow, then, “freedom and justice” were metaphors for the Mormons themselves. With the expulsion of law-abiding, independent, and productive Americans, the human embodiments of freedom and justice became absent from the nation. By arguing that a Democratic definition of liberty had been violated, Eliza Snow demonstrated an idea that the Latter-Day Saints personified American values to a greater extent than their non-LDS counterparts. Importantly, Mormons did not have to cling to an American identity. As self-described “peculiar people,” they set themselves apart from other Americans. Joseph Smith coined the term “theodemocracy” to describe the particular government he sought to form among the Saints, and Brigham Young referenced that idea when arguing that the priesthood represented the will of both God and

²⁶ Snow, “Ode to Liberty,” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 62-64.

²⁷ Snow, “Song for the Pioneers No.2: The Camp of Israel” in *Poems*, Vol. 1, 163-164.

²⁸ Eliza Snow, “Nauvoo Journal and Notebook,” *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 92.

the people in Utah.²⁹ Though stateless, they continued to reproduce American nationalism from the Mexican territory of Deseret.

LDS pioneer women often saw the tangible embodiment of Jacksonian freedom rhetoric was in American symbols such as the U.S. flag. They expressed Mormon-American exceptionalism by feeling as though they valued these symbols with more heartfelt devotion than other Americans. Snow wrote regarding the U.S. flag during the Mormon exodus, “how dear to the heart of an American has that sacred emblem ever been! And, although at that time, it yielded no protection—although we were homeless exiles, the wave of the ‘Dear old Flag’ seemed fraught with that inspiration which silently breathes a promise of peace.”³⁰ Though she acknowledged the intolerance of certain Americans who forced her out of the nation, Snow still clung to the “inspiration” and “promise of peace” which she attributed to the United States flag. Snow again ascribed almost sacred meaning to the flag despite the Saints’ forcible expulsion at the hands of Americans in her poem “My Own- My Country’s Flag”:

We had to flee: but in hasty flight,
We grasped the Flag with more than mortal might;
Resolved, that, through our foes should us bereave
Of home and wealth, our Flag, we would not leave.
We took the Flag, and journeying to the West,
We wore its motto graven on each breast³¹

Though leaving the United States, Snow penned that the Saints refused to leave the American flag behind. Rather, they “grasped [it] with more than mortal might.” She noted that the flag’s motto, which she clarified in later stanzas as “union, truth, and liberty” remained at the forefront of LDS thought throughout the westward trek. Snow never fully

²⁹ John Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2012), 244.

³⁰ Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” in *Personal Writings*, 25.

³¹ Snow, “My Own My Country’s Flag” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 60-62.

unpacked the full significance of the flag to her or the Saints, perhaps expecting her readers to understand her meaning. Rather, she discussed the pride her grandfather felt after having “fought and bled” for the American flag during the American Revolution and reasserted the emotion which the stars and stripes inspired within her.

The significance of the American flag as an extension of the Saints themselves is revealed through the frequency with which female pioneers discussed the immediate raising of the flag at resting points along the trek. Snow wrote that “Soon after our arrival [at a temporary stopping point along the Mormon trail], a tall Liberty Pole was erected, and from its summit, the ‘Stars and Stripes’ seemed to float with, if possible, more significance than they were wont on eastern breezes.”³² In this instance, she not only attributed significant value to the flag, but expressed the idea that this American symbol was *more* significant along the trek to Mexican territory than in American centers of society and culture. As she and other women argued, American symbols stood for union, liberty, freedom, national pride, love of country, and an acknowledgement that America was the most “highly favor’d spot on Earth.”³³ As such, they interpreted the flag as carrying more meaning, or perhaps its true meaning, to the exiled Mormons.³⁴

Eliza Snow was not alone in her reverence for the flag and the significance of raising it at every opportunity, however. Early convert Nancy Tracy wrote, “the leader calls a halt and says “here is the place for the saints to dwell. Immediately the Stars and Stripes were planted on the loftiest peak.”³⁵ To Emily Dow Partridge Young as well, the American flag

³² Snow, “Sketch of my Life,” in *Personal Writings*, 31.

³³ Snow, “My Own—My Country’s Flag” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 61.

³⁴ Intriguingly, the ways in which Mormons spoke of realizing the true meaning of America often paralleled the ways in which they explained how spiritual trials strengthened their testimony of God and the Book of Mormon. It seemed that as spiritual trials strengthened their testimony of the LDS Church, civic trials strengthened the Mormon testimony of U.S. symbols, nationalism and American exceptionalism.

³⁵ Tracy, *Life History*, 57.

carried extraordinary significance which spanned beyond a simple representation of the United States as a national polity. “Our national flag, the stars and stripes, attached to the liberty-pole,” was raised in Far West, Missouri on July fourth, 1838. It “floated gaily in the breeze. All were happy and joyful, as none but the Saints know how to be.”³⁶ Emily Young directly correlated happiness with the flying of the flag, even attributing gaiety to the symbol itself before citing the happiness of the people in the flag’s presence. She ascribed further significance to the stars and stripes, writing “Shortly after the fourth a terrible storm arose...the liberty was struck and shattered by a bolt, foreshadowing coming events, as the sequel proved.”³⁷ This refers to the wave of anti-Mormon persecutions, including the Boggs Execution order, which would ensue in the summer of 1838. For Emily Young, the stars and stripes, described in this quote as “liberty” itself, were a symbol of the Mormon community. The flag waved “gaily in the breeze” when the Mormons were free to worship, but was “struck and shattered” along with the victims of Missouri Anti-Mormon ruffians. Furthermore, her assertion that the Mormons felt joy “as none but the Saints know how” again lends credence to the idea that Mormons were the only true patriots. On Independence Day and in the presence of the American flag, Emily Young claimed that the Mormons felt a particularly unique type of joy experienced by none other. Thus, her use of the flag as a metaphor for the Mormons themselves and her claim of unique patriotic feeling illustrated Mormon American exceptionalism in a variety of ways.

While the American flag stirred patriotic and even religious feeling within exiled Mormon women, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence served as important

³⁶ Emily Young, "Reminiscences of Emily Dow Partridge Young," BX 8670 .A1a no.575, Americana Collection Quarto—1130 HBLL, L. Tom. Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, UT, 6.

³⁷ Young, "Reminiscence," 7.

documentary symbols from which LDS women could appropriate text to legitimize their citizenship. As opposed to their non-specific patriotic rhetoric directed toward the U.S. flag, early Mormon women often expressed in explicit terms the meaning and significance which these documents held. Their writing frequently pit peaceful, law-abiding LDS actions in direct opposition against the violent actions of their oppressors. Significantly, their Constitution-wielding rhetoric argued that Mormons were “true Americans” and better citizens than those who oppressed them, often in the name of ambiguous “American values.” A strong example of the rhetorical contrast of Constitutional rights with the reality of LDS oppression came from Helen Whitney, Joseph Smith’s youngest wife. Reflecting upon the martyrdom of her husband Joseph Smith, Whitney elected to repeat a particular passage from one of Smith’s sermons: “it is the love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race.”³⁸ She continued, reciting his assertion that Truth could only exist in a state of liberty wherein neither the state nor the citizenry force the people to accept or reject any religious or civic ideology. Significantly, Whitney did not reflect on Smith’s copious religious teachings but rather wrote down his words on liberty in the here-and-now. This demonstrates two things: first, as many historians have attested, Joseph Smith was a Jacksonian man in a Jacksonian world.³⁹ Secondly, and more importantly to the historiography of Mormon women, is that this common woman, pioneer, plural wife, and eventual mother of eleven emphasized the first latter-day prophet’s liberty rhetoric over his religious teaching. Her mental landscape clearly expanded beyond exclusively religious

³⁸ Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Autobiography*, MSS SC 2964, Women’s Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 12.

³⁹ Cross, *The Burned-Over District*, 146-149, Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 146-147, Park, “Early Mormon Patriarchy,” 2, Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 116-120.

ideas to the embrace of the type of liberty rhetoric embraced by many of her fellow Jacksonians.⁴⁰

Helen Whitney's discussion of Smith's unique and true love of liberty in contrast to the mob which murdered him demonstrates a further element of Mormon American exceptionalism: the idea that Mormons alone abide by the Constitution as the Framers intended. She continued, stating, "If our enemies are determined to oppress us and deprive us of our Constitutional rights and privileges as they have done, and if the authorities that are on the earth will not sustain us in our rights, nor give us the protection which the laws and Constitution of the United States and of this state guaranteed unto us, then we will claim [those rights] from.... God Almighty." Here, Whitney validated the legitimacy of Constitutional and state laws and defended Mormons as law-abiding citizens. Furthermore, by defining Constitutional protection as something which could be "claimed" from above, Whitney classified the Constitution as a direct extension of God's law. She was not circumventing American laws and appealing directly to God, but rather affirmed the legitimacy of U.S. laws and threatened to appeal to God if anti-Mormons continued to violate her Constitutional rights. Her words reflected Eliza Snow's view that the Constitution was "sacred" and divinely inspired and that Mormons, through adherence to what they saw as the Constitution's original intent, were the most law-abiding Americans.⁴¹

The idea that the U.S. Constitution was divinely inspired suggests that America was both favored and guided by God. This argument was not implicit among Mormon women;

⁴⁰ Whitney is most famous for being the youngest bride of Joseph Smith. See John Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 120, Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), Hyrum L. Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974). Her life has also been explored as "A Widow's Tale," which is the title of the compilation of her writings. See Charles Hatch, ed. *A Widow's Tale: the 1884-1896 Dairy of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney* (Logan: Utah State University press, 2003).

⁴¹ Snow, "My Country—A Lamentation" in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 121.

Eliza Snow wrote of the “sacred Constitution which our noble forefathers were instrumental in forming under the inspiration of the Almighty.”⁴² America was not only great because of its civic institutions, culture, or liberties, but because it was specifically chosen and steered by God. The wickedness of humans, despite the divinely-inspired rights, protections, and laws of the Constitution, caused the nation to stray from its initial purity. This is where Mormon exceptionalism met American exceptionalism. Whitney’s statement that the Saints would “claim” their Constitutional rights and protections from God suggests that the Mormons believed that they lived the Constitution according to the Founders’ original intent. Eliza Snow echoed this, writing “We, the Constitution hold/ pure as when its sacred fold/ was, at first, bequeathed.” Nancy Tracy argued that she and her fellow Saints were “true and law-abiding in every way,” “law-loving,” “obedient to the laws of the land” and that they “would be the only ones that would hold the Constitution together after our enemies had torn it to shreds.”⁴³ Yet, sinful Americans had affected the “land of liberty,” disallowing good citizens from “worship[ing] God according to... the Constitution of their country.”⁴⁴ Mormon women throughout the pioneer period repeated the idea the America was divinely favored and that the Latter-Day Saints were the only ones who correctly followed the Constitution’s sacred and pure laws.

While pioneer women asserted that American citizens and authorities had violated the Mormons’ Constitutional rights, they also idealized a time in which they believed the United States was more virtuous. Emily Young’s phrasing: “oh liberty, *now* art thou fallen... in the smoke that ascendeth up forever and ever” seems to point to a past in which times were

⁴² Snow, “Address,” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 126.

⁴³ Snow, “Ode to Liberty,” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 63. And Tracy, *Life History*, 60-62.

⁴⁴ Emily Young, “Reminiscences,” 40.

better, liberty was preserved, and freedom of religion could be exercised.⁴⁵ This golden age fallacy, or “Jeffersonian myth” implanted in Americans “a whole set of social choices: virtuous farmer... vs depraved capitalist... democracy vs. aristocracy; power vs. corruption” with the emphasis that those morally upstanding choices had been American choices and part of a shared American culture in the past.⁴⁶ Eliza Snow demonstrated this rhetoric through mourning the Utah War in a poem entitled “The Fathers—Wouldn’t They be Astonished?” She posited that “Our Washington and Adams, Jefferson and other sages.... Would surely fall to weeping” if they saw America in 1857.⁴⁷ Clearly, she felt that the Founders would have disapproved of Congress’ sanction of federal troops entering Utah.⁴⁸ As her poem continued, she imposed a golden age vision of the United States’ founding: “If [the Founders] look for ‘Rights’ as equal, as they hop’d for in the sequel.... When the government they founded—when the trump of peace they sounded.”⁴⁹ Snow later echoed this sentiment in another poem, asking “where now the respect and loyalty with which [Washington, Jefferson, and Adams] adhered to... on the grand platform of civil and religious liberty, guaranteeing equal rights... beneath a glorious and sacred Constitution?”⁵⁰ Here, Snow indicated a belief that equal rights, peace, respect, loyalty, and civil and religious liberty were originally instilled in the nation after the Revolution but had crumbled with sinfulness in little more than half a century. The view that the United States was once, before the birth of the LDS Church, in line with Mormon civic values fits squarely within the belief that Mormons were the truest Americans.

⁴⁵ Ibid, italics added.

⁴⁶ Schlesinger, *Age of Jackson*, 512.

⁴⁷ Snow, “The Fathers—Wouldn’t They Be Astonished?” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 123-125.

⁴⁸ William P. MackKinnon, “Prelude to Civil War: the Utah War’s Impact and Legacy” in *Civil War Saints*, ed. Kenneth L. Alford (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2012), 1-21.

⁴⁹ Snow, “The Fathers—Wouldn’t They Be Astonished?” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 124.

⁵⁰ Snow, “My Country—A Lamentation” in *Poems*, Vol. 2, 121.

By reflecting on what they believed original American virtues to be and corroborating them with antebellum Mormon values, these women proposed that the LDS community embraced what they saw as the original and pure vision of the Founder's intentions for the nation. In the same way that Mormons claimed to have brought about the "Restoration" of Christ's true and original Apostolic Church, they believed that they could restore the civic virtue of the Constitutional Framers' original intent.⁵¹ As articulated by Latter-Day Saint women, Mormon exceptionalism and American exceptionalism worked in tandem to create a vision of Mormon America as the embodiment of the "more perfect union."

While Mormons experienced exile from the nation they claimed to love and revere, they sought to create that "more perfect union" in the Mexican territory they christened "Deseret." From this frontier refuge, they hoped to expand the LDS sphere of influence in the west and to serve, as the Puritans had before them, as a "city upon a hill." The Salt Lake Valley was to be an example to the world of the righteousness and blessings which flowed from true gospel living.⁵² Hailing the superiority of the western frontier and its expansive farmland over the corruption of Eastern cities, they echoed the yeoman ideal within the highly regulated government that was the LDS Church. Likewise, they looked at their indigenous neighbors, members of the Ute tribe, as potential converts, yeoman farmers, and

⁵¹ It is often difficult to unpack specific details and explanations from patriotic rhetoric. Surviving documents are left with much ambiguity with which to answer exactly how Mormons sought to create this "more perfect union." Women's writings such as Eliza Snow's which mention this idea advise behavioral reformation and provide religio-political Jeremiads lamenting the destruction of the Founders' pure intent and exhorting young people to "choose the right." Male authorities such as Smith and Young likewise praised the Founders and American founding documents and called for a renewal of civic virtue. See Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period I, History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, by Himself*, 7 vols., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 3- 9. They also worked to institute a civic reformation in more formal ways. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young's "Theodemocracy," for example, sought to fuse republican ideology, the United States Constitution, and a theocracy of the Priesthood. Its practical application included the Church's prophet remaining secular governor of Utah, which would, in the Mormon view, prevent corruption by men less divinely inspired. See Patrick Q. Mason, "God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," *Journal of Church and State* (January 28, 2011).

⁵² Bowman, *The Mormon People*, 96-97.

adopters of Mormon-American culture. This continued until the 1850s when Brigham Young declared Utah “Mormon country,” ending the paternalistic relationship between Mormons and Utes and embracing one of violence and marginalization.⁵³ Latter-Day Saint pioneer women favored this westward geographic and cultural expansionism. They shared these views, characterized broadly by historians as “manifest destiny,” alongside many other Jacksonians, envisioning that “the spread of freedom across the unsettled spaces of the country was, in this view, a practicable way to keep liberty from being lost in the toils of time.”⁵⁴ Through laudatory expressions of the majesty and virtue of the western frontier, desires to control and conquer indefinite territory, and disregard for Native American culture and livelihood, Mormon women engaged with the Democratic embrace of manifest destiny.

Manifest destiny, the idea that white, Christian Americans had a God-given right and duty to spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific while bringing a particular type of progress to the west, came to a very tangible head with the Mexican-American War about a decade after Jackson’s time in office. However, this idea certainly gained traction throughout the Jacksonian period, with Jackson himself arguing that the annexation of Texas would “extend the area of freedom” and with Democrats’ persistent attempts to dispossess Native Americans of their land for white settlement and agriculture.⁵⁵ Though Mormons were involuntary westward pioneers and would have preferred to stay in Jackson County,

⁵³ Bowman, *The Mormon People*, 107-108

⁵⁴ Major L. Wilson, “What Whigs and Democrats Meant by Freedom,” in *The Many-Faceted Jacksonian Era: New Interpretations*, ed. Edward Pessen (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 201-202.

⁵⁵ John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 137. Whig journals, meanwhile, almost universally opposed continentalism. While ideology, especially among common people who may have not left many sources behind, is inherently difficult to quantify. However, by contrasting magazine publications such as the New York Tribune and the Democratic Review as one historian has and by, as I have done, reading extensive personal writings, manifest destiny appears to have been favored very strongly by poor white folk throughout the antebellum United States. See Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 35.

Missouri, where they believed Jesus would ultimately return and a “New Jerusalem” would be built, they came to embrace Jacksonian views of westward expansion. Similarly, once on the Mormon Trail, they often praised the western frontier and described the wide, open prairie lands as superior to the cramped corruption of Eastern cities.

In fact, the LDS immigration experience embraced those elements of white expansion, democratic rhetoric, freedom of religion, and liberty from government interference to a greater extent than non-LDS migrants. While many Mormon women were distressed at leaving the homes they had established in Nauvoo, they were not “reluctant draftees” like so many women whose husbands elected to move west for economic reasons.⁵⁶ Moving west to establish a Zion on earth, Mormon women endured hardship with an eternal perspective, believing, as an LDS pioneer hymn illustrates, that “the fight with sin is real/ it will be long but must go on/ push along.”⁵⁷ In the Latter-Day assumption of America as the New Jerusalem, and by extension, Brigham Young as the American Moses, manifest destiny took on a particularly “destined” quality among Mormon pioneers.⁵⁸ These women not only felt that America was a divinely chosen place and that Mormons were the best Americans to inhabit it, but also that the Saints were commanded to spread American culture and the LDS faith beyond U.S. borders.

In the first place, the concept of Zion was a wholesale embodiment of manifest destiny. The Saints paralleled their experience to the Old Testament Hebrew and “were to be gathered out of the world” to live away from worldly influences [with] direct, continuous revelation.” This merging of the spiritual and secular would recreate the “Kingdom of God”

⁵⁶ John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 178.

⁵⁷ Will L. Thompson, “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Hymnal* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1986), 252.

⁵⁸ Leonard J. Arrington, *American Moses*, vii.

on earth.⁵⁹ Like many Americans who travelled westward individually or in small groups for land and opportunity, the Mormons moved in the thousands and settled vast tracts of land despite Native American and Mexican territorial claims. Brigham Young, who led the Saints to the Salt Lake Valley, intended for them to radiate their pure influences outward through missionary efforts in order to expand Zion throughout the world. While Joseph Smith intended the Mormon Zion to be in Independence, Missouri, an area of higher non-LDS white settlement than Utah territory, the goal of religious and cultural expansion was the same.⁶⁰

Mormon pioneer women reflected the broader American view of Manifest Destiny and the LDS-specific vision of a western Zion through their personal diaries and poetry. Even early in the Smith years, it appears, LDS women were looking westward to expand the Church's landholdings. Some pioneers found particular significance in Joseph Smith's discussions of territorial expansion while others saw moral value in frontier agricultural endeavors unregulated by U.S. authorities. In other writings, women hailed the beauty of the west and compared it favorably to what they saw as ugly eastern corruption. Still more explicit, some work expressed desires to create an expansive LDS kingdom, by force if necessary. Together these writings expressed manifest destiny ideology, from the beginning of the LDS Church through settlement in Utah, and mirrored much of the broader Jacksonian discourse of land usage.

⁵⁹ Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 66.

⁶⁰ See Doctrine and Covenants 51; this chapter discusses Zion's location in Jackson County, Missouri and the necessity of Mormons preaching the LDS gospel "unto those who sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death" (D&C 51:1-3) and bringing converts physically into Zion. Upon doing so, converts may be part of both the physical and metaphorical Zion of the Mormon community.

Manifest destiny even superseded spirituality in one LDS woman's diary entry. Early LDS pioneer Mary Fielding Smith found such significance in Joseph Smith's plans of expansion that she reflected on them to the marginalization of religious matters in one 1837 entry. She wrote, "Some important things were shown to Bro. Joseph in vision... relative to the enlargement of our borders which has indeed become indispensably necessary for the inhabitants of Zion both here and in the West."⁶¹ Significantly, this was before the Saints were chased from Nauvoo and were still geographically close to where they anticipated the final return of Christ to transpire. Nauvoo seemed to be a permanent location for the Saints, and yet Smith and many of his followers—male and female—looked toward outward expansion.

Mormon women continued to favor LDS expansion into the pioneer period. Though the Saints were forcibly pushed westward, Eliza Snow's often-reproduced poem "Let Us Go" hailed to glory of the frontier. She tied hard work, agricultural labor, western regionalism, and freedom from government intervention together to create a poem overflowing with manifest destiny sentiment.⁶² Snow addressed the American exceptionalist concept that the Constitution, her "just right of protection" was soiled by a sinful and corrupt government which failed to follow the Constitution as the Founders intended. The law was just, she argued, but those who executed it were not. Away from their oppressors, however, the Saints

⁶¹ Mary Fielding Smith, in *Women's Voices An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900* ed. Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey and Jill Mulvay Derr (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1982), 67.

⁶² Snow, "Let Us Go," in *Poems*, Vol. 1, 146-147. Part of this poem reads:

Let us go from a Government where
Our just rights of protection we never can share—
Where the soil we have purchased we cannot enjoy...
Let us go- let us go to the wilds for a home
Where the wolf and the roe and the buffalo roam—
Where beneath our own vines, we in peace, may enjoy
The fruits of our labors, with none to annoy

could enjoy “the fruits of [their] own labors,” farming, worshipping and living as the Founders intended U.S. citizens to do.

Snow continued her embrace of western regionalism in “My First View of a Western Prairie,” penned during the first wave of immigration in 1846.⁶³ In this poem, she celebrated the west as awe-inspiring, virtuous, fertile, and abundant in agrarian resources. Her reference to the land’s “full abundance” denotes that she expected the Mormons to tame the land for LDS self-sufficiency and productivity. Significantly, Snow emphasized that Nature’s pastures in the west “mock the agriculturalists of eastern soil.” Thus, she was not simply reiterating the praise of tilling soil which marked much Jeffersonian and later Jacksonian literature. Rather, she broadened pro-farmer rhetoric and created a pro-western message. The “far off” and “beautiful” west became something magical and to be contrasted with even the relative rurality of the Old Northwest. By combining western regionalism, virtue, and agricultural development, then, Eliza Snow advocated a manifest destiny message in this poem.

While Snow’s “My First View of a Western Prairie” was celebratory, it was not explicitly imperialistic. Her poem “Kingdom of God,” written in the early years of Utah settlement, referred to that beautiful western expanse Snow discussed in earlier poetry but declared that “The kingdom of God is a kingdom of Conquest” which would ultimately spread to all lands.⁶⁴ Though her words were largely ambiguous, this brought her manifest

⁶³ Snow, “My First View of a Western Prairie,” in *Poems*, Vol.1, 39-41. Part of this poem reads:
The splendid eye beauties of the far-off West;
Where Nature’s pastures, rich and amply broad,
Waving in full abundance, seem to mock
The agriculturalists of eastern soil;
I grew incredulous that Nature’s dress
Should be so rich, and so domestic, and
So beautiful, without the touch of Art

⁶⁴ Snow, “The Kingdom of God” in *Poems*: Vol. 2, 97-98.

destiny rhetoric into full alignment with expansionist Jacksonians who desired for white Americans to conquer, civilize, and tame the west, through force if necessary. American exceptionalism here is evident; Snow expressed that LDS Americans would conquer “from Mount Zion” throughout the world. This kingdom was a patriarchal one, led by the Priesthood and supported by the “helpmeet” sisterhood. Meanwhile, as Mormons perceived the Kingdom of God to be the gathering place of Latter-Day Saints which would transcend into the Millennium, her assertion that “the kingdom of God holds the keys of Salvation” meant that only Mormons could complete this conquering project.⁶⁵ By positing Mormons as the best types of citizens and the United States as a divinely selected and favored nation, Mormon women embraced a Mormon- American exceptionalism view of manifest destiny.

As previously explored, Mormons held fiercely to their identity as Americans, positing their non-Mormon oppressors as un-American and sending over 500 men to fight in the Mexican-American War. Though the Mormon Battalion never saw battle, they would have been working to conquer, among other places, the Salt Lake Valley for white, Christian settlement.⁶⁶ While John L. O’Sullivan, who coined the term “manifest destiny” had initially warned against using violence to expand national borders, by 1846 the *Democratic Review* used the rhetoric of conquerors, stating that “peaceful accommodation” with Mexico was impossible.⁶⁷ Snow’s discussion of the “kingdom of conquest” was ultimately in line with expansionist American values.

⁶⁵ Snow, “Kingdom of God,” in *Poems*, Vol. 1, 98.

⁶⁶ Though many non-LDS Christians disagree, Mormons have consistently argued that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is the full and true incarnation of Christianity. See “Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer of the World,” in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2011), 45-56.

⁶⁷ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 46.

A cursory reading of Latter-Day Saint pioneer women's journals and poetry clearly demonstrates that these individuals maintained and advanced political views throughout the early years of LDS settlement. Historians have largely overlooked personal political writings like Orpha Everett's, Mary Smith's, and Eliza Snow's, preferring, for example, to emphasize Eliza Snow's contribution of Heavenly Mother to LDS doctrine rather than her wealth of political poetry. Though these writings which reflect political ideology were largely personal, these women nevertheless embraced Jacksonian views and perpetuated them on the Deseret frontier. While this ideology included, as the previous chapter illustrates, Democratic views of human nature and the self, it extended beyond personal reflection into the ways in which these women viewed the world around them. Drawing their introspection outward, early Mormon women expressed Jacksonian views in their vocabulary of liberty versus tyranny and strict constructionism. They revered American symbols and idealized the nation's birth while condemning the nineteenth-century U.S. Government for straying from the Founders' original intent. They saw themselves as true Americans who could bring American virtue back to its eighteenth-century roots and create a "more perfect union" in the way that God and the Founding Fathers had intended. Finally, they sought white, Christian territorial expansion and legitimized western settlement with the belief that God ordained the creation of an American Zion. All of these views were firmly situated within the oratory of Jacksonian Democrats. Through analysis of these women's multifaceted engagement with American intellectual and cultural ethos, we can begin to see that pioneer women were not, as some historians have argued, so isolated to their housework and family responsibilities that they could write about little beyond their cabins.⁶⁸ Rather, it allows us to view the

⁶⁸ John Faragher argues that men and women's pioneer diaries differed in that men wrote about "the stuff of action," while "the isolation and immobility of wives" resulted in women's writings focusing on the nature that

Mormon foremothers as real and dynamic individuals whose participation in the larger American political and religious world shaped the ideology and institutions of the burgeoning west. Therefore, with a firm establishment of the existence of Mormon women's political ideology, this thesis will next explore the ways in which Mormon women implemented Democratic political ideology by rejecting the official institution of the U.S. government for its lack of freedom and replacing it with more restrictive religious assemblies which suited their spiritual needs. Through collective political action, these women both affirmed and tested the boundaries of Church policy by interacting in the broader discourse of American free associations.

surrounded their residence, daily choirs, personal feelings, and infrequent interpersonal connections. In short, men wrote about ideas, trends, and themes, while women wrote about the narrow here-and-now. See Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, 128-134.

Chapter Three:

“As Sisters in Zion, We’ll All Work Together”

Latter-Day Saint Women and Rugged Collectivity

In 1868, Eliza Snow reflected on two decades of organized female activism within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Carrying her Female Relief Society of Nauvoo Minute Book from congregation to congregation throughout the Salt Lake Valley, she spoke to the women of the Church regarding the Society's origins, history, and purpose. "Union [is] the soul of successful concentrated action," she said. A major purpose of the sisterhood had always been "to do good—to bring into requisition every capacity we possess for doing good, not only in relieving the poor but in saving souls. United effort will accomplish incalculably more than can be accomplished by the most effective individual energies."¹ Thus, Snow articulated the twofold necessity of unity and adherence to the gospel of Jesus Christ as envisioned by the early LDS Church. Likewise, she spoke of the organization's commitment to democratic practices and strict behavioral expectations. Snow and LDS authorities did not view democracy and conformity as incongruent, but rather that they allowed female Church members to "find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed."² In these speeches, Snow exemplified the many accomplishments of early LDS women's collective dedication to unity and benevolence. Through combined action, democratic rhetoric, and conformity to LDS doctrine and social norms, Mormon women engaged in the greater discourse of American benevolent societies and put their political ideologies into action.

While much has been written on women's religious benevolent societies, the early women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as organizers has been the subject

¹ Eliza R. Snow, "Female Relief Society," April 18 and 20, 1868, in Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, Matthew J. Grow *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-Day Saint Women's History* (Salt Lake City: Church Historians Press, 2016), 270-275. "Sisterhood" will be used throughout this chapter to describe all the female members of the LDS Church.

² Snow, "Female Relief Society" in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 271.

of extremely marginal scholarship, even though women such as Eliza Snow were dedicated archivists who consciously preserved hundreds of documents from female-led meetings, charity events, and political activities. Scholars hired by Church authorities and Church-owned publishing agencies have accomplished nearly all the work on Mormon women's collective action.³ Most work, even those which seek to present an overall view of early Mormon women or of the Relief Society, are organized biographically by individual member.⁴ This biographical nature restricts a fuller discussion of the ways in which these women interacted and worked together. Perhaps because of its authorship, most scholarship has been laudatory, commissioned by the LDS Church for its membership to read, and meant to spiritually edify current LDS women.⁵ Laudatory sources have thus "thrown the baby out with the bath water," neglecting these women's dissent, polygamy debates, and apostasy alongside their pro-Mormon political action and efforts to strengthen the LDS influence in American life. Furthermore, many sources which claim to tell "the story of Relief Society" make Joseph Smith and other men the subjects of discussion, rather than assessing the women's group on its own terms.⁶ One women's scholar even argues that "one of the least-

³ The most significant book on Relief Society was written by two Church historians and published in 2016 by the Church Historian's Press. Derr, Madsen, Holbrook and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*.

⁴ See LaRene Gaunt and Janet Peterson, *Faith, Hope and Charity: Inspiration from the Lives of General Relief Society Presidents* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 2008), Leonard J. Arrington, "The Legacy of Latter-Day Saint Women," *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 10 (1990): 3-17, Maureen Carr Ward, "They Deserve to be Remembered: Identifying Members of the Nauvoo Relief Society, 17 March 1842 to 16 March 1844," *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 2002 Nauvoo Conference Special Edition (2002), 53-57.

⁵ Emma Smith, Joseph Smith's first wife and first Relief Society president, for example, ultimately defected from the Church over the issue of polygamy. This was problematic in the nineteenth century and in the present, as Joseph Smith described her as an "elect lady," chosen by God to lead the organization. See Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 220-223.

⁶ Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), Leonard J. Arrington, "The Legacy of Latter-Day Saint Women," *The John Whitmer Historical Association* 1, Vol. 10 (1990): 3-17. An older, but often-cited article by Leonard J. Arrington subtitled "Women in Mormon History," in fact, is largely a history of Joseph Smith and other men's views of women which references but fails to discuss the

tapped sources in the ongoing effort to retrieve the teachings of Joseph Smith is the minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society,” disregarding what that source can tell us about the women within the society entirely.⁷ Likewise, far too many Relief Society- related sources use some variation of the phrase “the Relief Society was organized by Joseph Smith,” placing Smith as the primary actor of the organization.⁸ Most surprisingly, these sources often contradict that very statement by acknowledging that these women organized *themselves* without Smith’s prompting and presented him a constitution. Only after this initial organization and formal constitution-writing did the women present the idea to Smith, who agreed and formalized their society. Indeed, the Church’s new and groundbreaking collection of early Relief Society primary sources concludes the introduction by stating that “together, the Nauvoo minutes and other [Relief Society] documents... demonstrate how Joseph Smith and other Latter-Day Saints envisioned new possibilities for women within the Latter-Day Saint organization.”⁹ Rather than making Latter-Day Saint women the indirect object of this analysis, I will argue

Relief Society prior to 1867 in any depth. Leonard J. Arrington, “Persons for all Seasons: Women in Mormon History,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 20, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 42.

⁷ Jill Mulvay Derr and Carol Cornwall Madsen, “‘Something Better’ for the Sisters: Joseph Smith and the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo” in *Joseph Smith and the Doctrinal Restoration* (Provo: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 2005), 123–43.

⁸ Jill Mulvay Derr, “Woman’s Place in Brigham Young’s World,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1978): 388 states “The Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the spring of 1842.” Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson write, “Eliza Snow also took on a new role as secretary of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, organized by Joseph Smith on 17 March 1842,” *Eliza R. Snow: The Complete Poetry* (Provo: BYU Press, 2009), 199, Leonard J. Arrington’s “The Legacy of Early Latter-Day Saint Women” passively states that “at the sixth meeting of... the Relief Society, which had been founded just a few weeks earlier...the prophet gave instruction on a variety of topics.” Thus, Arrington begins what he calls “the Legacy of Early LDS Women” by passively ignoring *who* founded the Relief Society and immediately making Joseph Smith the subject, and the Relief Society members the indirect object of Smith’s teachings. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *Daughters in My Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2011), 12 states “the Prophet Joseph Smith organized them” after a page long discussion of the sewing circle Margaret Cook initiated and the constitution Eliza Snow organized. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher’s *Women of Covenant* likewise states “since its founding by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1842, the Relief Society...”

⁹ Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, xxxix.

that these documents demonstrate how *women* envisioned new possibilities for *themselves* within the LDS institution and America writ large.

In the non- Mormon context, however, there has been no dearth of scholarly interest in women's participation in moral reform, institutions, and voluntary societies. Necessarily, a spectrum of views has made this field colorful indeed. Much of the mid twentieth-century historiography asserted that institutional benevolence sought to impart social control through white, Protestant, native-born values upon minorities and the poor. This task was effectively an extension of Republican Motherhood, a task well-suited for white, Protestant, middle-class American women who would treat those they helped as perpetual children.¹⁰ Some historians have argued that women's benevolent societies kept them isolated within a small, public extension of the private sphere, while others have emphasized the emancipative qualities of female solidarity through activism.¹¹ Other scholarship has taken female activism out of the two-party paradigm and asserts that the idea of female moral superiority held radical possibilities for both feminists and anti-feminists.¹² Some microcosmic institutional histories have not explicitly centered on women but demonstrate the semi-permeability of the deliberative, or formal and political, and persuasive, or informal and unofficial, spheres of influences. The stronger the institution—male or female—the greater power the collective

¹⁰ Classic works regarding the benevolent empire include Charles Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960) and Clifford S. Griffin, *Their Brother's Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1860* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1960).

¹¹ For the ways in which women perpetuated of social and gender roles through activism, see Mary Page Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Katharine Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976). Carroll Smith-Rosenburg's "Beauty, the Beast, and the Militant Woman: A Case of Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," *American Quarterly* 23 (October 1971): 562-84 explores active solidarity within the public sphere.

¹² Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

had to affect the goings on in the deliberative sphere of formal policy and politics.¹³ Others illustrate that elite white women of the Early Republic emphasized a gendered vision of republic virtue and compromised the line between persuasive and deliberative spheres through social capital.¹⁴ Still more scholarship has looked at the ways in which class and political issues shaped the nature female benevolence work while many have considered the impact of non-voters on what became formal public policy.¹⁵

This chapter is in conversation with the broader historiography of institutions and voluntary societies, as Mormon women's activism mirrored that of many moral reformers throughout the nation. Focusing on Mormon women's collective action which often transpired through the Relief society, it places the Mormon process of female institution-building within the context of other American free associations.¹⁶ It explores the explosive process of democratic and voluntary institution building expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville as "the immense assemblage of associations" which each "propos[ed] to inculcate some truth or to foster some feeling."¹⁷ It similarly engages the work of ordinary nineteenth-century Americans who became grassroots civic activists despite barriers to formal legal deliberation such as voting and office-holding.¹⁸ Employing the work of scholars of religious free associations, this chapter explores U.S. voluntary societies administered by female moral

¹³ John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹⁵ See Kyle G. Volk, *Moral Minorities and the making of American Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁶ See Ann Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, "Of the Use Which the Americans Make of Public Associations in Civil Life" in *Democracy in America* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835-1840).

¹⁸ See Johann Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2008). For a full discussion of the deliberative and persuasive spheres of influence in America, see John Brooke, *Columbia Rising*.

reformers and links their methods to those of the Relief Society.¹⁹ My work demonstrates that Mormon pioneer women, like their Protestant counterparts in the east, embraced a critical moment in the mid- nineteenth century to affect Church policy and institutional norms.

Mormon folklore and Mormon history have been woven together over nearly two centuries, becoming in some points, inseparable. Research, therefore, can be difficult and problematic. While this project has no intention of discrediting the LDS Church, certain source issues must be addressed. First, Eliza Snow’s original Relief Society constitution no longer exists, nor do historians know when it was lost.²⁰ Meanwhile, however, scholars reference this absent document in nearly every discussion of the early Relief Society and the women who participated in it.²¹ Secondly, the only extant record of several of Joseph Smith’s initial comments to the women of the Nauvoo Relief Society occurs in a single article of *Exponent*, an LDS women’s magazine, forty years after the time at which they were supposed to have transpired. These quotes, essential to much of the present LDS understanding of the Relief Society’s formation, have not survived in any primary sources.²²

¹⁹ See Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 80.

See also Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution: 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

²⁰ Snow’s diary begins two months after the founding of the Relief Society and she only references the organization once in her personal writings. Nowhere does she mention the constitution. Her 1868 article in *Deseret News*, in which she discusses the history of the Relief Society and her participation therein, likewise fails to mention her writing of the original constitution and bylaws. See Eliza Snow, “A Day of Much Interest:” *The Nauvoo Journal and Notebook*,” in *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, ed., Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University, 2000), 49 and Eliza R. Snow, “Female Relief Society,” *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, UT), April 18, 1868, Vol. 1, no. 172, 2.

²¹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *Daughters in My Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2011), 11, Linda King Newell and Valeen Toppetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 107. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, 26, Leonard J. Arrington, “The Legacy of Early Latter-Day Saint Women,” *John Whitmer Historical Association* 10 (1990), 12.

²² Smith purportedly told Eliza Snow and the women of the Church that Snow’s “constitution and by-laws [were] the best he had ever seen” but that the Lord had “something better for them than a written constitution.” Furthermore, Smith is repeatedly credited with stating that the Church was “never perfectly organized until the women were thus organized.” Both quotes, essential to much of the present LDS understanding of the Relief

Yet, while these statements do not exist in the Nauvoo Minutes or the journals of the many astute diary-keeping women who would have been present, they appear in numerous religious and secular publications. They are significant because they contribute to the LDS understanding of Church history, and because the Church embraces them as foundational to present points of theology. In sum, certain oft-repeated claims of both secular and religious works regarding the founding of the Relief Society are simply not extant in surviving primary sources, and though the Church considers many of them crucial to LDS history, this thesis will exclude assertions for which primary sources are lacking or inaccessible.

My work looks at early LDS women's collective action from a novel perspective. Considering the Relief Society and other LDS women's collaborative efforts as units of many individuals rather than deconstructing individual leaders, I demonstrate that these women engaged in the broader context of American free associations and to affect Church policy and institutional norms. While they rejected other women's benevolent societies as sinful and misguided, Mormon women employed many of the same strategies and sought many of the same ends as other women's Christian organizations. Meanwhile, these women were often geographically and ideologically separate from women's societies in the East, rarely seeking public funding, legitimation, or legislation. In this way, the Mormon foremothers operated as what I call a "rugged collective"—embracing the rugged, commoner rhetoric of many American pioneers from a collective, rather than individualistic, perspective. Rugged collectivity was evident both through the official Relief Society and through unofficial gatherings in which Mormon women performed benevolent work. While many non-Mormon male pioneers in the mid nineteenth century, both in wagon trains and

Society's formation, are not extant in any primary sources. Sarah M. Kimball, "Autobiography," *Women's Exponent*, 12, no. 1, 1 Sept. 1883, 51.

small family groups, embodied a sense of hyper-individualism and the pursuit of personal economic improvement, documents from Mormon women demonstrate conscious and communal efforts to quell dissent and promote unity.²³ Looking at these women from an institutional, rather than an explicitly individual perspective, allows me to see, as some scholars have noted, how unified efforts “far exceeded unorganized individual aid in scope and regularity” and how this organized group of women “became the primary conduit” of social welfare within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.²⁴

This chapter demonstrates the variety of ways in which LDS women put their political ideology into practice, engaging the rhetoric of both democracy and conformity to create a “rugged collective” of women, often outside the purview of the Priesthood. Echoing the activism of many female moral reformers throughout the nation, Mormon women took on a particularly democratic tone in order to fulfill an explicitly religious purpose. Both official Relief Society meetings and unofficial congregations of LDS women included elections and decisions made by majority consent, while female-orchestrated celebrations emphasized the ideological consistency of rigid theology and American patriotism. They conducted meetings through parliamentary procedure and the recording of minutes became crucial to their vision of themselves as a legitimate institution and as an archive of their many relief projects. LDS women’s groups also engaged with Native American women and children, seeking to convert them to the Mormon faith and culture. Finally, these early Mormon women acted as a political bloc to lobby for political change. They petitioned governors and Congress to

²³ For non-LDS pioneer individualism and inter-pioneer conflicts, see John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 13 and 28-29, Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 19 and Deborah Lawrence, *Writing the Trail* (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press, 2006).

²⁴ Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 8.

protest the Boggs Execution Order and to assert their rights as law-abiding and, in their eyes, exceptional Americans. Proclaiming a love for liberty from government interference, free speech, and popular sovereignty, these women nonetheless fostered a female community of unity in belief and action, rejecting dissenting sisters as “iniquitous.”²⁵

The roots of Mormon women’s rugged collectivity began as unofficial gatherings in the 1830s of sisters who wished to use their talents and skills to assist in the building of the Kirtland Temple. After the Saints were pressured by anti-Mormons to leave Ohio, the LDS sisters gathered and collaborated again to help the Priesthood build the Nauvoo Temple. After much discussion of formalizing their association, women including Eliza Snow and Sarah Kimball met to discuss official purposes, policies, and bylaws to be included in their institution. Joseph Smith accepted and legitimized the society as the official women’s arm of the LDS Church.²⁶ This was significant to the Society’s membership as it assured them that regardless of similarly the LDS women’s organization looked or acted in comparison to other female-operated benevolent societies, it was uniquely and divinely blessed and guided. It was not to be a secular, but rather an explicitly religious association, with the goal to help build the Kingdom of God through whatever means necessary. Secondly, this organization was a re-creation of the Celestial Kingdom in which heavenly parents oversee hosts of spirit

²⁵ See Derr, Madsen, Holbrook and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 42.

²⁶ Joseph Smith, recorded by Sarah M. Kimball, “Autobiography,” *Women’s Exponent*, 1 Sept. 1883, 51, also in Eliza Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” in *Personal Writings*, 35. These sources are not, by this historical definition, primary, as both were written decades after Smith reportedly said this. However, in the words of Derr, Madsen, Holbrook and Grow, “Minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society do not contain such a statement by Joseph Smith but do record two of his close associates expressing a similar idea,” *The First Fifty Years*, 6. The first associate was Newel K. Whitney, who is recorded in the May 27, 1842 Relief Society Minutes stating that he “without the female all things cannot be restor’d to the earth it takes all to restore the priesthood.” Derr, Madsen, Holbrook and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 75-76. The second was Reynolds Cahoon, who was recorded in the August 13, 1843 Relief Society Minutes stating the Relief Society “is according to the order of God connected with the priesthood according to the same good principals & knowledge.” Derr, Madsen, Holbrook and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 115. So while we do not have record of Joseph Smith expressing the idea that the Priesthood was perfected by female organization, it is evident that the idea existed among high Church authorities in the early 1840s.

children. In the same way that the Church envisioned Mormon women as “helpmeets” to their respective husbands, the Relief Society was meant to assist the priesthood in works of charity, building the female community, and supporting Mormon women and children in need.²⁷ After Smith’s formal legitimization of the society, his associate John Taylor blessed Relief Society president Emma Smith that she would be a “mother in Israel.” This meant that through her leadership, God’s kingdom on Earth now had, as in heaven, a mother and father in Emma and Joseph Smith, respectively.²⁸

Significantly, early members of what became the Relief Society were adamant about remaining peculiar amid the rise of voluntary benevolent societies. In 1842, Eliza Snow asserted that that “the popular institutions of the day should not be our guide—that as daughters of Zion, we should set an example for all the world, rather than confine ourselves to the course which had been heretofore pursued.”²⁹ Early in its organization, female and male leaders gathered to establish the society’s name, which Apostle John Taylor argued should be “The Nauvoo Female Benevolent Society.” Emma Smith and Eliza Snow rejected the term, arguing that the word “benevolent” was “a tainted term” reminiscent of other voluntary associations which were “infamously corrupt.”³⁰ Still, however, the Relief Society was incredibly reflective of its non- LDS counterparts. They were, in so many respects, a women’s Christian benevolent society.

²⁷ See Doctrine and Covenants 49:15-17 and Moses 3:21-24.

²⁸ See Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 33

²⁹ Eliza Snow, Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, March 17, 1842, Recorded by Willard Richards <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book/2#full-transcript>

³⁰ Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 30-31.

Though they valued liberty from government interference, they functioned through highly regulated frontier communitarianism to accomplish benevolent and political work through the rhetoric of democracy.

Certainly, LDS women's organizations were not the only ones to promote popular sovereignty alongside strict unity. Alexis de Toqueville discussed the odd coexistence of democracy and social conformity within American institutions in *Democracy in America*. He wrote that democracy naturally lends itself to divisiveness—it breeds individualism, independence, and social isolation. This leads to vulnerability of the individual, causing them to seek outside support. “If,” he wrote, “at the heart of such [a democratic] nation, the influence of each individual is weak and almost non-existent, the power of the mass over each individual mind is very extensive.”³¹ A legal system of individual equality embeds no natural allies which exist in an aristocratic system, and “as all men grow more alike, each individual feels increasingly weak in relation to the rest.” Therefore, “public approval seems as vital as the air they breathe,” and people within a democratic society find themselves, through social necessity, conforming to the will of the many. Though Toqueville never came into contact with the Latter-Day Saint community, his words rang exceptionally true among the collaboration of women within the Nauvoo Relief Society. These women remained steadfast in their devotion to the democratic process while endorsing cultural and intellectual conformism and punishing dissent. The individualism which can come with majority-rule elections was so often superseded by oppressive but unofficial social pressures. Among so many who embraced both intense religiosity and the Jacksonian ideals of natural dignity and

³¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: And Two Essays on America*, Trans. Gerald E. Bevan (New York: Penguin, 2003), 398.

“common woman ideology,” personal industry or failure carried particularly significant consequences wherein failure could not be blamed on external factors.

LDS women revealed their commitment to popular sovereignty most notably through Relief Society meetings. One early Relief Society member noted that the society “functioned as ‘miniature democratic laboratories,’ teaching their member self-government.”³² While we do not have Eliza Snow’s initial Relief Society Constitution, we have copious notes and minutes from early meetings which demonstrate that these women displayed democratic rhetoric. Unlike the First Presidency of the Church, in which Heavenly Father “called” members to places of authority through the prophet, the Relief Society chose presidents and other authorities through election who could be removed if they failed to “fill the office with dignity.”³³ Though it must be admitted that Relief Society leadership was markedly elite, as the first president was Joseph Smith’s primary wife and the second president was married to Joseph Smith and, after his death, Brigham Young. Still, Relief Society members nominated and elected Emma Smith and interactions below the highest authority relied on voting, elections, and consensus from the many women of varying socio-economic statuses who composed the society.

In the first meeting in Nauvoo, the women agreed that “whatever the majority of the house decide[s] upon becomes a law to the Society” and that “when one has the floor, occupies as long as she pleases.”³⁴ Democratic elections continued into the Utah period, as evidenced by the Fourteenth Ward Relief Society, organized in 1856 in Salt Lake City, which

³² Desdemona Wadsworth Fuller, cited in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 26.

³³ Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 42. Relief Society authorities in the twenty-first century no longer embrace this democratic practice. Rather, women are “called” by higher male authorities, and presumably by Heavenly Father, to serve in the women’s organization.

³⁴ Nauvoo Female Relief Society Minutes, March 17, 1842 in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 33.

noted in bylaws four and five that “a vote of any meeting regularly called” would determine the admission of any new members and of new bylaws.³⁵ Meanwhile, however, a majority of the members could expel a fellow member for “Unchristianlike conduct,” a term not defined in any of the LDS women’s organizations’ documents.³⁶ Emma Smith and ordinary members regularly reminded the Society that “one principle object was to purge out iniquity.” In order to keep the society “pure before God,” it was “necessary that sin should be exposed,” and members were admonished to take action when a fellow sister failed to be one in unity with the sisterhood and the Church.³⁷ Alongside these warnings, Smith and other members often reminded the sisters that they must “act in concert or nothing can be done.”³⁸ Relief Society meetings, then, reflected a bounded embrace of democracy, as members often encouraged other women to vote and act wisely, or to “choose the right” by adhering to doctrinal and institutional norms.³⁹

The first recorded example of successful conformity is Lucy Ann Munjar, whom the society voted to “suspended for a time” for iniquitous behavior after a lengthy exhortation toward reform by president Emma Smith. A few weeks later, Munjar repented and “impress’d the necessity of being united in doing good.”⁴⁰ Munjar’s case is significant in that her suspension was democratic: President Smith proposed her temporary expulsion, her

³⁵ Salt Lake City Fourteenth Ward Relief Society Report, September 17, 1856 in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 212.

³⁶ Salt Lake City Fourteenth Ward Relief Society Report, September 17, 1856 in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 213.

³⁷ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Seventh Meeting of the Society, May 12, 1842.

³⁸ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the Society, March 31, 1842 in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 42-43.

³⁹ “Choose the Right” is a popular LDS hymn, composed in 1872, which condensed complex LDS Arminianism into one simplistic melody. See Joseph L. Townsend and Henry A. Tuckett, “Choose the Right,” in *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Hymnal* (Salt lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1985), 239.

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Seventh Meeting of the Society, May 27, 1842 in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 75.

proposal was seconded and carried by the majority of the society. Secondly, her argument in favor of admission back into the society centered on her change of heart regarding the necessity of unity amongst the sisterhood. In essence, she realized the importance of conforming to the society's norms, and she subsequently conformed. In another instance, in Nauvoo, the Relief Society formally advised a woman named Roxena Repshar to "return to her husband," from whom she had separated "without cause." President Emma Smith noted that if Repshar chose to go home, she would continue in fellowship with the sisters, "but if not our prayers will do no good."⁴¹ Records do not exist that explain whether Repshar reconciled with her husband or not, but the fact that the Relief Society of Nauvoo issued a formal and collective statement to this woman threatening expulsion for a "violation of the laws of virtue" demonstrates that democratic rhetoric and strict norms coexisted within the institution.⁴² Eliza Snow reflected the Society's steadfast rejection of iniquitous behavior and appropriated the language of American political processes in her poem "The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo." Stating that the society "stamp[ed] a vetoing impress on each move/ that Virtue's present dictates disapprove," she maintained ambiguous definitions of virtue and iniquity while engaging compatible notions of conformity and democracy.⁴³ A strong spirit of conformity, then, existed alongside the Nauvoo Relief Society's democratic rhetoric. The society's authorities regularly encouraged members to take great care in following the commandments of the faith, especially of humility and watchfulness, and the

⁴¹ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Society, August 31, 1842 in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 95.

⁴² Emma Smith stated in the ninth meeting of the Relief Society on May 26, 1842 that she wanted "none in this Society who had violated the laws of virtue." See Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 71.

⁴³ Eliza Snow, "The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo: What is it?" *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, IL), July 1 1842, Vol. 3, no. 17, 846, cited in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 134-135.

will of the majority decided which morally upstanding women could be included in the society's ranks and which ones would be excluded for iniquitous behavior.⁴⁴

Even before the formal organization of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, LDS women assembled to engage in political activism. In 1839, Joseph Smith called for the Saints to write petitions of redress to protest their treatment at the hands of Missouri governor Boggs and paramilitary anti-Mormon mobs. Their hope was to attract the attention of either Congress or President Martin Van Buren and receive compensation. As President Jackson had refused Mormon pleas for protection in the early 1830s, they hoped they could gain the new president's sympathies. In the wake of the Mormons' removal from Missouri, Latter-Day Saint women helped their fellow sisters compose affidavits. Of the 678 individuals who filed affidavits, seventy were women and ten of those women were illiterate.⁴⁵ These women's petitions ranged from "the expense for being mooveing to Mo" to claims of being taken prisoner by Missouri militias and mobs.⁴⁶ While the Relief Society was not yet in formal existence, these women's petitions demonstrate several things. First, women's petitions, particularly that of illiterate women, demonstrate common woman ideology. The fact that these women felt the voicing of their losses was worthy of congressional and even presidential attention is reflective of a belief in natural dignity, the democratic procedure of petitioning, and female institutional unity. Through collective action, these women put democratic ideology into practice. LDS women came together without any institutional backing other than the unifying element of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

⁴⁴ See Minutes of the Proceedings of the Seventh Meeting of the Society, May 12, 1842, *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book*, in The Joseph Smith Papers.

⁴⁵ "Introduction" *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833-1838 Missouri Conflict*, Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833-1838 Missouri Conflict*, (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), xviii.

⁴⁶ Johnson, ed, "Introduction," in *Mormon Redress Petitions*, xvii-xxxiv.

These petitions predate the women's official organization, and these early female collaborative petitioning efforts did not encompass the full range of LDS women in Nauvoo. Rather, these petitions reflect the LDS women's rugged collectivity. They worked together to assert the type of authority and independence quintessentially associated with solitary frontiersmen. Competent, hard-working, and focused on survival, these women demanded rights for their female communities.

Though many of these petitions were from individual women, rather than group petitions, they were written with the understanding that many LDS women were petitioning simultaneously. Joseph Smith had charged the Saints with detailing their abuses in Missouri in letters to Congress, and the women responded overwhelmingly. Amanda Smith, who provided a lengthy and thorough testimony of abuses, demonstrated a continual belief in American institutions by explaining her children's "hunger, fatigue, and cold," and the "slaughter" of her husband, son, and friends alongside a discussion of America as a "land of liberty" with an "honorable government."⁴⁷ Likewise, Hannah Dutton and Mary Benson wrote a joint petition rejecting the "destruction of the articles of property belonging to Mr. David Dutton."⁴⁸ Importantly, David Dutton was still alive at the time of this petition: this demonstrates that Hannah and Mary believed that their joint petition would hold significant sway in Washington toward the Dutton family's compensation. Betsey Bidwell helped Cathrene Morriss, an illiterate woman, demonstrate that the Missouri militia had ordered her out of her house and had threatened her life at gunpoint.⁴⁹ These collaborative actions

⁴⁷ Amanda Smith, 7 May 1839, affidavit sworn before C.M. Woods, C.C.C. Adams Co., IL, "Individual Affidavits from the National Archives (M-Z)" in Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions*, 493-559.

⁴⁸ Mary Benson and Hannah Dutton, 9 Jan. 1840, Sworn Before S. Comer, J.P., Hancock Co., IL "Individual Affidavits from the National Archives (A-L)" in Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions*, 411-492.

⁴⁹ Betsey Bidwell and Cathrene Morriss, 8 Jan 1840, sworn before J.Orr, J.P., Adams Co., Ill "Individual Affidavits from the National Archives (A-L)" in Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions*, 411-492.

demonstrate democratic ideology on multiple levels. These women were not merely discussing ideology in personal journals or poetry but were putting that rhetoric into practice on a national stage. Moreover, they worked together as a rugged collective to appeal for rights not only for themselves but for their greater community.

The LDS female community again engaged in political activism and solidarity to fight for rights they believed had been violated. After Joseph Smith had been arrested and released multiple times and the Mormons had been victimized through many individual acts of violence at the hands of Missouri mobs, Smith's life was again in immediate peril. This time, he was on trial for ordering his personal friend and bodyguard Porter Rockwell to assassinate Missouri governor Boggs. Boggs had, in 1838, pushed legislation to forcibly remove the Mormons from Missouri. Most notably, this included passage of the "extermination order," which made the murder of Latter-Day Saints legal. Because Missouri governor Thomas Reynolds was a Missouri resident and Smith had previously lived in Missouri, Reynolds sought Smith's extradition to Missouri for the trial.

Knowing that a trial in Missouri would be disastrous for Smith, the Relief Society petitioned Illinois governor Thomas Carlin for "the privileges and advantages guaranteed to us by the laws of this State and the United States."⁵⁰ This petition first addressed gender norms, stating that "it would be more consistent with the delicacy of the female character to be silent" but that owing to previous "cold blooded atrocities...horrid deeds... [and] the tears of widows and orphans" and the most recent atrocity of Smith's imprisonment, the sisters must act. The petition furthermore emphasizes the Mormons' law-abiding virtue and patriotism, contrasting it with the "illegal proceeding" of the Missouri militia and of anti-

⁵⁰ Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 139.

Mormon mobs. These women again asserted First Amendment rights, this time in the right to petition. While they were unable to affect policy through the ballot box, they engaged in lobbying to influence the deliberative sphere from the persuasive sphere.⁵¹ The Relief Society obtained a thousand signatures on a petition after Carlin rejected the first document. Four months of legal limbo ensued, until a federal judge ruled that Boggs' affidavit was flawed released Smith in January of 1843. Joseph Smith conceded that "the Relief Society... had taken the most active part in my welfare against my enemies" and that grave consequences would have resulted without the women's intervention.⁵² In this instance, Mormon women employed Mormon-American exceptionalism, patriotism, and democratic activism, positing themselves as model citizens, to preserve the LDS Church.

Long a part of American political action, petitioning became a significant tool for nonvoting Americans to assert opinion and advocate for change. Women, poor men, African-Americans, abolitionists, Native Americans, and others outside of the deliberative sphere used petitions and lobbying beginning in the colonial period to affect policy without having the authority of policymakers.⁵³ Women, particularly before 1830s, petitioned all levels of government as the Relief Society did, with the "discourse of domesticity," using arguments founded in the moral superiority of women to rally for legislation which would assist women, children, and the poor. Along with women's rights activists, female abolitionists, Indian removal opponents, and others, the Relief Society engaged in greater political action than their democratic foremothers after 1830.⁵⁴ While pre-1830 petitions "influenced policy," post

⁵¹ For a fuller explanation of the deliberative vs. persuasive, see John Brooke's *Columbia Rising*, 9.

⁵² Arrington, "Legacy," 7.

⁵³ Stephen A. Higginson, "A Short History of the Right to Petition Government for the Redress of Grievances," *The Yale Law Journal* 96, no. 1 (Nov. 1986): 142-166.

⁵⁴ First quote, Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 139.

1830 petitions were no longer in “entirely female and private” spaces but rather “in a space declared national and political.”⁵⁵ In the same way as female opponents to Indian Removal petitioned, the Relief Society used quintessentially “female” characteristics such as benevolence and purity to rally for similar same political ends as men were.⁵⁶ In petitioning Thomas Carlin, these women spanned two worlds: the benevolent and the political. As nonvoters, they worked to sway male voters and appropriated the language of femininity, patriotism, and benevolence for political means. Like their antislavery sisters in the east, they presented policymakers with the signatures of thousands for benevolent and non-self serving purposes. The Relief Society’s petition to Governor Thomas Carlin thus fits squarely within the broader pattern of democratic female political activism. Emphasizing their adherence to gender roles and deference to male authority, they separated themselves from “radical” women’s rights activists and lobbied from a place of feminine conservatism.⁵⁷

Yet, Mormon women did not only work in solidarity to protect the Church from destruction. Well before Mormon women fought against the U.S. government’s criminalization of plural marriage, they petitioned to retain it in the form Joseph Smith envisioned. While scholars since the nineteenth century have debated the agency of Mormons who participated in polygamy, many diaries of early Mormon women demonstrate

⁵⁵ Alisse Theodore Portnoy, “‘Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard:’ Negotiating Female Decorum, United States Politics, and Political Agency, 1829-1831,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 576.

⁵⁶ Male Church authorities including John Taylor and Brigham Young headed a separate committee to petition the Carlin. Intriguingly, the male effort gained fewer signatures and, though we do not have Carlin’s reflections on the ultimate outcome of the Boggs V. Smith case, Smith credited the Relief Society with being the most effective toward influencing Carlin in Smith’s favor. See Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 136.

⁵⁷ Sylvia D. Hoffert, *When Hens Crow: The Woman’s Rights Movement in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 8.

often reluctant but voluntary involvement.⁵⁸ In the fall of 1842, John C. Bennett, an associate of Joseph Smith and temporary mayor of Nauvoo began taking additional wives and publicizing Smith's still incomplete doctrine of celestial marriage. At the time, only Joseph Smith and his wives engaged in polygamy, and Smith commanded his associates to abstain from the practice until an undisclosed future date.⁵⁹ In opposition to Bennett's incorrect practice of celestial marriage, nineteen women wrote and submitted a statement to the *Times and Seasons*, a Nauvoo newspaper, declaring that "We the undersigned members of the ladies' relief society, and married females do certify and declare that we know of no system of marriage being practiced in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints save the one contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and we give this certificate to the public to show that J.C. Bennett's 'secret wife system' is a disclosure of his own make."⁶⁰ Given that at least three of the women who signed the document were either engaged in polygamy with Smith themselves or had witnessed the plural marriage of others, LDS Church scholars have interpreted this to mean that these women "likely differentiated in their minds between what they saw as an inspired system of marriage, commanded by God, and Bennett's practice of

⁵⁸ Elvira Annie Cowles, for example, wrote that though her husband promised her that he would not take additional wives, she observed the suffering of other female pioneers and told him "I will go to Cache Valley with you if you will marry those girls and take them too." Elvira Annie Cowles, *Elvira Annie Cowles: Utah Pioneer of 1847*, MSS 8, Women's Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

Bathseba Smith likewise situated polygamy within the rhetoric of queenship and exaltation: "Being thoroughly convinced, as well as my husband, that the doctrine of plurality of wives was from God, and having a fixed determination to attain to Celestial glory, I felt to embrace the whole Gospel, and that it was for my husband's exaltation that he should obey the revelation on Celestial Marriage [D+C 132] that he might attain to kingdoms, thrones, principalities and powers, firmly believing that I should participate with him in all his blessings, glory and honor... I had joy in having a testimony that what I had done was acceptable to my father in heaven." Bathsheba Wilson Bigler Smith, *Autobiography*, MSS 920, Women's Manuscript Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. Eliza Snow wrote in her life sketch, "as I increased in knowledge concerning the principle and design of Plural Marriage, I grew in love with it," Eliza R. Snow, "Sketch" in *Personal Writings*, 52.

⁵⁹ Joseph Smith, "Journal December 1841- December 1842," 123. <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/28>.

⁶⁰ "On Marriage," *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1, 1842 in Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 142-144.

unlicensed bigamy.”⁶¹ “On Marriage,” then, is a demonstration of Relief Society action and rugged collectivity on multiple levels. As some of these women were plural wives and others, according to this and other documents, supported the practice, many early Mormon women engaged in both westward pioneering and marriage as collective units. Secondly, “On Marriage” is an act of female solidarity against opponents of the Church itself. While documents do not specify whether these nineteen women were coerced into writing the statement, the fact remains that nineteen members of the Nauvoo Relief Society denounced Bennett’s actions and maintained that all marriage among worthy Church members was scripturally sound. This message was not meant exclusively for other Mormons, but was published in a secular newspaper to be read by non-Mormons as well. These women worked with the institutional backing of the Relief Society to defend the greater Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. They proceeded as a collective and used the Relief Society name to speak for the entire women’s association. Thus, they asserted solidarity among the Mormon women of Nauvoo and female adherence to LDS doctrine.

During the early years of LDS organization, Mormon women worked in solidarity to accomplish political goals. Using their common faith as a unifying force, they joined democratic and religious rhetoric to petition the U.S. government, support LDS polygamy practices against non-Mormon critics, and limit dissent within their own ranks. These were ordinary women, who, through collective action, believed themselves capable of feats far beyond their experience. As they moved west, they employed similar methods to accomplish political ends away from formal government supervision. In modern Utah, these women put

⁶¹ Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 143.

beliefs in LDS theology and American Manifest Destiny into practice among their indigenous neighbors.

In 1854, President Brigham Young and General Authority Parley Pratt called for assistance in poor relief for the women and children of the Ute people, with whom the Saints had previously waged war. Like many American conversion efforts, Mormon missionary work among Utah Native Americans was culturally insensitive and imperialistic. It sought to spread the LDS religion among women and children and to instill white American material values of dress, farming, and housing into Native communities. From the Mormon perspective, Native Americans were the descendants of Lamanites, an ancient tribe of the Book of Mormon who were cursed with dark skin for their perpetual wickedness. God was merciful, however, and blessed the Lamanite descendants with a veiled memory of their heritage, so they would easily accept the Gospel with the assistance righteous believers.⁶² Mormon women were key actors in this “civilizing mission,” procuring and mobilizing resources to fulfill Young’s call.

To be sure, LDS women did not see their indigenous neighbors as equals. Snow wrote multiple poems about “the red man,” sympathizing with the plight of many Native Americans in the wake of Jackson’s Indian Removal Act but suggesting that the Gospel of Jesus Christ might provide eternal happiness beyond their earthly suffering.⁶³ In the words of one historian, “Heathenism seemed to be a surmountable obstacle...if children could be brought into the fold at a tender age and raised as Christians.”⁶⁴ Though this rhetoric was

⁶² See Rodney Turner, “The Lamanite Mark,” in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo: BYU Publications, 1989): 133-157.

⁶³ Eliza R. Snow, “The Red Man of the South” and “The Red Man of the West” in Eliza R. Snow, *Poems: Religious, Historical and Political*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Latter-Day Saints’ Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1877), 35-88.

⁶⁴ Carol Devens, “If we Get the Girls, We Get the Race”: Missionary Education of Native American Girls,” *Journal of World History* 3, No. 2 (Fall, 1992): 223.

often couched in spiritual terms, it reflected a twofold Jacksonian ideology. First, it demonstrated the Mormon belief in Democratic improvement; that Native Americans could *choose* to convert, thereby escaping their ancestors' sins. Mormons had no intention of incorporating Native Americans into greater white LDS society, but rather sought to conquer indigenous beliefs with the Latter-Day gospel. Secondly, it showed the LDS embrace of Manifest Destiny. The belief that the "Almighty Ruler of the Universe" intended for "our domain [to extend] from ocean to ocean" was indeed reflected in the LDS attempt to spread religion and white, democratic values westward to Native Americans and eastward to the British Isles.⁶⁵

Mormon women gathered unofficially throughout multiple Utah wards and congregations to enact benevolent work. Though resources were limited in the first years of LDS Utah settlement, they collected donations, had fundraising parties, sewed items to sell to fellow Mormons, and made clothing to distribute among the Native American community. In line with their non-LDS Christian missionaries in the west, this clothing included jeans, dresses, and aprons. Aprons were a particularly interesting item upon which LDS women placed emphasis; unlike pants and dresses, their purpose comes out of cultural ideas of cleanliness rather than functional (although also culturally-driven) purpose of clothing the body. Though Brigham Young provided regular assignments and set apart specific individuals to head certain tasks, LDS women worked in concert to provide food, clothing, and education—in the English language and the Latter-Day religion—to the nearby Ute community.

⁶⁵ Polk, James K. "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1845. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25814>.

Like much of the Christian benevolent work executed in the antebellum period, these women acted as “member missionaries” who largely stayed at home raising funds while a few Church elites performed actual missionary work among Native American communities.⁶⁶ The Indian Relief Society of Parowan, for example, set apart four women as teachers and nurses to minister to the Paiute Indians. Specifically, these women sought to teach the Latter-Day religion, instruct them on western methods of childcare, and to nurse “according to revelation, that is, by laying on hands”⁶⁷ Similar to the actions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Mormon women functioned as “collectors” who asked for donations and sold home-made goods such as rugs and other household goods, the funds from which would be added to the mission fund. Organizations such as the Female Association of Hampshire County likewise supported the male and married missionaries in the Hampshire Missionary Society by fundraising and sending items which would encourage Native Americans’ cultural and religious assimilation.⁶⁸ The key historian of unofficial LDS Relief Societies notes that in 1855, Indian relief societies throughout Utah had collectively contributed over \$1,500 to the cause.⁶⁹

Though not bound by any official Church or government institution, LDS women’s-operated Native American benevolent organizations encouraged a sameness in thought and

⁶⁶ Richard L. Jensen, “Forgotten Relief Societies, 1844-67,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (1983): 114.

⁶⁷ J.H. Martuneau to G.A. Smith, Parowan, *Deseret News*, 11 July 1855. Nursing “according to revelation” rather than according to the conventions of medical science was in part a reflection of LDS women’s early anti-intellectualism, discussed earlier. Many Mormons of both genders expressed the idea that doctors were faithless and societally problematic. In this view, ordinary, faithful women could heal much better than credentialed medical physicians.

⁶⁸ Robert Pierce Beaver, *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 18.

⁶⁹ Jensen, “Forgotten Relief Societies,” 114. Interestingly, Brigham Young contributed by purchasing a number of rugs to furnish the newly-built Lion House which housed his polygamous family, many of whom were in the very Relief Society within which the rugs had been produced. Jensen, “Forgotten Relief Societies,” 115

action. The minutes of one of these meetings note that these women “entered into a covenant” whereby they promised to “cultivate a spirit of union, humanity, and love.”⁷⁰ Jensen interprets this covenant as evidence that “the society consciously sought to avoid some of the problems of the Relief Society at Nauvoo” but leaves these problems ambiguous. The context of the Relief Society’s encouragement of conformity and adherence to notions of Manifest Destiny indicates that these women engaged with Democratic political ideologies while fostering less-than-democratic ideas of harmony and conformity.

Early Mormon women’s emphasis on unity continued throughout the post-pioneer period in both outward missionary efforts and among Mormon settlers. As explored in the second chapter, Mormon pioneers were often intensely patriotic and frequently embraced a view of Mormon-American exceptionalism. By viewing themselves as the best type of American citizens and by interpreting the Constitution as a divinely inspired document, early Mormons often held exceptionalist views of both their own people and the country from which they were ousted. These views were not expressed solely by individuals, but were perpetuated through female-led institutional gatherings. One of the most significant ways in which LDS women collectively demonstrated patriotism and encouraged conformity to Mormon nationalism was through festive culture and celebrations. This was not a new idea; non-voters participated in nationalist celebrations to voice their political opinions and to stir up adherence to particular values from the period of the Early Republic onward.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Jensen, “Forgotten Relief Societies” 113.

⁷¹ For an analysis of festive culture among ordinary people who were often outside the deliberative sphere, see Simon P. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). Newman presents a social history of the United States’ Early National Period. Exploring various ways in which the body politic appropriated celebrations, symbols, rites, and ideologies, he lends agency to those who are often overlooked in the narrative of early America, arguing that commoners’ participation in public festivities helped shape political culture on the national level. While his work ends just after the election of Thomas Jefferson, his assertion that ordinary Americans were

Utah newspapers reported frequent celebrations wherein the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and American flag were hailed alongside LDS scripture and hymns. These hymns, significantly, were often written by LDS foremothers. At one Independence Day celebration in the Salt Lake Valley, the oldest men of Deseret addressed their fellow Mormons. First, they recounted a version of colonial history which included virtuous colonists fighting against “oppressive laws” and “unjust taxes.” The oldest members then read the Declaration of Independence, sections of both the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Deseret, sang Eliza Snow’s hymn “Thrones, Kingdoms, Dominions, and all Institutions,” and read Snow’s poem “Ode to Deseret.” They gave another address, wherein they discussed how the United States was initially virtuous and pure but had become corrupted and the Saints, driven out by iniquity, were the last preservers of the Founders’ original intent. Another Eliza Snow hymn was sung in closing.⁷² Other articles noted that Fourth of July celebrations “breathed the spirit of pure patriotism, true liberty, and happiness unalloyed.”⁷³ Journalists described “the bursts of feeling by music, singing, speeches, orations, toasts...” as “unsurpassed by any preceding it among the most refined and civilized nation on the earth.”⁷⁴ These celebrations, then clearly promoted nationalist, American exceptionalist, and Mormon exceptionalist sentiment. Participants described the greatness of America and American institutions while asserting Mormon fulfilment of the Founders’ intentions.

active and influential in the formation political culture was evident throughout the antebellum period among non-Mormons and Mormons alike.

⁷² J. D. Worden, “The Celebration of the Fourth of July,” *Deseret News*, July 12, 1851.

⁷³ Worden, “The Celebration of the Fourth of July.”

⁷⁴ “The Celebration of the Twenty-Fourth of July,” *Deseret News*, July 26, 1851.

What has been greatly overlooked regarding these celebrations, however, is the female role in organizing these expressions of festive political culture. The Relief society organized these celebrations, thereby creating spaces wherein nationalist sentiment and conformity to Mormon-American exceptionalism was stimulated. Though male authorities gave formal addresses, it was Mormon women who organized themselves and performed the legwork which made these celebrations possible. The mundane tasks of booking halls and speakers who would address the celebrants, preparing food and drink, making decorations, and cleaning up which fostered the existence of these festivities were all female-orchestrated. Only occasionally did women receive formal acknowledgement for their work in organizing these parties. This rare recognition was exemplified by one toast in which one man hailed “The Ladies of Deseret” who “like early swarms, make full hives. And that’s the way the kingdom thrives.”⁷⁵ These parties, then, exemplify collective female action in the implementation and perpetuation of patriotic feeling among the men and women of Deseret.

Mormon women’s engagement with Jacksonian notions of nationalism and American exceptionalism, then, were not merely bound between the covers of personal journals. Nor did these women discuss political ideology exclusively within the Relief Society or other women’s- only groups. Rather, they organized events and created spaces wherein the LDS community writ large would celebrate these political views. Therefore, by holding patriotic celebrations, Mormon women worked collectively to promote Democratic ideology, hail a particular vision of democracy, and foster unity amongst the Saints.

Whether with the official, Church-ordained Relief Society or simply among fellow Mormon sisters, these women promoted a common culture and Democratic political ideology

⁷⁵ Worden, “The Celebration of the Fourth of July.”

through the vocabulary of democracy. Engaging in benevolent Christian work among their own members and among Native American communities in Utah, they mirrored hundreds of other benevolent societies which emerged in nineteenth-century America. Meanwhile, however, they asserted their own divine peculiarity and rejected the Whiggish and pro-government sentiment of many other American societies.⁷⁶ Thus, Mormon women's groups functioned officially and unofficially on the frontier to enact benevolent work and promote Jacksonian political views. In women's only-meetings, they mirrored elements of the U.S. Constitution, enshrining freedom of speech and democratic voting practices into Relief Society bylaws. Meanwhile, however, that democracy was bounded, as these women sought to ensure unity and a sameness in belief. Through rugged collectivity, then, early Mormon women worked together "as sisters in Zion," to sustain LDS cultural expectations while employing democratic and patriotic rhetoric.

Yet, Later-Day Saint collective women's action prior to the Civil War has received far too little scholarly attention, as historians have often credited Relief Society work to elite male leaders. Mormon women's collective work demonstrates that the early sisterhood worked through what John Brooke called the "persuasive sphere" to affect Church policy and institutional norms. Through rugged collectivity the Mormon foremothers shaped LDS culture, saved the Church and its male leadership from potential destruction, ministered to the flock's spiritual and temporal needs, and promoted Democratic political ideology on the western frontier. A nineteenth-century Relief Society hymn proclaims, "how vast is our purpose, how broad is our mission." These women proved that their purposes and missions

⁷⁶ Women's temperance advocates, for example, advocated legislation in order to cure the perceived societal ill of alcoholism. See Holly Berkley Fletcher, *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

included benevolent work, cultural production, and political activism; their work was vast indeed.

Epilogue

Among the present-day Mormon community, there is a firm but uncomfortable understanding that a goddess, “Heavenly Mother,” exists alongside God in the Celestial Kingdom of Heaven. First embodied in Eliza Snow’s 1845 poem “O, My Father,” Mother in Heaven became part of official doctrine in 1909. Yet, she is an awkward character alongside Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, treated with “sacred silence.” Though the censorship of Heavenly Mother, as one BYU study found, has no doctrinal basis, Church leaders and ordinary members alike assert that she must be protected from the type of daily verbal blasphemy Heaven Father receives when people take His name in vain.¹ Mormons often interpret her as “so special,” that “[God] held her on a pedestal where she was never to be seen or spoken to, for fear that her purity would be sullied.”² Meanwhile, the natures of male spiritual figures such as Heavenly Father and Jesus and their human messengers on Earth, like Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, have been investigated deeply by Mormon and non-Mormon scholars. Even conservative historian and Latter-Day Saint Richard Bushman, who asserted that academic work which paints Joseph Smith as controversial comes from cantankerous ex-Mormons who “have to justify their decision to leave,” as they “cannot countenance evidence of [Smith’s] divine inspiration” without facing their own failures in faith, tread into analysis of Smith’s treasure hunting, polygamous marriages, and political aspirations.³ In the same way that LDS members have silenced discourse of Heavenly Mother to maintain her purity, so too have scholars pedestaled the Mormon foremothers,

¹ David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, “A Mother There’ A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven,” *BYU Studies* 50 no. 1 (2011): 72.

² Paulsen and Pulido, “A Mother There,” 75.

³ Richard Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism’s Founder* (New York: Random House, 2005), xx.

writing them almost exclusively as mothers and wives of faith. Though source material documenting various facets of their lived experiences is dense, scholars have hushed the multifaceted ideas which these women preserved in countless diaries, turning them into mascots of faith and femininity. Emphasis on early Mormon piety to the exclusion of all other aspects of their lives has resulted in a two-dimensional narrative which removes these women from their social and cultural context and turns them into demigod-like figures to be emulated by twenty-first century Mormon women.

A significant example of this is the editor of Eliza R. Snow's poetry personal poetry collection which she entitled *Poems: Religious, Historical, and Political*. He introduced her collection by stating that her work was a collection of "spiritual themes.... Written with a pen that had been dipped in the well of eternity," thereby neglecting her vast array of historical and political work which Snow noted specifically in the title and throughout the body of her multi-volume work.⁴ While laudatory biographies which emphasize the moral fiber of their subjects might be expected of mid-century consensus historians, this trend has perpetuated among twenty-first century scholars and continues to shape the type of work coming out of graduate programs today. One of the most significant historians of Mormon women and key historian of Eliza Snow, Jill Mulvay Derr, fits squarely within this "faith first" model. She has interpreted Snow as "one who wielded phenomenal religious power... liturgical power... and ecclesiastical power... Insofar as imperfect mortals rise to such stature, she was the female counterpart of prophet, priest and king."⁵ Significantly, Derr acknowledges that "poetry was Eliza's entrée to the public sphere" and even that she "employs the contrast

⁴ Nicolas G. Morgan, ed, *Eliza R. Snow: An Immortal: Selected Writings of Eliza R. Snow* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas G. Morgan, Sr. Foundation, 1957).

⁵ Jill Mulvay Derr, "Presidential Address: Form and Feeling in a Carefully Crafted Life: Eliza R. Snow's 'Poem of Poems,'" *Journal of Mormon History*, 26 no.1 (Spring 2000): 29.

between liberty and power, virtue and corruption, so popular among her Jacksonian contemporaries,” but these ideas are left unexplored, context in which to situation Snow’s religious faith.⁶ Yet, the most prominent scholar on Eliza Snow avoids Snow’s political engagement by contextualizing Snow’s rhetoric in religious terms: “Mormonism provided theology for Eliza’s cosmic battle, manifestations of divine power to direct and strengthen the forces fighting for truth, and a commission—a work for Eliza to perform.”⁷ The significance of Snow’s engagement with democratic political thought is overshadowed by her character as a woman of pious fortitude, and her writings which reflect democratic political culture are given negligible real estate within Derr’s work.

Likewise, Sandra Ailey Petree, asserts that “while Eliza R. Snow makes no official mention of what her journals are dedicated to, her intent is clear: she is bearing witness, formally and in writing, to the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁸ While few would argue that Snow’s *overall* purpose was to bear her testimony, Petree negates and dismisses any areligious writings in the literally thousands of pages Snow left behind. Snow’s discussions of the superiority of the U.S. Constitution, poetry supporting presidential candidate William Henry Harrison, patriotism in the face of exile, and even reflections on the importance of science are forgotten beneath a broad religious narrative.

Still, an even greater problem within the historiography is in relation to sources, specifically sources that are used and over-used, sources that are neglected, women’s sources that are used to demonstrate the greatness of men, and most, egregiously, the continued use of sources that may be false. Mormon women provide some of the richest source material for

⁶ Derr, “Presidential Address,” 9 and 15.

⁷ Derr, “Presidential Address,” 29-30.

⁸ Sandra Ailey Petree, *The Power of the Word: Self-Inscription in the Journals of 19th century Mormon Women* (PhD diss., University of Arkansas, 1999), 8.

historical study as they were extremely literate and astute diary-keepers. An LDS culture of record-keeping and genealogy tracking has meant that many women wrote memoirs late in life, that later generations worked to preserve their families' papers, and that Church historians captured hundreds of pioneers' stories through interviews. The LDS Church Library in Salt Lake City houses thousands of fully transcribed personal and family histories, while the Women's Manuscript Collection in special collections at Brigham Young University contains more diaries, journals, memoirs, personal documents and even scrapbooks of Mormon women than a single historian could ever sift through. The LDS Church and its membership have processed, transcribed, and made available countless sources on the lives of Mormon women, but scholarship on these sisters has remained cursory and problematic.

Some pieces, such as certain poems by Eliza Snow and Emma Smith's opening statements as President of the Relief Society are repeated so often as to make them meaningless. Most Mormons have heard Snow's phrase "I was born a patriot" so many times that it has become a cliché within the faith, almost like a popular bible verse that children memorize in religious summer camp, committed to memory with no real context. But with so much extant source material, it is unnecessary and uninteresting to repeat such tropes within new historical work. The fact that these women's views of themselves and the world around them are still obscure, and that their collective action was identified in 1983 as "forgotten"—with limited academic response in the past 33 years to "remember," is problematic.⁹ By

⁹ Richard L. Jensen, "Forgotten Relief Societies, 1844-67," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (1983): 105-25. Significantly, scholars have not sought to revise or expand this article since its publication. Even the groundbreaking 2016 *First Fifty Years of Relief Society* cites, but does not expand, Jensen's work. In many cases, the authors simply quote or paraphrase Jensen without contributing any additional insight. See Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, Matthew J. Grow *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-Day Saint Women's History* (Salt Lake City: Church Historians Press, 2016), 179, 182, 607.

deeply investigating these women's writings in the same way that historians read non-Mormon texts, Mormon scholars can discover remarkable aspects of their lives which have been hitherto overshadowed by famous phrases.

Similarly problematic is that so many Mormon women's writings have been employed to study the elite men with whom they interacted. Derr's "Woman's Place in Brigham Young's World," for example, demonstrates how Young viewed women, not how women experienced life in the context of Brigham Young's leadership.¹⁰ Likewise, Derr and Madsen write that "One of the least-tapped sources in the ongoing effort to retrieve the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith is the minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society."¹¹ While continued study of Smith and other important leaders in the LDS community is important, the Relief Society itself has been studied far too little. Only a handful of books—most of them written by Derr and Madsen themselves, and a few outdated articles explore women's experiences as members of the Relief Society, and many of *those* sources continue to analyze prominent Mormon men even as they forge a marginal historiographical space for women. For example, the authors of the groundbreaking collection of Relief Society sources defer to Joseph Smith in the final sentence of the collection's introduction. They undermine nearly 800 pages of female solidarity and collective action with "together, [these documents] ... demonstrate how *Joseph Smith*...envisioned new possibilities for women within the Latter-Day Saint organization."¹² In all three cases, women appear to be the piece's subject but are ultimately used as framing devices through which to analyze men.

¹⁰ Jill Mulvay Derr, "Woman's Place in Brigham Young's World," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 3 (1978): 1-21.

¹¹ Jill Mulvay Derr and Carol Cornwall Madsen, "'Something Better' for the Sisters: Joseph Smith and the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo" in *Joseph Smith and the Doctrinal Restoration* (Provo: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 2005), 123-43.

¹² Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, xxxix. Italics added.

Finally, historians must stop referring to sources to which we have no access. Three of the most often-cited moments in Mormon women's history are Eliza Snow's composition of the original Relief Society constitution, Joseph Smith's response that the constitution was exceptional but that Heavenly Father "had something better" in store for them, and Smith's assertion that the Relief Society was never "perfectly organized" until he organized them after the pattern of the Priesthood. As discussed in Chapter 3, Eliza Snow's constitution does not exist in any accessible fashion in LDS Church holdings. Snow herself makes no mention of it in any of her writings, including her hundreds of journal entries and her 1868 *Deseret News* article on the history of the Relief Society. Nor does it exist in any extant Relief Society documents. Rather, the earliest mentioning of all three of these moments is in an 1883 *Women's Exponent* article written by Sarah Kimball, an early convert and member of the Nauvoo Relief Society. Mormon historians consistently cite this article to demonstrate the validity of these three occurrences without acknowledging that it was produced four decades after the 1842 formation of the Relief Society. Work such as Derr's article "Something Better" for the Sisters: Joseph Smith and the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo" take for granted the existence of Snow's constitution, as well as Smith's replies (included even in the title) and build upon them as the foundation of their scholarly arguments.¹³ Other historians, such as Richard and Claudia Bushman, who are discussed in Chapter 1, assert LDS folklore as verifiable fact without any citation. LDS and non-LDS scholars have then cited the Bushmans, whose sources are nonexistent.¹⁴ Certainly, this historian's game of

¹³ In fact, Derr, Madsen, Holbrook, and Grow state that Smith's statement of "perfect organization," purportedly given in a Nauvoo Relief Society meeting, "is not found in the Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book. However, Kimball's 1882 reminiscence of Relief Society beginnings included similar wording." Derr, Madsen, Holbrook and Grow, *The First Fifty Years*, 597. Kimball's reminiscence was over forty years after Smith's statement, and it is problematic that LDS scholars treat her source as a primary document of events that occurred in the 1840s.

¹⁴ The particular instance I discussed in Chapter 1 was that of the number of infants midwife Patty Sessions successfully delivered. LDS sources and the Bushmans note that she delivered 3,997 babies, which many other

folklore telephone is not exclusively a Mormon issue, and extends to many historical fields. However, given the rich abundance of writings that Mormon women have left behind, it is ahistorical, disingenuous, and insulting to these women of historical inquiry that historians are continually referring to unverifiable sources and stories. Positing Eliza Snow as the writer of the Relief Society's rejected constitution or Patty Sessions as the woman who delivered 3,997 babies without verifiable documentation perpetuates the false myths of the Mormon foremothers and takes them further away from their historical context. Moreover, it is entirely unnecessary to include these apocryphal narratives; early Mormon women recorded and preserved so much of their daily lives that we can extract similarly inspirational and flabbergasting stories from sources that exist and are accessible.

Through the previous three chapters, I have attempted to bring one overlooked aspect of early Mormon women—political ideology— out of obscurity. I have sought to demonstrate that Mormon Women during the pioneer period were multifaceted cultural and political agents. They engaged Jacksonian political ideologies in the ways in which they viewed themselves, claiming a natural dignity that came from within and appropriated Enlightenment ideology to reject Euro-American elite views on education, science, medicine, and government. Laboring with calloused hands, they saw temporal value in producerism and eternal value in obedience to Heavenly dictates. Viewing themselves as inherently valuable and competent, they applied Jacksonian Democratic views to the world around them, expressing nationalism and American exceptionalism despite their exile west of U.S. borders. Mirroring other Jacksonians, they sought to enlarge their unique culture and religion through territorial expansion. Finally, Mormon women applied these political views through

sources have argued, citing the Bushmans. After extensive research, I have found no primary source in existence which carries this statistic.

collective action, together enacting benevolent work, fostering nationalist sentiment and cultural imperialism all while reproducing democratic structures. A common faith brought these women together, but faith alone cannot explain their political activity. Rather, these women were cultural and political agents who worked within the persuasive sphere to challenge, uphold, and build political ideology within the LDS community. They were not passive consenters under the deliberative sphere of the Priesthood, but rather employed cultural persuasion to shape, maintain, and modify the norms of the greater LDS and American cultures.¹⁵

Though unique Americans in many respects, these women embraced many white, Protestant, Democratic American values nonetheless. Their views of themselves and the world around them mirrored other Democrats, and their collective action resembled other Christian benevolent societies. Though they asserted their exceptionalism and religious peculiarity, they perpetuated many American customs and beliefs outside the view of U.S. citizens and authorities. Once we see these women as multifaceted and real people, we can start to discover not only the factors which shaped the Mormon experience, but more of the beliefs and practices which shaped the broader experience of antebellum Americans.

This work has demonstrated a few of the ways in which Mormon women employed their faith in the Latter-Day gospel and belief in Democratic ideology, but cannot address all of the implications of this argument. How else, for example, did these women's bipartite belief in literal divine lineage and Jacksonian natural dignity shape their visions of self-worth? Might early Mormonism, contrary to many scholars' assertions, have actually been comparatively more liberating for women than other Second Great-Awakening faiths?

¹⁵ See John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 9.

Church authorities called husbands and fathers away for years at a time for missionary and other work; how did political ideology affect the ways in which “deputy husbands” thought and acted? How did these women’s political views affect family structures, marriage practices, and child-rearing methods? The omission of Mormon women’s political views has likewise omitted a vast trove of historical knowledge about religion, pioneer life, westward expansion, and more. The needs and opportunities in Mormon women’s scholarship are vast, but we can begin by creating a discourse about the content of women’s writings and the significance that it held *to them*, rather than to elite religious leaders or present-day Latter-Day Saints.

I would like to propose that the inclusion of women’s lived experiences into these narratives can do much more than satisfy millennial yearnings for diversity. If scholars turn to investigate the nature of women’s lives on their own terms, rather than skewing them to present examples for modern Mormons to emulate, we can learn volumes about nineteenth-century America. The women of early Mormonism left their lives to be remembered within thousands of pages still waiting in Utah archives; let us stop pedestaling them as caricatures of piety and examine their work on its own terms. Only by assessing their work in its nineteenth-century context can we begin to construct a more complete narrative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the women and men who made it possible.

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