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## Susa Young Gates 1856-1933: Educator, Suffragist, Mormon

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SUSA YOUNG GATES 1856-1933:  
EDUCATOR, SUFFRAGIST, MORMON

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

PATRICIA A. LYNOTT

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY, 1996

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I am also deeply indebted to the scholarly assistance provided by Ron Watt, Senior Archivist at the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City; Mark Smith, Archivist at the Brigham Young University Archives in Provo, Utah, and; Robert Parson of the Special Collections and Archives at Utah State University in Logan, Utah.

#### DEDICATION

This effort is lovingly dedicated to  
Rod and Collin, and to the many special  
people who bless my life with their  
patience and unconditional love.

## PREFACE

Chronicles of human achievement are satiated with biographies of men and women whose profound lives were exemplary, though often removed from common experience. The historical record frequently fails to nourish our understanding of less celebrated individuals whose personal and public demeanor shaped the direction of ordinary events. The following biography attempts to depict the life of an extraordinary woman, though widely unknown, who contributed to the development of education on the western frontier during a period in American history that is characterized by civic responsibility and social reform.

Susa Young Gates was the forty-first child of Mormon leader Brigham Young. Her mother, Lucy Bigelow, was one of an estimated fifty-five plural wives who consented to a polygamous union with the second prophet of a burgeoning Mormon church. The plural household in which the extended family of Brigham Young lived was considered to be one of the most radical experiments in family living arrangements of the nineteenth century. Susa was born in Salt Lake City in 1856, and lived during a period of social and religious transition between the Victorian Age and the Progressive Era. When Susa

was born, the Great Salt Lake Valley was part of the vast untamed frontier of the intermountain West, where the Mormons were largely, and deliberately, isolated from mainstream American society. The circumstances of frontier life, isolation from the greater society, and unorthodox family arrangements converged to produce a distinct influence on Mormon society and education. It was an influence that fashioned the character of Susa Young Gates, as well.

Susa grew to become one of Brigham Young's 'favorite' children, serving for a short while as his personal secretary. She was regarded as a considerable force in the campaign for national women's suffrage, and by the turn of the century, she had gained international recognition as an advocate of women's rights. She held several international appointments and was closely acquainted with popular suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Additionally, Susa Young Gates was a skilled writer and editor, a gifted musician, a scholarly genealogist, and a persuasive public speaker. She also served as a missionary for several years. Though she was accomplished in many fields, and committed to many causes, Susa's contribution to education is often overlooked. This outspoken Mormon suffragist vigorously argued for female enrollment in colleges and high schools, and served as a trustee at both Brigham Young Academy, now Brigham Young University and the

Utah State Agricultural College, now Utah State University. She is referred to as the 'Mother' of Physical Education in Utah as a consequence of her many contributions to the study of physiology and family planning.

Susa's professional accomplishments were models of precision, organization and fortitude. Her personal affairs, however, were often saturated in contradiction, controversy and tragedy. Against her parents wishes, Susa married impetuously at the age of sixteen, and would suffer the social and emotional consequences of divorce five years, later. She bore a total of thirteen children, losing eight of them to divorce, illness, or accident. Additionally, Susa endured six miscarriages. The following essay examines the social, religious, and political influences that fashioned the professional efforts and personal impulses of Susa Young Gates, and specifically analyzes those features that shaped her perspective towards education.

Constructing this biography was often a challenging enterprise. It derives from a non-Mormon perspective which renders both objectivity and bias. It derives, as well, from a perspective imbued with feminism. Interpreting sources which originate from an era and culture largely dominated by overtly male structures, invites radical interpretation from those determined (or destined) to view them from a feminist viewpoint. People and events become disproportionately magnified, and there is a temptation to



invent villains and heroines rather than depict the mortal attributes of average people who may mirror, too closely perhaps, our own humanness. Such was the handicap that encumbered this effort.

Throughout her life Susa Young was both praised and criticized for being a contradiction in terms. She could be strong-willed yet submissive, and impatient yet tender, often exhibiting these behaviors in tandem. But to say that her life was a study in contrast fails to capture the complexity of her character. It is more accurate, perhaps, to define her life as an elaborate saga consisting of several episodes. It is a story that merits our time and attention because it provides not only a richer understanding of the interdependent relationship between education and Mormonism, but it reveals the underlying sets of tensions that would come to define the unique role of women in Mormon society during a period of social and religious transformation.

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## CHAPTER I

### MORMONISM: THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND THE DOMAIN OF SUSA YOUNG

In a small room in the southeast corner of the "Lion House," Susa Young was born on 18 March 1856 in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was one of fifty-six children fathered by the influential second president and prophet of the Mormon church, Brigham Young. Her mother, Lucy Bigelow, was one of an estimated fifty-five plural wives married to the "kingdom builder" whose vision and tenacity forged a thriving community in the Great Basin region of the American West during the last half of the nineteenth century.

A fragile infant, and often sickly child, Susa Young grew to become a powerful force within a variety of social and political circles during an age in American history characterized by confidence, optimism, civic responsibility and social reform. Susa's professional accomplishments were models of precision, organization and fortitude. Her personal affairs, however, were often saturated in contradiction, controversy and tragedy. Susa traveled the world, and established relationships with some of the famous celebrities of her day such as Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. She enjoyed celebrity herself, as the most famous daughter of a man who left an

indelible mark on American history. Susa was the embodiment of Mormon faithfulness, projecting a public image of unyielding strength, yet she was tortured by unreasonable fears--of death, of darkness, of cats and dogs. She endured the social and psychological humiliation of divorce in a religious community that rendered little tolerance for such failure, and Susa would lose eight of the thirteen children she gave birth to as a consequence of "divorce, prematurity, accident, or illness."<sup>1</sup> In short, her life was a synthesis of great privilege and intense pain.

Susa's many professional accomplishments merit recognition. In 1889 she founded the widely-read and highly respected Young Woman's Journal, which she edited until 1929 when it was subsumed by the Improvement Era. In 1914 Susa accepted an appointment as editor for the Relief Society Magazine. She was the author of seven published books, several unpublished manuscripts including the voluminous History of Women, and countless articles. Her early works appeared in such Mormon publications as The Deseret News, Woman's Exponent, Juvenile Instructor, and The Era.

Susa Young was also regarded as a leading expert on genealogy, and is referred to as the founder of modern Mormon genealogical research. She was responsible for devising the catalog system currently used in the internationally renowned library of the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints, and she also created the women's biography division of the Genealogical Society of Utah, becoming head of the society's Library and Research Department in 1923. Additionally, Susa developed classes in genealogy to help women who wanted to construct their family histories. She established the first chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Utah, and served as president of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers where she initiated the Hall of Relics.<sup>2</sup>

It is her work for national suffrage, however, that gained Susa international attention. She served as the only U.S. delegate to the International Women's Congress held in Copenhagen in 1902, and as national chairman of the press committee for the United States National Women's Council from 1899 to 1904. In February, 1920, she headed the Utah delegation at the Woman's Suffrage Victory Convention held in Chicago. Susa was personally acquainted with Susan B. Anthony, whom she referred to as "Aunt Susan," and who once invited her to join the suffrage movement in an official capacity. Susa graciously but unequivocally rejected the invitation which was contingent upon her denouncing the religion that gave her spiritual and emotional life.

Not only was Susa a gifted writer, highly respected genealogist and an active suffragist, but also an articulate persuasive speaker, capable stenographer, and dedicated

missionary with her husband, Jacob Gates, whom she married on 5 January 1879. Mrs. Gates was a woman of extraordinary initiative. In an effort to achieve harmony between personal and public obligations, she commuted on an almost daily basis from Provo to Salt Lake City, approximately ninety miles round-trip, during an era of primitive transportation. By the time of her death in 1933, Susa Young Gates had acquired a reputation as a formidable presence not only within the Mormon community, but far beyond.

While her contributions to social, political and religious causes helped shape the direction of modern Mormonism, it is Susa Gates' contribution to education that is often overlooked. In 1878 she organized the Music Department at Brigham Young Academy, where she also created the Domestic Science Department in 1897. She was a faculty member in that department until 1903. Susa was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1891, and served in that capacity until her death in 1933.<sup>3</sup> One of the twenty-four Heritage Halls at Brigham Young University is named after her. These female residence halls are named in honor of "an exemplary Latter-day Saint woman whose life could serve as an inspiration and guide to the residents of the respective buildings."<sup>4</sup> Susa also served on the board of the Utah State Agricultural College in Logan from 1906 until 1912.

She is referred to as the "Mother of Physical Education" in Utah and designed and conducted classes in 'physiology' and family planning.<sup>5</sup>

Susa advocated many of her father's attitudes regarding education, and his influence on her professional development was obvious. The "Kingdom of God" that Brigham Young sought to establish in Utah, was the domain in which Susa lived and worked. To understand the educational perspectives of Susa Young Gates, however, one must first recognize not only the influence of Brigham Young, but the overwhelming impact of her faith. Mormonism served as the defining feature of Susa's life. To appreciate the intricate mosaic of Mormonism, the development of this uniquely American religion must be viewed through a lens of social, political and economic circumstances that contributed to its enigmatic nature.

#### Tenets and Structure of the Mormon Church

Mormonism has been characterized as paradoxical in its tendency to represent both American mainstream culture and counter-culture. In 1957 historian Thomas O'Dea made the observation that:

. . . in its origin, Mormonism was to be both typical of the larger American setting in which it existed and at the same time peculiarly itself, with its own special idiosyncratic emphasis and interpretations. Even when most at odds with its fellow Americans, it was to be typically American,



and it was always to feel and express this combination of typicality and peculiarity.<sup>6</sup>

Through divine revelation, Mormonism was designed by the prophet Joseph Smith to be a religious renewal of the first church established by Jesus Christ and his twelve apostles. Early Mormons believed that salvation was attainable through "faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, steps to be followed, of course, by unbroken faithfulness to the end."<sup>7</sup> The early church differed in many ways from traditional Christianity. Mormon doctrine proclaimed that God the Father was knowable, material and plural. Mormons perceived God as a real being consisting of a material body, and that Jesus Christ was his literal son, and his most intelligent child. God's second most intelligent child had been Adam, progenitor of the human race. They believed that "both God and man are fundamentally related, the same kind of race of beings, though quite different in degree of development, both having existed forever."<sup>8</sup> Essentially, Mormons believed that humans possessed the potential to become like God, espousing a certain degree of polytheism.

An important feature of Mormonism, and one which unified several elements of Mormon theology, also influencing the Mormon attitude toward learning, was the "Law of Eternal Progression." This law is generally

interpreted to mean that God's chosen people will be responsible for creating and populating other worlds, just as God has organized and populated this world. "Progression for the Mormon, is thus a grand scheme which includes a democratization of the powers of divinity to the point that each individual has the capacity to achieve godlike status."<sup>9</sup>

Another unique feature of Mormonism, and one which contributed to its basic social structure, emanated from Joseph Smith's revelation in 1834 referred to as the "Order of Enoch" or the "United Order," as it came to be called. Susa defined the United Order in this way:

Enoch knew God and taught his people to hold earthly possessions as a common property; and, in this dedication, to lose self in the good of the community . . . A very good start was made to establish the United Order in Kirtland, and later in Missouri. Men deeded their property to the presiding Bishop, with the proviso that it should be restored to them if they desired it, or if the Order was dissolved.<sup>10</sup>

Still another significant tenet that distinguished Mormonism from other denominations, and directly influenced the life-styles of its members, was the "Word of Wisdom." This revelation announced by Joseph Smith in 1833 advocated temperance and moderation with regard to food, alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine. Abstinence and self-discipline were highly valued in the culture.

Marriage and family relations were fundamental to Mormon theology, just as they were to other religious denominations, but while traditional Christian religions hailed marriage as a sacrament, the Mormon concept of marriage differed in a very significant way. The highest status and glory that a Mormon could achieve in heaven was attainable only through celestial marriage, elevating this sacrament to a position of vital importance. Neither men nor women could be saved apart from each other in a marriage relationship. There were two types of marriage sacraments that were performed, ordinary secular marriage, which lasted only for time, and celestial marriage, which lasted for time and eternity, enduring both on earth and then in heaven. Celestial marriage required that the sacrament be properly sealed by a Priesthood holder. The function of marriage in the Mormon faith was of supreme importance. "In heaven, men who had contracted such marriages would be great patriarchs having 'all power', surrounded by their own families as well as by those unfortunate ministering angels who lacked wives or progeny."<sup>11</sup>

Mormonism rejected the pre-eminence of faith over works, and also emphasized a temporal Kingdom of God on earth, rather than a spiritual Kingdom of God in heaven. Susa's father defined the nature of God and his temporal kingdom:

The Kingdom of God on earth is a living, moving, effective institution, and is governed, controlled, dictated and led by the invisible God whom we serve who is an exalted, living being, possessing body, parts, and passions, who listens to the prayers of his Saints, is a reasonable, merciful and intelligent being, who is filled with knowledge and wisdom, who is full of light and glory, and the foundation of whose throne are laid in eternal truth; whose personal form is perfect in proportion and beauty.<sup>12</sup>

The structure of the afterlife was also distinctive from the perspective of Mormon theology. Mormons believed that the life after temporal existence consisted of three separate kingdoms that included all human beings, except for a small number of people who would be eternally damned. The three heavenly spheres consisted of the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial levels. The life of a Mormon was spent preparing for the last kingdom, the only one in which God dwells. Each level varied by the degree of personal glory that a Mormon achieved on earth. A life that was true to the gospel, and the tenets of Mormonism, and one that had been blessed through the appropriate endowments administered in temple rituals could achieve the celestial kingdom. It is also significant to note that those who have achieved a lesser degree of glory will be called on to serve those who have achieved the higher levels.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, Mormonism held that there was:

no final judgment immediately after death but that life goes on in another sphere. The eternal spirit, separated from the mortal body, returns to

a spirit world and continues the process of learning and making choices while awaiting the resurrection of all God's children. In that spirit existence all who did not have the necessary opportunities for progress and fulfillment while on earth will have a fair chance.<sup>14</sup>

Mormons also practiced a rather unique form of "proxy" baptism for the dead, a temple ordinance that made possible "the salvation of those who had died without knowledge of the truth."<sup>15</sup> In order to perform this temple work, "a living person undergoing the experience as proxy for a specific dead person, males for males, females for females" engaged in genealogical research. Susa Young Gates was instrumental in devising the systematic approach to tracing family lineages for which Mormons have become famous.<sup>16</sup>

Despite doctrines and practices that distinguished it from mainline Christianity, Mormonism shared many features in common with Protestant religions, and especially Puritan culture. The early Mormons believed in a close and personal God, and subscribed to a providential history just as the early Puritans did. They also accepted the Calvinistic concept of predestination, and the Puritan work ethic. Mormons believed in a very systematized social and economic order that resulted in a sort of communitarianism. This emphasis on social organization was a prevalent feature of America in the 1840s, a decade that is noted for several communitarian experiments.<sup>17</sup> Mormon ventures in social and

economic communitarianism allowed the early Saints to develop a very sophisticated agrarian ideal, producing new irrigation techniques that made possible the growing of wheat, corn and other crops in the virtual waste land of the Great Basin region, an area "bordered by the Rocky Mountains on the East, the Colorado River on the South, the Sierra Nevada on the West, and the watershed of the Columbia River on the North," that represented "Zion" to a people who believed they were chosen by God.<sup>18</sup> This systematic approach would be incorporated into the social structure of Mormon education in Utah, as well.

Mormons believed in a church of saints, and firmly acknowledged the importance of a Christian calling. Even today, young male members of the church typically spend two or more years of their lives teaching the gospel, and making conversions in some 110 countries, at their own expense. Mormon women are encouraged to participate in the many church auxiliaries that promote the ". . . core gospel principles of charity, integrity, hard work, education, loyalty, and sisterhood."<sup>19</sup>

Throughout its history, the Mormon Church sponsored a wide spectrum of charitable and educational societies that serviced the various needs of its members. The Sunday School, established in 1867, provided religious instruction to children of all ages.<sup>20</sup> The Primary Association

provided recreational, as well as religious training, to younger children on a weekly basis. The Religion Classes offered after-school religious instruction for elementary-age students, and both the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association and the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association were initially designed as cultural and recreational organizations for young adults of the church. They were founded by Brigham Young and operated as "Retrenchment Associations" until 1875. Relief Society, founded in 1842, provided a wide array of social and educational services not only to the church, but the entire state of Utah, as well. These auxiliaries performed a vital role in the development of the early church, and "helped to satisfy the Mormon urge for self-improvement in all aspects of life."<sup>21</sup> In particular, they provided an "expanded role for women, for as the auxiliaries developed and the need for teachers increased, women supplied much of the need."<sup>22</sup>

The governance structure of the church is a significant feature of Mormonism. It is hierarchical, very systematized, and executed by an appointed, lay priesthood consisting of male church members only. The church is headed by a president believed to be a human prophet who functions through divine inspiration, making continual revelations of the word of God. The central church is located in Salt Lake City where the president is assisted by

two counselors. This trio of the church's highest officials is referred to as the First Presidency. The governing board of the church consists of a Council of Twelve Apostles (or Quorum), and between 1890 and 1930 was also supported by the First Council of Seventy who held various administrative posts within the church, but primarily focused on missionary work. The church hierarchy operates on a system of succession by survival, e.g., the president of the Quorum succeeds to the presidency upon the death of the incumbent president.<sup>23</sup>

Local congregations are referred to as wards, which consist of approximately five to six hundred members, and each is governed by an appointed, unpaid bishop who is assisted by two counselors. Five to ten wards comprise a stake, governed by an appointed stake president and two counselors, who also accept no compensation for their service.

Mormonism on the local level has remained what it was from the start--a lay organization. There is no professional clergy in the ward congregation or the stake, and the general authorities are lawyers, educators, engineers, journalists, and business executives drawn from various fields.<sup>24</sup>

Priesthood authority is another central tenet of Mormonism. Church priesthood refers to the "the authority of God bestowed upon men to represent Him in certain relationships between men and God."<sup>25</sup> The priesthood was



granted to all "worthy" male members of the church over the age of twelve, and included the exercise of such spiritual ordinances as blessings, healings, and prophecy. The priesthood was separated into two levels. The lower level was referred to as the Aaronic priesthood and it was responsible for the administering of ordinances and rituals, including baptism and the sacrament of bread and wine. Aaronic priesthood-holders had positions such as deacon, teacher, or priest. The higher level of priesthood authority is referred to as Melchizedek priesthood which held "the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church and supervised generally the new Kingdom of God."<sup>26</sup> Those who held the Melchizedek priesthood usually served as elder, on the Council of Seventy, or as high priest.

The entire governance structure of the Mormon church centered around the concept of dual priesthood. Priesthood authority was an important cornerstone in the theological edifice of early Mormonism. The church was born into a social setting that had been ruptured by sectarianism. Its founder, Joseph Smith, shrewdly recognized the need for a new source of religious authority. It offered, perhaps, one reason for the sudden sensation created by the introduction of Mormonism.

### History of the Early Church

The history of the Mormon Church is a narrative in Americana. While many historians focus on the "myth of the Trans-Mississippi West, that is, the well-known image that associates Mormons with cowboys and Indians, gold miners, mountain men, and other heroic figures of the great, open, arid West,"<sup>27</sup> the first chapter of the Mormon saga correctly begins in upstate New York during the early nineteenth century. The origins of Mormonism are rooted in the life of its first prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., born to Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith on 23 December 1805.

Although Smith was born in a small town in Vermont, in 1811 the family moved to Lebanon, New Hampshire, and by the time Joseph, Jr. was eleven, the Smith's had migrated to western New York. The area in which Joseph Smith was raised played a major role in the development of a religion that attempted to "demolish an old way of life and build a new social order from the ground up."<sup>28</sup> The young Smith would become "one of a proliferation of preachers and prophets who found God along the stony ridges and narrow lakes of western New York."<sup>29</sup> Smith, as well as many members of the original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, hailed from a section of upstate New York referred to as the 'burned-over district' as a consequence of the countless brush fires of religious revivals that had swept the region since the

Second Great Awakening of the 1790s. In the late eighteenth century the region had been settled largely by New England migrants, "Pennsylvanians, eastern New Yorkers, and Yankees . . . disillusioned with their previous economic and spiritual life."<sup>30</sup>

Joseph Smith's family was "typical of many early Americans who practiced various forms of Christian folk magic."<sup>31</sup> Such practices included witchcraft, fortune telling, alchemy, astrology, and the supernatural. Historian D. Michael Quinn has shown that at least three generations of the Smith family demonstrated belief in supernatural influences. Joseph Smith's great-grandfather, Samuel Smith of Boxford, Massachusetts was one of three men who accused two women of witchcraft during the Salem witch trials of 1692. Both women were hanged.

The Smith's were a farming family, but as young Joseph became older, he was known to engage in the occupation of treasure-hunting. Digging for buried treasure was a common practice in New York during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a custom that had originated in England during the 1600s. There was a rational basis for this practice, however, since it was not uncommon for people to bury their valuables. Less rational, at least by contemporary standards, was the belief that the spirit of the person who had hidden their valuables would rise in protest when the

buried treasure was uncovered. (Given this axiom, the common practice of supernatural incantations that often accompanied treasure-hunting seems reasonable.) Smith was not peculiar for engaging in treasure-hunting. Digging for buried treasure was not merely a practice engaged in by the religious fringe. Mainstream Protestants were also known to search zealously for buried treasure. By the turn of the nineteenth century the state of Vermont, where Smith's father had lived most of his life, was known as a sort of "treasure-digging mecca."<sup>32</sup> Historians of Mormonism seem to agree that the senior Smith's belief in the supernatural influenced his son's spiritual world view and religious development in many ways.<sup>33</sup>

One day in 1822, while helping a neighbor to dig a well, Joseph Smith, Jr. found a brown "seer stone," a magical device that could locate lost objects. It was the third such stone that Smith had uncovered, but it was this stone that he used for most of his treasure-digging and for interpreting his divine revelations. While a modern perspective might interpret such a claim with skepticism, Jan Shipps observes that digging for treasure in nineteenth century New England was not inconsistent with the "honorable" life of a prophet.<sup>34</sup>

In the years between 1824 and 1827, Joseph Smith and his father spent a great deal of their time treasure-

hunting. Most of these efforts failed. Joseph Smith was hired in 1825 to go to the Susquehanna Valley in Pennsylvania to uncover a lost silver mine. In 1826 he was charged with being an imposter and brought to trial by the Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge, New York. It would be the first of many formal charges levelled against Smith on suspicion of fraud. On 18 January 1827, Joseph Smith married Emma Hale of Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania. The union was vehemently opposed by the bride's father, Isaac Hale, who "could see no good in a man who dug for treasure or had 'visions'."<sup>35</sup> Emma, however, seems to have accepted Smith's prophetic calling without question, as did his immediate family.

Throughout the 1820s, Joseph Smith had been experiencing "visions" of God the Father, and his son, Jesus Christ, who revealed to him that existing churches were spiritually flawed and theologically inaccurate. In September of 1823, Smith had one vision in which it was revealed to him by an angel that gold plates existed upon which an ancient record was inscribed. He was informed that the plates were buried in the Hill Cumorah outside of Manchester, New York. These were the records of the prophet Mormon, and his son, Moroni. The plates were to contain the "fulness [sic] of the gospel that would lead to salvation."<sup>36</sup> In September of 1827, Smith obtained the

plates and claimed to have spent several years translating these scriptural accounts from "reformed Egyptian" into English. Smith was assisted in his efforts to prepare this gospel for the world by his new wife, Emma, his immediate family, and a handful of loyal friends. The result was the Book of Mormon, which recounted a fascinating story that "provided a sweeping historical context for the history of the New World, explaining the origin of the American Indian."<sup>37</sup> It told of the development of two great civilizations, one derived from Jerusalem in 600 B.C., and the other preceding the period in which "the Lord confounded tongues at the Tower of Babel."<sup>38</sup> The Book of Mormon was first advertised for sale on 26 March 1830. Joseph Smith's "Church of Christ" was officially established on 6 April 1830 in Fayette, New York. It was later named the Church of Latter-day Saints to indicate it was the Church of Christ in his last days. It was officially named the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1838.

The 1830s were a decade of growth and turbulence for the young Mormon Church. Missions were established in Ohio, Missouri, and England. In January of 1831, Joseph received a revelation that instructed him to settle three hundred miles west in the village of Kirtland, Ohio "which lay northeast of Cleveland, boasted a gristmill, a sawmill, a hotel, and the Gilbert and Whitney Mercantile store."<sup>39</sup>

Smith, accompanied by a portion of his small congregation, arrived by sleigh in Kirtland on 1 February 1831. By 1835, there would be as many as two thousand Mormons in Kirtland and the surrounding area. In June of 1831, Smith "received a revelation calling 14 pairs of elders to go on missions to Missouri. They were instructed to travel by different routes and to preach the gospel along the way."<sup>40</sup>

Because the Saints challenged fundamental assumptions about religion and society, their unorthodox life-styles and religious practices were rejected by most mainstream Christian denominations. On 24 March 1832, Joseph Smith was tarred and feathered by a mob in Hiram, Ohio and by 1833, the Saints in Missouri were experiencing intense persecution, politically and economically. Angry mobs of non-Mormon Missourians were known to physically attack members of the church on several occasions. It was common for state and local officials to confiscate the property and possessions of the Mormons, citing trumped up charges in an effort to eradicate them from the community. On 6 May 1834, Joseph Smith led a small force of Latter-day Saints from Ohio westward into Missouri in an effort to assist the struggling Mormons in that area.

In less than a decade, the Saints had been driven from New York, to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, losing most of their property with each displacement and often losing their

lives. By the end of the 1830s the Saints had been asked to leave Clay County, Missouri and more church members began migrating further west into the Great Basin region that would eventually become the state of Utah. Joseph Smith was arrested in Missouri in November of 1838, but was allowed to escape the following April. By the autumn of 1838, the Missouri-Mormon war had started with both sides engaging in violent warfare. Lilburn Boggs, the governor of Missouri at the time, ordered that the Saints be "exterminated," or in the very least, expelled from the state. When Boggs issued his expulsion order, the Saints had three days to begin moving out of Missouri. The Mormons removed what belongings they had left and settled on the eastern side of the Mississippi at Commerce, Illinois, which they later named Nauvoo, "City Beautiful."

On 10 May 1839, Joseph Smith and his family moved to Nauvoo. In December of 1840 the city had received an official charter from the state of Illinois that granted the Mormon community a good deal of social and economic autonomy, and allowed for the city to raise a "body of independent militarymen" called the Nauvoo Legion.<sup>41</sup> Between the years 1841 and 1844, Nauvoo experienced a period of astonishing growth, and became the largest city in Illinois, but persecution would continue to plague the Saints. On 20 July 1842, Joseph Smith was arrested for



complicity in a planned attack on the life of Governor Boggs of Missouri. He was released on a writ of habeas corpus a month later.

By January of 1844, when Joseph Smith had announced his candidacy for the United States presidency, Mormon-Gentile tensions had escalated to the brink of civil war in Illinois. Smith's announcement served only to heighten the anxiety and anger of non-Mormons. Thomas Ford was Governor of Illinois from 1842 to 1846, and was trying at the time to "govern a state without money, without effective transportation, and with no effective way of rallying public support in areas of state not directly involved in the Mormon troubles."<sup>42</sup> In June of 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were imprisoned in Carthage on charges of destroying a newspaper that had opposed Smith's leadership in the church. On June 27, both Smith and his brother were murdered in their cell by an angry mob of non-Mormons who had "rushed the jail" and "disarmed the guard."<sup>43</sup>

In the aftermath of the assassinations, Gentiles feared that angry Mormons would retaliate using the military strength of the 2000 member Nauvoo Legion, but Smith's distraught followers were in shock over the loss of their prophet and founder. The evacuation of Nauvoo, would not occur until 1845. In his memoirs, a frustrated Governor Ford lamented that:

the humble governor of an obscure state, who would otherwise be forgotten in a few years, stands a fair chance, like Pilate and Herod, by their official connection with the true religion, of being dragged down to posterity with an immortal name, hitched on to the memory of a miserable imposter.<sup>44</sup>

Smith's tragic murder created confusion and dissension within certain factions of the church, but it was largely ineffective in dissolving the spirit and determination of most members. His martyrdom served only to unite many of the Mormons, and strengthened their religious resolve. Although no immediate successor emerged after Smith's assassination, by 27 December 1847, Brigham Young had been installed as the second prophet and President of the Mormon Church. Young organized a pioneer company to explore the possibility of settlement in the West. Under Young's leadership, preparations began to abandon the settlement at Nauvoo and migrate to the Great Basin region of the far western frontier. In July of 1847, 148 Mormons reached the Salt Lake Valley.

Despite hardship and persecution, the fledgling religion continued to attract converts. In 1840, ten years after Joseph Smith had first established the Mormon Church, there were 30,000 members. Three years after Brigham Young had reached the Utah territory, church membership rose to 60,000. The charismatic young prophet from western New York had succeeded in creating a whole new socio-theological

system that rejected many of the tenets of traditional New England culture. Smith had firmly established, "elaborate new beliefs and rituals which would lead his followers out of their present state and initiate them into a largely unknown new condition of being."<sup>45</sup> Such new beliefs and rituals appeared to challenge the cultural composite of American society. It was a challenge that was met by mounting hostility and pervasive conflict.

#### Social Conflict and Anti-Mormon Hostility

Religious reformation, frontier settlement, and anti-traditional family arrangements were formidable challenges for the Mormons. But no gauntlet was more difficult to overcome than that of looming anti-Mormon sentiment. While many factors contributed to a general hostility, "anti-Mormonism arose largely from a contest for economic and political power between western settlers and a group that voluntarily withdrew from society and claimed the undivided allegiance of its members."<sup>46</sup>

From the moment of its origin, through its years of colonization, and well into the twentieth century, Mormons experienced intense social and political ridicule as a consequence of their religious doctrines and social practices. Plurality of gods, baptism for the dead, and secret temple ordinances contradicted traditional Protestant

theology. The Mormon concept of theocentric governance which derived from the belief in a temporal Kingdom of God; challenging the sufficiency of the Bible by embracing a third book of sacred scripture; and, the practice of polygamy which emanated from the doctrine of celestial marriage, all threatened to unravel the tightly woven fabric of mainstream American culture. These religious convictions, combined with the unique organizational structure of the Mormon Church, would have direct implications for the development of Mormon education systems.

In the early years, Mormons strived for a theocentric government in which only the "godly" ruled, challenging the American concept of separation between church and state. The patriotism of nineteenth century Mormons was regarded with suspicion by non-Mormons in the United States, many of whom considered Mormons to pose a direct threat to the security of the relatively new federal union. Mormons made no secret that their loyalty to the Kingdom of God took precedence over any national fidelity. David Brion Davis observed that, "just as the Puritans could support the Crown from a good distance and work out their model state within an established framework, so the Mormons paid verbal homage to the Constitution."<sup>47</sup> Davis also observed that:

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when danger of foreign invasion appeared increasingly remote, Americans were told by various respected leaders that Freemasons had infiltrated the government and had seized control of the courts, that Mormons were undermining political and economic freedom in the West and that the Roman Catholic priests, receiving instructions from Rome, had made frightening progress in a plot to subject the nation to popish despotism.<sup>48</sup>

The relationship that would develop between the Mormons and the federal government, and more importantly, the eventual state government of Utah, would have serious implications for the creation and maintenance of Mormon education.

Of all the distinctive features that characterized Mormonism during the nineteenth century, and which ran most counter to the Democratic pluralism dominating American society, no single practice wreaked more havoc for the Saints than that of polygamy. Although the practice of plural marriage was officially denied by the church until 1852, it began unofficially under an elm tree outside of Nauvoo on 5 April 1841 when Joseph Smith married twenty-six-year-old Louisa Beeman. It is estimated that Joseph Smith was sealed in marriage to as many as forty-eight wives. It is believed that most of these women were wives in name only, officially 'sealed' to the prophet to achieve the spiritual benefits of celestial marriage, but not living with Smith in a conjugal relationship.<sup>49</sup>

Polygamy was the source of much internal dissent within the Mormon community, and outrage among non-Mormons. Many statements made by Joseph Smith indicate the prophet recognized that "plural marriage would bring upheaval to his people and perhaps result in his own death."<sup>50</sup> While many Mormons professed to accept the concept of plural marriage in theory, evidence suggests that most Saints loathed it in practice.<sup>51</sup> Plural marriage was taught only as a tenet of the church, not as a fundamental principle that determined Mormon faithfulness, or guaranteed salvation. It would appear, however, that "polygamy became a rallying point for Mormons who wished to demonstrate their loyalty to the Church."<sup>52</sup>

It is also significant that the practice of plural marriage is often cited as a primary reason for the creation of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which occurred shortly after Joseph Smith's assassination. At least two dozen splinter groups emerged in the wake of the Nauvoo crisis, and many dissenters rejected what they considered to be Brigham Young's brutal migration westward. Much of the dissent centered around the rejection of polygamy, and the Reorganized Church was officially established in 1860, with its headquarters in Independence, Missouri, and its membership dispersed throughout the Midwest.

Polygamy was a controversial experiment in family relations that lasted for approximately sixty-five years. During the height of this period, there were many rumors that suggested incestuous relationships, although there is little significant evidence to support this. Given that plural marriages were never publicly recorded, it is difficult to determine just how prevalent polygamy was. It never became the redemption of family life that Mormons had hoped it would be, nor the social virus that Gentiles feared would infect all of human civilization. Historians have argued that polygamy was more pragmatic in nature than anything else. Its intended benefits were designed to increase the number of the polygamist's descendants, supporting the Mormon belief in extensive progeny, as well as meeting the challenges of frontier living. Also, polygamy was regarded as an adequate means of eliminating a husband's need to seek extramarital pleasure, thus curtailing sinful, adulterous activities and eliminating the need for professional prostitution.

Plural marriage also enhanced the possibility of marriage for every woman in the Mormon community, contributing to the efficiency and security of all church members. For many Mormon women polygamy was considered to be "a practical, honorable, means of providing marriage and motherhood for thousands of deserving women who would

otherwise be condemned to a life of spinsterhood."<sup>53</sup> Aside from any temporal significance regarding "spinsterhood," there were spiritual implications effecting marital status that were grounded in Mormon doctrine. Mormonism holds that salvation is contingent upon marriage. There is evidence that suggests a great number of plural wives were sealed in marriage during the year just prior to the exodus from Nauvoo in 1847. Scholars maintain that one of the reasons for this surge was the fear that unmarried Mormon women might die during the dangerous journey, and thus be condemned to spending eternity alone. It is under these circumstances that Susa Young would come to regard polygamy as a religious sacrament and not as a social experiment:

Celestial marriage was a divine revelation, not an economic convenience, and while it was often a bitter trial to both the good men and the lovely women who undertook it the deep conviction that it was right lifted it up from unworthy considerations.<sup>54</sup>

Regardless of its intended benefits, the criticisms against polygamy were loud and many, not just from the non-Mormon community, but from within the ranks of the church, as well. Gentiles criticized polygamy as a pagan practice that challenged the American way of life. Many Gentiles, and some Mormons, were concerned that the practice of plural marriage would cause disharmony and unhappiness within Mormon families. Many felt that polygamy debased the women



who consented to living within such an anti-traditional system. Even Susa's aunt, Mary Jane Bigelow, struggled with this unconventional family arrangement. She was a plural wife to Brigham Young for a short time, but eventually divorced the Mormon leader under amicable circumstances finding polygamy "incompatible with her Puritan background."<sup>55</sup> It would seem that for Susa, being raised in an extended family arrangement posed little difficulty or challenge.

From a political perspective, the institution of polygamy had a very defined role. Plural marriage enhanced the Mormon electorate substantially, given that female suffrage was passed in Utah by 1870, largely as a result of the political savvy demonstrated by President Brigham Young. The visionary leader of the Utah Mormons had recognized that mounting anti-Mormon sentiment would probably result in legislation designed to undermine the controversial church. Between 1860 and 1890 no fewer than fifteen bills were introduced into the United States Congress that were anti-Mormon in nature, most which were related to plural marriage. In 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Act was passed not only reaffirming polygamy as a crime (which was established legally as such in 1860), but also authorizing the United States Attorney General to seize the property of the church, and disenfranchise Utah women. Not until August of 1920

when the Nineteenth Amendment was finally ratified would women in Utah once again be able to cast their ballots.

Anti-Mormon sentiments were reflected not only in restrictive legislation, but also in public speeches, newspaper accounts and popular literature. Anti-Mormon discourse can be identified in the earliest stages of the church's history, and was indicative of the fear and hostility evinced by many Americans toward the religiously radical Saints. As early as 1832, two years after the Mormon Church had been established, Rev. Alexander Campbell rendered the first critical analysis of the Book of Mormon. Campbell was the founder of the "Campbellites" or, "Reformed Baptists" as they were commonly called, a denomination that competed with Mormonism in converting the 'disillusioned souls' of upstate New York. In his widely published Delusions. An Analysis of the Book of Mormon . . . and a Refutation of Its Pretenses to Divine Authority, Campbell's acrimony was blatant. He claimed that the Book of Mormon provided "final answers to every theological problem of the day" such as:

infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of freemasonry, republican government and the rights of man.<sup>56</sup>

Though intended to expose the many theological inconsistencies in Smith's work, Campbell's cynical analysis inadvertently identified the core dilemmas which contributed to the religious apathy that characterized upstate New York during the period.

In 1834 Eber D. Howe published Mormonism Unveiled, a collection of statements attacking the character of Joseph Smith and his family by people who had claimed to know them. In 1841, two books were published that vehemently attacked the credibility of Mormon theology and practice; Mormonism Portrayed; Its Errors and Absurdities by William Harris, and E.G. Lee's, The Mormons; or, Knavery Exposed. One year later, John C. Bennet, who had once been Joseph Smith's closest confidant, published The History of the Saints; or, an Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism.<sup>57</sup>

A lecture delivered at Chautauqua, New York in August of 1880 entitled 'Utah and the Mormons' was reprinted in The Chautauquan with the name of the lecturer withheld by request. An excerpt from the speech poignantly indicated general mistrust that many Americans had of the Mormons.

They are an aggressive, a growing people, and utterly alien and foreign to us, to our government and institutions, customs and traditions. They are as much foreign population as if we should take 150,000 of the Russians, with the emperor of Russia at their head, and place them in the centre of this country. They owe no allegiance whatever to the government at Washington, no to our flag.<sup>58</sup>

A year later, in a scathing invective published in the Utah Review by Reverend Theophelus Hilton, Mormonism was depicted in the following terms:

Mormonism is made up of twenty parts. Take eight parts diabolism, three parts of animalism from the Mohammedan system, one part bigotry from old Judaism, four parts cunning and treachery from Jesuitism, two parts Thugism from India, and two parts Arnoldism [from Matthew Arnold], and then shake the mixture over the fires of animal passion and throw in the forms and ceremonies of the Christian religion and you will have the system in its true component elements.<sup>59</sup>

Mormons, experiencing the hostility of the non-Mormon world, struggled to survive as a people and as a faith. Their ultimate removal to the shores of the Great Salt Lake was deemed necessary after violent encounters with surrounding communities. This geographic isolation would provide them with a buffer of space and time to prosper materially, and establish their religious foundation as a faith. Important in this latter effort would be the role of education. Throughout their travails in the East and the West, they sought to use education to strengthen their community and to shore up their faith. Gentiles sought to utilize education, as well. While verbal assaults, physical violence, and restrictive legislation were all effective means of temporarily suppressing the Saints, controlling the form and function of Mormon education became a strategic weapon in the war against a radical religion designed to

establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Not only was education essential in allowing the early Mormons to succeed in the society, but it provided the faith with a powerful defense mechanism. The contributions of Susa Young Gates as educator, activist, and suffragist comprised but a single, albeit significant, element of the social and political maelstrom that characterized late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Mormonism.

## NOTES

1. Rebecca Foster Cornwall, "Susanna Y. Gates" chap. in Sister Saints, ed. James B. Allen (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 74.

2. The Hall of Relics was created as a museum that housed a wide range of artifacts from Utah's pioneer period. It included such items as the hand carts used by many of the Mormons who migrated west, covered wagons, eating utensils, clothing from the period, etc. Though the original building is no longer standing, the Hall of Relics was incorporated into the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Museum which currently occupies two six-story buildings. Edith Menna, Director of the Museum, phone interview by author, 19 June 1995.

3. Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed. Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years vol. 1 (Provo, UT: University Press, 1975) Appendix 9, 573.

4. Wilkinson, vol. 3, Appendix 21, 725.

5. Rebecca Foster Cornwall, 73, and; Appendix 21, 730 in vol. 2 of Wilkinson's Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years.

6. Thomas F. O'Dea, The Mormons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 21.

7. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton. The Mormon Experience: History of the Latter-day Saints (New York: Knopf, 1979), 27.

8. Arrington and Bitton, 75.

9. Mark Leone, Roots of Modern Mormonism (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 32.

10. Susanna Young Gates and Leah D. Widstoe The Life Story of Brigham Young (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930), 200.

11. Lawrence Foster, Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 145.

12. Journal of Discourses (London, 1854-1886) Vol. 11, p. 251.

13. For an in-depth discussion of the Mormon concept of the afterlife, see Leone's Roots of Modern Mormonism, 33-34.

14. Arrington and Bitton, 186.

15. Foster, 144.

16. Arrington and Bitton, 302.

17. Nineteenth century experiments in communal living included such utopian societies as the Transcendentalists at Brook Farm (1840-1847). Robert Owen's failed efforts at New Harmony, Indiana in 1824 initiated the outburst of secular communitarianism that included over ninety societies in this country between 1800 and 1850.

18. Arrington and Bitton, 111.

19. Derr, Jill Mulvay, Janath R. Canon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1992.) A quote from the foreword referring to the mission of Relief Society.

20. According to Arrington and Bitton, as early as 1849 the Mormons had begun experimenting with Sunday School education in some wards. In 1867, the General Sunday School Union was established.

21. Arrington and Bitton, 214. Also, Arrington claims in his 1977 article, "The Latter-day Saints and Public Education," Southwestern Journal of Social Education that the Mormon Church operates one of the largest systems of released-time religious instruction in American public education.

22. Ibid.

23. For a succinct description of the Church governance structure see Thomas G. Alexander's Preface in Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1930 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986). Also, Arrington and Bitton provide a fine definition for some of the over two-hundred positions held by lay members of the Church on pp. 292-293 in The Mormon Experience.

24. Arrington and Bitton, 292.

25. Cited from the Official Report of the General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints, 5 April 1940, pp. 20-21.

26. Arrington and Bitton, 206-207.

27. Mario S. De Pillis, "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," in The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past, ed. D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 14.

28. Foster, 143.

29. Jan Shipps, "The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith," in D. Michael Quinn, 53.

30. Arrington and Bitton, 3.

31. D. Michael Quinn, "Divining Rods, Treasure Digging, and Seer Stones," chap. in Early Mormonism and the Magic World View (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1987). Quinn's book provides a thorough examination of early Christian folk magic, and hypothesizes that this perspective indirectly influenced the form and function of Mormon doctrine.

32. Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, 22.

33. See: Arrington and Bitton, The Mormon Experience (New York: Knopf, 1970); Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Knopf, 1967); Brooke, The Refiner's Fire (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), and; Shipps, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

34. Jan Shipps, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 13.

35. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith 2nd ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 1.

36. Wilkinson, Vol. 1, p. 8.



37. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience: History of the Latter-day Saints (New York: Knopf, 1979), 33-34. Given the religious apathy that characterized much of New England during this period, it is not difficult to understand the mass appeal the Book of Mormon held for its original audiences in the 1830s. As Arrington and Bitton point out, despite the fact that the book was incredibly complex, it managed to clarify problematic passages in the Bible. Additionally, the book itself was lauded as a tangible piece of evidence that could be verified.

38. Quoted from the "Introduction to the Book of Mormon," (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ, Latter-day Saints, 1981).

39. Newell and Avery, 37.

40. Arnold K. Garr, "Early Missionary Journeys in North America" in Historical Atlas of Mormonism, ed. Kenneth Brown, Donald Q. Cannon and Richard H. Jackson (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 30.

41. Flanders, Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965) See pp. 94-102.

42. Huntress, Keith, "The Murder of Joseph Smith" in Mormonism and American Culture, ed. Marvin S. Hill and James B. Allen (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972) 77, 84.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., 74-75.

45. Foster, 143.

46. David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII (September 1960), 205.

47. David Brion Davis, "The New England Origins of Mormonism" in Mormonism and American Culture, ed. Marvin S. Hill and James B. Allen, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 27.

48. Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion," 206.

49. Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet (New York, 1945), Appendix C.

50. Newell and Avery, 95.

51. Stanley S. Ivins' article, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy" in Hill and Allen, pp. 101-111, provides an excellent discussion of the ramifications this doctrine had on Mormon development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is significant to note that according to Ivins' research, more than 66 percent of polygamous men "married only the one extra wife necessary to achieve highest exaltation in the celestial kingdom," p. 210. in Foster's Religion and Sexuality.

52. Foster, 210.

53. Arrington and Bitton, 199.

54. Susa Young Gates typed manuscript, "My Father as His Forty-Six Children Knew Him," Box 1, Folder 1, Utah State Historical Society, p. 1.

55. R. Paul Cracroft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Her Work" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1958), footnote 1 on page 2 of Chapter entitled, "Full Measure of Wheat."

56. Rev. Alexander Campbell, Delusions. An Analysis of the Book of Mormon . . . and a Refutation of Its Pretenses to Divine Authority (Boston: Benjamin H. Adze, 1832) p. 13 as cited in Mario De Pillis' "The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism" in Michael Quinn's The New Mormon History, p. 22.

57. Eber D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled (Painesville, OH: Eber D. Howe, 1834); William Harris, Mormonism Portrayed: Its Errors and Absurdities (Warsaw, IL: Sharp and Gamble, 1841); E. G. Lee, The Mormons; or, Knavery Exposed (Frankford, PA: E. G. Lee); John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints; or, an Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston and New York: Leland and Whiting; Bradbury, Soden, 1842).

58. "Utah and the Mormons," The Chatauquan Vol. 1 No. 3 (Aug 1880), 122. No author.

59. Written by Rev. Theophelus Hilton 27 May 1881, and reprinted in Robert Joseph Dwyer's The Gentile Comes to Utah, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971) p. 184 Also, the reference to "Arnoldism" refers to English poet, Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), whose work was representative of Victorian intellectual concerns, and who was the foremost literary critic of his day. Despite deep religious doubts, Arnold wrote several works that attempted to defend the essential truth of Christianity against conventional dogmatism.

## CHAPTER II

### EDUCATION IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"Education is the power to think clearly,  
the power to act well in the world's work,  
and the power to appreciate life."

Brigham Young<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance that early Mormon leaders placed on the dissemination of knowledge.

"Education has long been a kind of obsession among Mormons."<sup>2</sup> It has been a cornerstone of Mormonism since its inception. In Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith recorded a divine revelation that commanded:

. . . you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom; Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand . . . The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth.<sup>3</sup>

Smith regarded education as a primary tool for building the kingdom of God on earth, as did his successor, Brigham Young. Joseph Smith's vision for the education of his flock would require the geographic confines of the intermountain West, and the organizational and economic savvy of Brigham Young, to bring to fruition his visionary dream for a wide-scale Mormon educational system. Brigham Young's approach

to education was consistent with his approach to all social and political matters--pragmatic. Susa claimed that her father believed "there should be no broken links between the school door and the shop, farm or kitchen."<sup>4</sup>

Education is the process by which cultural transmission occurs between one generation of a society to another, and includes both formal and informal means. Schools are formal education structures that are components of the wider culture in which they are created, while informal means of education can include any number of socializing practices that shape the mind or character of individuals and groups in a society. Susa Young Gates recognized the range of settings in which education can occur.

Education which is defined as instruction and discipline, and qualified usually by the terms "learning" and "schooling," may include any acquired information or instruction received at home, on the street, in public places or within the walls of a school room.<sup>5</sup>

Before the early Saints were able to establish formal systems of education, the church relied on informal means of uniting its widely dispersed membership into a cohesive religious community. As Mormon culture matured, circumstances allowed for more conventional systems of education to be implemented. To effectively examine any means of education, however, they must be considered within the context of aggregate forces that shape their existence.

Mormonism evolved within a cultural context dominated by religion and frontier life, and these two forces would shape both the formal and informal means of Mormon education throughout the early twentieth century.

Both Smith and Young were keenly aware that the growth of a nascent religion hinged on education that could provide existing members with proselytizing skills. They also recognized that a burgeoning population of Mormon converts needed to learn the basic tenets of church doctrine and practice. Consequently, early Mormon educational efforts placed a primary focus on theology and oratory. Additionally, because the pattern of Mormon migration encroached the American frontier, it was also necessary to provide learning experiences that fostered practical skills, "that kind of knowledge which will be of practicable utility, and for the public good, and also for private and individual happiness."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, training in mechanical arts, agriculture and domestic science were also emphasized.

The Mormon's early educational efforts developed in three stages: migration from Ohio to Utah (1830-1846); the rise of private education in the state of Deseret (1847-1869), and; the beginning of public education in the territory of Utah (1870-1896).

Mormon Education: the Migration Years, 1830-1846

Efforts to establish a fixed system of formal education were nearly impossible for the Mormons during the early years of migration between 1830 and 1847. The nature of resettlement imposed serious limitations on the extent to which the Saints could disseminate knowledge to church members. It should be noted that the Mormons were not a nomadic people in the sense that they chose to wander across the American frontier in search of greener pastures, nor were they Overlanders who were tempted by the gold fields of California.<sup>7</sup> These were a religious people, forced to resettle as a consequence of their controversial beliefs and practices. The Mormon migration varied distinctly from other American migration movements, and these variations had direct implications for the development of Mormon educational systems.

In the composition of its wagontrains, the motives that drove them, the organization and discipline of the companies, it [the Mormon Migration] differed profoundly from the Oregon and California migrations. These were not groups of young and reckless adventurers, nor were they isolated families or groups of families. They were literally villages on the march, villages of a sobriety, solidarity, and discipline unheard of anywhere else on the western trails, and not too frequent in the settled United States.<sup>8</sup>

The Mormons were committed to education, and their "villages on the march" met the frustrating challenges of constant resettlement by managing to provide educational

opportunities, though limited, in many of the "gathering" sites that emerged between Kirtland, Ohio and the Great Basin region of the western frontier.<sup>9</sup> While it was not feasible to establish traditional systems of education in most of the temporary settlements, church members relied on less conventional resources to provide the educational experiences that united them as a religious community. These included newspapers and journals, scriptural texts, and church-sanctioned social and benevolent societies.

A wide range of publications provided church members with access to important information contained in articles, essays, letters and sermons. As early as 1832, the Saints published a newspaper, The Evening and the Morning Star, which was the first of many publications that addressed Mormon doctrine and practices, and connected a widely dispersed membership to church officials. This church magazine was published by William W. Phelps in Jackson County, Missouri. The first issue, published in June of 1832 contained the following admonition regarding education:

Those appointed to select and prepare books for the use of schools, will attend to that subject, as soon as more weighty matters are finished. But the parents and guardians in the Church of Christ, need not wait--it is all important that children, to become good should be taught so.<sup>10</sup>

By 1841, there were thousands of Saints scattered throughout Great Britain, and a monthly periodical called



The Millennial Star, was published in May of 1840 "to acquaint the English Saints with the current and past history of the Mormon Church."<sup>11</sup> Also, in 1872, the Woman's Exponent was published by the Relief Society as an independent, biweekly journal for "the benefit, education, and development of thought of all sisters in the Church."<sup>12</sup> This publication was designed and managed by Mormon women, and addressed a wide range of issues to include; housewifery, polygamy, women's rights, and the study of medicine. Early Mormon publications were clearly utilized to disseminate knowledge and provide education.

Scriptural texts such as the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants, were also primary educational tools in the early years of Mormon development. It is reasonable to consider that given the scarcity of eastern textbooks during the early church period, Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon may also have been the most readily available for the Saints to study. The teachings in Doctrine and Covenants were particularly significant to the Saints, since they provided instruction on a multitude of issues ranging from the structure of church organization, to the manner in which parents should teach their children. It was considered a companion text to both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and was specifically:

a book of scripture containing 138 sections or chapters and two official Declarations. Most of the sections were written by Joseph Smith, the first president and prophet of the Church, as he received them as revelation or other promptings from the spirit of God.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, "the church required parents to teach their children certain theological concepts at an early age and prescribed rewards and penalties for doing so."<sup>14</sup> These rewards and penalties were explicated in Doctrine and Covenants. This "companion" text was also instructional in that it clarified issues that arose when Joseph Smith originally translated the Book of Mormon, and interpreted various passages from the Bible.<sup>15</sup>

Educational opportunities also occurred through the activities of various benevolent societies that were established early in the church's history. One such example is Relief Society, first organized in March of 1842 by Joseph Smith. This organization provided instruction to Mormon women in the area of spiritual ordinances such as baptism for the dead, speaking-in-tongues, and the laying-on of hands (healing the sick). The women members of Relief Society also became adept at organization and governance. They created and operated successful economic cooperatives, such as wheat granaries and the manufacture of raw silk. Although Relief Society was initially created as a religious and charitable auxiliary of the church, it served as an

important mechanism in the development of Mormon economy. Relief Society became an important teaching instrument, providing valuable lessons in thrift, production, and religious ordinances.

As a consequence of the obstacles imposed by constant resettlement, early Mormon education was disseminated through a variety of informal means. Mormon publications, scriptural texts, and church-supported benevolent societies provided a host of learning experiences to the knowledge-thirsty Saints, and their "villages on the march". With each attempt to settle in a new community, the Mormons would begin the process of establishing formal education structures. It was a process that would be interrupted three times until the Saints would finally reach the New Zion in the intermountain West.

#### Educational Efforts in Ohio

Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland, Ohio on 1 February 1831. Kirtland became the primary settlement of the Mormons from 1831 through 1838. "By the summer of 1835 there were fifteen hundred to two thousand Mormons in Kirtland and vicinity."<sup>16</sup> Shortly after arriving in Ohio, Joseph Smith received a revelation in June that called for the "selecting and writing of books for schools in this church."<sup>17</sup>

Although Joseph Smith had established a "common school" of sorts in Kirtland that included "adult classes in mathematics, geography, and English grammar,"<sup>18</sup> one of the Mormon's earliest attempts to implement formal schooling took place during January of 1833 with the founding of a theological seminary called the "School of the Prophets." This adult educational program was designed to instruct church elders, and was first housed in the Newel K. Whitney Company Store where classroom space and textbooks were scarce.<sup>19</sup> In 1836, the School of the Prophets was relocated to the newly built Kirtland Temple, the first religious building constructed by the Latter-day Saints. The temple was completed in fewer than three years, and served a number of functions ranging from a place of worship, to the local meeting house, to the community school.

Mormon historian and educator John C. Moffitt claims that instruction in the School of the Prophets centered around the study of "learning-proselyting," and emphasized both theology and public speaking.<sup>20</sup> Joseph Smith's biographer, Fawn Brodie, maintains that the only course work actually taught in the school was the study of Joseph Smith's revelations.<sup>21</sup> The elders, who were preparing for missionary work, studied during the winter months in order that they could preach the gospel during the milder summer

months. Although constant persecution and resettlement forced the School of the Prophets to close shortly after Joseph Smith's assassination, it was resurrected by Brigham Young in 1867, "not so much a school as an invitational forum or town meeting of priesthood holders" who "raised and resolved issues of theology, church governance and community development."<sup>22</sup>

Joseph Smith was fascinated by the study of languages:

It seems as if the Lord opens our minds in a marvelous manner to understand His word in the original language; and my prayer is that God will speedily endow us with a knowledge of all languages and all tongues.<sup>23</sup>

Early Mormon schools in Ohio provided instruction in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Joshua Sexias, an instructor in Hebrew, was employed by Smith and brought to Kirtland as was H. M. Haws, a professor of Greek and Latin. Many other areas of study were also important to the early Mormons. An example of these studies was indicated in the "Olive Leaf" revelation, recorded by Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, on 27 December 1832. The Saints were admonished to "be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God."<sup>24</sup> Although the following citation includes the original passage from Doctrines and Covenants, the parenthetical references represent the common

interpretation of the disciplines that the revelation intended to address:

. . . things both in heaven and in the earth [astronomy, geology, archaeology, physics, chemistry, biology]; things which have been [history]; things which are [current events]; thing which must shortly come to pass [prophecy]; things which are at home [domestic affairs]; things which are abroad [foreign affairs]; the wars and perplexities of nations [international relations]; the judgments which are upon the land [scriptural fulfillment]; and countries and kingdoms [modern history, geography].<sup>25</sup>

Although Kirtland prospered as a result of Mormon influence, tensions between Mormons and Gentiles intensified in Ohio. Many Gentiles suspected the Mormons of criminal conduct such as counterfeiting and theft, and in 1837 the official bank of the church, the Kirtland Safety Society, failed, exacerbating resentment and persecution. By the end of the year, approximately 1600 Latter-day Saints departed on the long journey to the Missouri frontier.

In addition to the Mormon community established in Kirtland and its surrounding area, Joseph Smith revealed in July of 1831 that a second gathering place should be established in Jackson County, Missouri. He specifically designated Independence, Missouri, as the new "City of Zion." Consequently, as members of the original New York branch traveled west to establish a gathering place in Ohio, some continued on to the frontier region of Missouri. For the first ten years after the creation of the newly restored

church, "two gathering places effectively competed for members."<sup>26</sup> Kirtland became the "administrative center" of the church, while "the Missouri gathering became a focus of efforts to recreate the model of the early Christian church by living a communitarian life-style."<sup>27</sup>

### Educational Efforts in Missouri

The Mormons first began gathering in Missouri between 1831 and 1838. For almost eight years, thousands of Saints traveled the 900-mile journey from Ohio to the new Zion, most of them making the trip on foot, enduring hunger and thirst, extreme cold or oppressive heat, and exposure due to insufficient clothing. The areas of Missouri in which the Saints settled included Jackson, Clay, and Caldwell Counties. In January of 1838, Joseph Smith and his family left Kirtland and moved to Far West, a small town on the Shoal Creek in Caldwell County, Missouri. During its peak, Far West had a population of approximately 3000 inhabitants.

Although education was as important to the Missouri Mormons as it was to the Ohio Saints, schools in Missouri did not flourish with the same success that had been enjoyed in Kirtland. The Mormons in Ohio had suffered substantial social and political oppression, but persecution by anti-Mormon Missourians was extremely severe and unyielding, making the establishment of fixed educational structures

extremely difficult. Also, because the frontier of Missouri was quite dissimilar from the technically-advanced Northeast, there were cultural differences between the Mormons who had originally settled in Missouri, and those Saints who had recently migrated from the East. These included "differences in speech, life-style, and other customs," often causing tension between the two groups.<sup>28</sup> In an ideal environment, where those responsible for the creation and maintenance of education share similar goals and values, establishing formal means of education is a difficult process. In an environment where educational leaders experience differences in cultural sets, the process of establishing education systems becomes extremely arduous. Such was the challenge in the rapidly growing Missouri settlements.

Despite the many obstacles that prevented a thriving system of education, several attempts were made to establish schools. By August of 1831, a school was dedicated in Colesville, located approximately in the area of present-day Kansas City. A small branch of the church known as the Timber Settlement had constructed a school house as early as 1833.<sup>29</sup> According to the History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri, when the Mormons first arrived in Far West they constructed "a large and comfortable school house."<sup>30</sup> Sidney Rigdon, a high



official of the church, who was also instrumental in establishing several of the Missouri branches, addressed the nature of Mormon education in an oration delivered in July of 1838:

We have assembled ourselves together in this remote land, to prepare for that which is coming on the earth, and we have this day laid the corner stones of this temple of God, and design, with as little delay as possible, to complete it, and to rear up to the name of our God in this city 'Far West', a house which shall be a house of prayer, a house of learning . . . where all the sciences, languages, etc., which are taught in our country, in schools of the highest order, shall be taught. And the object is to have it on a plan accessible to all classes, the poor, as well as the rich, that all persons in our midst, may have the opportunity to educate their children, both male and female, to any extent they please.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the many obstacles created by hostile non-Mormon neighbors, between 1831 and 1838 the Saints proceeded with their efforts to build their "Zion" in Missouri. They planted crops, built homes and a temple of worship, and constructed schools, but by the end of the decade, conflict in Missouri had reached deadly proportions. Although factors contributing to the prejudice and persecution were complex, in general, Missourians feared "the political and economic implications of the Latter-day Saint migration, the Saints' cohesiveness, and Joseph Smith's power as prophet and leader."<sup>32</sup> On the heels of the "Mormon War" between Missouri militia units and Mormon soldiers, Governor Lilburn Boggs issued the infamous "extermination order" in October

of 1838 calling for the expulsion or extermination of all Mormons in Missouri. This order ultimately forced the mass migration of Latter-day Saints into Commerce, Illinois.

### Educational Efforts in Illinois

Between 1839 and 1846, a small settlement on the banks of the Mississippi River between Burlington, Iowa and Quincy, Illinois, became the principal community of the Latter-day Saints. Commerce, Illinois, was renamed "Nauvoo" by the new Mormon settlers, a Hebrew word roughly translated as "beautiful place" or "city beautiful." Nauvoo was unique for several reasons. It enjoyed tremendous political and economic autonomy as a consequence of its very liberal charter issued by the State of Illinois in 1840. Growth in this Mormon community exploded, reaching a peak population of 25,000.<sup>33</sup>

The legal organization of Nauvoo, by means of the city charter granted on 16 December 1840, had important implications for the development of Mormon culture:

With a liberal charter from the Illinois legislature, the city enjoyed wide powers of self-rule . . . A militia was recruited . . . An embryonic university, an agricultural and manufacturing society . . . were only a few of the attractions the city offered.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, the Nauvoo Charter provided for a special writ of habeas corpus "designed to make Nauvoo and island of legal safety in which Mormons arrested by 'outside' civil

officers could be freed by legal process."<sup>35</sup> Often to the dismay of neighboring Gentiles, the city's municipal affairs, including law enforcement and the judiciary, operated independently from the jurisdiction of county government.

The charter was particularly significant for Mormon education in two important ways. It established the concept of a central authority over all formal education, and it created:

an institution of learning within the limits of the city for the teaching of the arts, sciences, and learned professions to be called the "University of the City of Nauvoo," which institution shall be under the control and management of a board of trustees, consisting of a chancellor, registrar, and twenty-three regents, which board shall thereafter be a body corporate and politic, with perpetual succession, by the name of "Chancellor and Regents of the University of the City of Nauvoo," and shall have full power to pass, ordain, establish and execute all such laws and ordinances as they consider necessary for the welfare and prosperity of said university, its officers and students.<sup>36</sup>

The University of the City of Nauvoo was one of the first municipal universities established in the United States, and resulted in much more than just a successful attempt to secure higher education.<sup>37</sup> The charter laid the foundation for the future University of Deseret. The system of common schools that had been established in Nauvoo by 1841 fell under the auspices of the University Board of Regents. The university, or "parent school," enjoyed a

scope of authority that ranged from standardizing textbooks, to designating teacher certification requirements. The board was also responsible for hiring teachers as well as paying their salaries. They established student costs, such as tuition and fees, which ranged from two dollars and fifty cents, to five dollars per semester.<sup>38</sup> Some of the earliest courses offered by the university focused on the study of mathematics:

. . . arithmetic, algebra, geometry, conic sections, plane trigonometry, mensuration, surveying, navigation, analytical, plane and spherical trigonometry, analytical geometry, and the differential and integral calculus.<sup>39</sup>

Early educators in Nauvoo were often church officials as well. Orson Pratt was an important church theologian, served as a member of the Quorum, and designed the original rectangular plat that designated the city lots of Salt Lake City. Professor Pratt was "a man of pure mind and a high order of ability, who without early education and amidst great difficulties has achieved it," and who taught Mathematics and English Literature at the University of the City of Nauvoo.<sup>40</sup> Although the professors who taught at the university were men, most of the teachers in the city's common schools were women, as the men of the community were required to attend the more physical challenges that accompanied pioneer existence. Some of these early women educators, such as Eliza R. Snow and Emmeline B. Wells,

would become significant figures in the development of Mormon economy and culture. Emmeline B. Wells, who became president of the Relief Society, and editor of The Woman's Exponent, "taught first a school in the upper floor of Joseph Smith's house, and later she taught in a school house which was afterwards burned down."<sup>41</sup>

Although formal schools of learning such as the University of Nauvoo and the School of the Prophets were developed to address adult educational needs, early Mormon education emphasized elementary instruction as well. Preparation for schools for children began almost simultaneously with those for adult instruction. One of Joseph Smith's earliest revelations in June of 1831 established the obligation of the church to provide Mormon children with a sound education. In November of 1831 it was also revealed to the prophet that parents had a direct responsibility to ensure that their children "walk uprightly before the Lord."<sup>42</sup> In 1832, the church newspaper, The Evening and the Morning Star, published an article entitled "Common Schools" in which church members were urged to "lose no time in preparing schools for their children, that they may be taught as is pleasing to the Lord, and brought up in the way of holiness."<sup>43</sup> In July of 1838 during a cornerstone ceremony for the temple in Far West, Missouri,

Sidney Rigdon, a member of the First Presidency observed that:

Next to the worship of our God, we esteem the education of our children and of the rising generation. For what is wealth without society or society without intelligence. And how is intelligence to be obtained? -by education [sic].<sup>44</sup>

Social and political conventions established in Nauvoo laid the foundation for many of the practices that would shape Mormonism throughout the early twentieth century. Systems of education, largely influenced by the unique provisions of the Nauvoo City Charter, would be crucial to the development of education in the Great Salt Lake Valley where the Mormons would, at last, find a permanent home. The concept of "perpetual succession" in university authority, and a centralized system of supervision, would have direct implications for Utah education, specifically, the University of Deseret, later to become the University of Utah.

The mass exodus from Nauvoo marked a major turning-point in Mormon social, political and educational history.

The economic and missionary success that followed Mormon social and ideological innovation at every stage of its development brought inevitable pressure from the outside community . . . The final move, to Utah, passed beyond the frontier into an institutional vacuum, where a totally new social order had to be established for survival, but where it could at the same time enjoy uninhibited growth . . . Like most unifying events, it created bonds that would last a

generation, as well as a history that would serve as a mirror to ennoble and justify future events. It was an instant epic.<sup>45</sup>

#### Mormon Education in the State of Deseret, 1847-1869

The second major stage of early Mormon education began in July of 1847 when Brigham Young first arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley with 148 weak and weary Saints. Although Mormon education continued in the camps throughout the 1300-mile journey from Nauvoo, formal elementary classes began within three months after the Mormons first arrived in the land they would call "Deseret," a word from the Book of Mormon meaning honeybee.

Entering into the valley in 1847, a woman was the first school teacher in the Old fort, erected on Pioneer Square. Mary Jane Dilworth (Hammond) came from a cultured and refined family in Philadelphia, the Dilworths. She was not only well trained in scholastic matters, but possessed a remarkably magnetic personality which won the affection of the children with never to be forgotten loyalty. Other teachers there were, among them being Eliza R. Snow and Zina D.F. Young.<sup>46</sup>

Before embarking on the long and dangerous journey west, in December of 1847, Brigham Young wrote a general epistle in Council Bluffs, Iowa, that expressed his desire to secure instructional materials for the new Zion as early as possible:

It is very desirable that all Saints should improve every opportunity of securing at least a copy of every valuable treatise on education-every book, map, chart, or diagram that may contain

interesting, useful and attractive matter to children, and cause them to love to learn to read; and also every historical, mathematical, philosophical, geographical, geological, astronomical, scientific, practical, and all other variety of useful and interesting writings, maps, etc., . . . for the benefit of the rising generation.<sup>47</sup>

Although the colonization of the Great Basin region shared some features in common with early resettlement efforts in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois, the unique geography, and the distinct history of the Great Basin region presented the Saints with challenges they had yet to encounter. These challenges would indirectly influence the development of their education systems. When the Mormons arrived, they settled in what was essentially a foreign country. Mexico's Great Salt Lake Valley was not ceded to the United States until 2 February 1848 with the signing of the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty, an outcome of the Mexican-American War. Many Mormons engaged in military service during this war.<sup>48</sup> The Mormons were the first permanent white settlers in the Great Basin region. Prior to their arrival, the Indian nations of the Paiute, Shoshone, Gosiutes, Navahos and Utes inhabited the area that would become, for the Saints, the kingdom of God on earth.

In 1849, the Latter-day Saints were unsuccessful in their petition to Congress requesting that their civil government of Deseret be admitted to the union as a state.



An alternative petition for Deseret to become a territorial government with home rule, was also rejected. As an outcome of the Compromise of 1850, the Mormon's "Deseret" became the territory of Utah, named after the powerful Indian nation that inhabited the center section of the Great Basin region. Four attempts to obtain statehood under the name Deseret between 1849 and 1872 failed, largely because the name symbolized the Mormon's "independence from outside control and influence, and thus carried within it, political, social, and economic agendas."<sup>49</sup> In February of 1851, Brigham Young took the oath of office as governor of the new territory and until Utah finally became a state in 1896, eight governors would be appointed to serve the region, most of them harboring overt anti-Mormon sentiments.

Because the colonization of the Great Basin Region necessitated extreme time and attention, early church leaders in Utah, particularly Brigham Young, recognized that educational systems needed to be less ornamental, and more practical. The primary objective of Mormon education, however, was to produce devout Latter-day Saints. Brigham Young hired a private tutor to teach his children and firmly directed him not to "try to teach the multiplication table without the spirit of the Lord."<sup>50</sup> The Mormon schools that evolved in Utah were devised to support the tenets of Mormonism, but to also complement a way of life

characterized by overwhelming struggle. Curricula were selected to promote Mormon ideals, but also, the principles of hard work, and individual sacrifice for the good of the group. Education promoted a sense of communitarianism that helped coordinate the disarray of an un-tamed frontier. In 1903, Progressive economist Richard T. Ely commented that:

we find in Mormonism, to a larger degree than I have ever seen in any other body of people, an illustration of the individual who is willing to sacrifice himself for the whole, and it is a religious sanction which compels him to do so.<sup>51</sup>

Mormon historian Leonard Arrington observed that Mormon collectivism, affirmed by a strong common faith, was critical in achieving the social and economic successes experienced relatively early in such a stark frontier environment.

The settlers' formula for success was a puritanical attitude toward consumption and saving and an ecclesiastically organized cooperation. With religion as an essential tool for survival, development was based on cooperative, rather than individualistic principles.<sup>52</sup>

Community interaction was a distinct feature of Mormon culture. Much of the Mormon's routine activity centered around a single public building that had been constructed through the labor, and donated materials, of all the citizens in the community. Often times, this public building was also the school house, and served as the

community church, meeting house, city hall, and even theater.

The early schools of Deseret were Mormon schools. Teachers and students were Mormons, and curriculum reflected specific Mormon attitudes and beliefs. If a public building was unavailable, it was common during this early period of settlement for schools to be conducted in private homes, much in the way dame schools of colonial New England were.<sup>53</sup> If a community did have a separate building that was used as a schoolhouse, it was typically constructed from logs, approximately 20 by 30 feet, and situated in the middle of the settlement or "fort," as these frontier villages were designed to defend against hostile attacks from Indians or enemy troops.

More often than not, local schools were private-venture operations. Teaching was usually done on a voluntary basis, and teachers would offer their services for small fees, food, or supplies. Schools were ungraded, and teachers were typically women of the community with limited formal training. In March of 1852, the Legislative Assembly passed an act providing for the creation of school districts, and in most communities that were populated enough to support a municipal or county government, examining boards were appointed to "determine the qualifications of school

teachers, and all applicants of good moral character that are considered to be competent."<sup>54</sup>

Brigham Young recognized the need to implement a system of organization that could oversee the widely dispersed Mormon common schools of the Great Basin Region. In September of 1851 he called for the creation of the office of territorial superintendent. "A superintendent of public instruction, with a fixed salary, might be of incalculable benefit, at this early period of our national existence, in the formation of a uniform system of common schools. . ."<sup>55</sup> Another means of unifying the policies and procedures of common schools was the creation of the University of Deseret. Patterned after the organizational structure of the University of Nauvoo, the University of Deseret served as an umbrella organization, supervising all educational efforts throughout the territory.

#### The University of Deseret

1850 was an important year in Mormon educational history. In February of that year, the territorial General Assembly passed an act that created the University of Deseret. This institution would eventually become the University of Utah, and was significant for many reasons. Using the model established in Nauvoo, the governance structure of the University of Deseret included a chancellor

and a board of regents, responsible for administrating university policy and procedures. These members were invariably high officials of the church. The university also incorporated the church system of colonization, establishing branches in other Mormon settlements, and it created a "parent school" which attempted what would be considered by today's standards a teacher-training program.

While the protective confines of the intermountain West insured social and religious purity, free from secular influences, isolation created a host of problems, as well. For education, perhaps the most serious dilemma created by social insulation was the inability to perpetuate an adequate supply of "qualified people who could provide learning experiences of a high quality."<sup>56</sup> As early as 1854, Brigham Young expressed his concern for this matter in a message to the Legislative Assembly: "I fear that sufficient attention is not paid to the selection and examination of teachers."<sup>57</sup> Although examining boards had been established to assess teacher qualifications, this process still did not assure high standards for evaluating their effectiveness. "Since there were no clearly defined and established patterns to follow, different methods of providing examining boards were used."<sup>58</sup>

In response to this complex dilemma, in November of 1850 the university opened the "parent school" which was

designed to coordinate subject matter and pedagogical methodology in all the common schools of the region, as well as prepare teachers to instruct in those schools. When it first commenced, the parent school was conducted in a private home, and the registration fee per quarter was eight dollars. In an advertisement that ran in the 16 November 1850 edition of the Deseret News, it was announced that the school was "designed for men" but eventually, "as soon as room can be prepared, another school similar in its object and character will be instituted for ladies."<sup>59</sup>

#### The Rise of Mormon Academies

Another significant educational structure in church history was the creation of Mormon academies. "Reacting to non-Mormon interference, leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints determined to organize their own system of private schools."<sup>60</sup> During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, church stakes sponsored Mormon academies in the same way that many Catholic and Protestant denominations sponsored parish schools. Between 1875 and 1911 the church established twenty-two academies.

The schools offered basic academic subjects as well as vocational and cultural skills, including agriculture, mechanics, homemaking, music, and art. Because students were involved in numerous debates, plays, athletic competitions, and music recitals, the academies also became social centers for communities.<sup>61</sup>

The rise of the early academies resulted largely as a consequence of two factors; a reaction against mounting anti-Mormon legislation that severely curtailed Mormon educational efforts, and inadequate secondary educational opportunities available in Utah at the time. Because the Saints perceived education to have a very defined role, Mormon academies were designed to achieve a perfect blend of spiritual principles and secular skills. The Mormons never regarded their academies as simply alternatives to, or competitors of, the district or denominational schools that would come to replace them. The Saints believed that their schools were unique in that only Mormon education could reveal God's truth. "Because Mormonism claimed particular insights to truth through continuous revelation by living prophets, its education claimed to be superior to all existing systems."<sup>62</sup> By the early 1930s, Mormon academies had all but vanished from the educational landscape as public high schools began to replace them.

The first Mormon academy in Utah was Brigham Young Academy, established in 1875. An important figure in the development of that institution, and one who played a significant role in the life of Susa Young, was Mormon educator, Karl G. Maeser. Maeser served as principal of Brigham Young Academy from 1876 through 1892, and had once been employed by Brigham Young as a private tutor for his

children. Maeser was born in a small town in Saxony, Germany in 1828. When he was fourteen, Maeser left his home to attend a gymnasium called the Kreuzschule, one of the finest preparatory schools in Dresden. He completed his advanced studies at the Friedrichstadt Schullehrerseminar in Dresden, a teacher-preparation college, "deeply affected by a number of rapid social and political developments and the philosophies of famous contemporary educators, including Pestalozzi, Herbart, and Froebel."<sup>63</sup>

Maeser was converted to Mormonism in Germany while employed as an instructor at the Budig Institute, where the Church of Latter-day Saints was regarded as an evil sect, so Maeser's baptism in October of 1855 was conducted in secret, but effectively terminated his career as an instructor. Shortly after his baptism, Maeser and his family left for the United States, but did not arrive in Salt Lake City until September of 1860, after having first served in missions at Philadelphia, and Richmond, Virginia.<sup>64</sup>

Maeser's relationship with Susa Young began when he was hired as a private tutor for Brigham Young's many children. Brigham asked Maeser to provide "such a course of instruction as only a thorough school teacher can give . . . better than by school mistresses."<sup>65</sup> Knowing of Susa's musical ability, Maeser appointed her head of the Music Department of Brigham Young Academy in 1878. Maeser has



been described as the "spiritual architect" of the 'new kind of educational institution' that President Brigham Young had envisioned."<sup>66</sup> Susa referred to the man who would become her mentor as "the greatest educator who ever entered into Mormon realms."<sup>67</sup>

Mormon academies played a distinct role in the development of early Mormon culture, but perhaps the most unique feature of early Mormon education was the introduction of the Deseret Alphabet. This radical effort to create a distinct written language was without precedent, and subjected the Saints to even greater suspicion and ridicule by the surrounding Gentile society.

#### The Deseret Alphabet

An important and unparalleled innovation of Mormon education during the early Utah period was the controversial attempt to adopt a separate set of written symbols known as the Deseret Alphabet. This endeavor at linguistic autonomy was the first of its kind in American history.<sup>68</sup> The reasons for adopting a separate language were varied. An article in the 19 August 1868 issue of The Deseret News claimed that a primary reason for the alphabet was "the weeding out of objectionable literature."<sup>69</sup> Another reason may have stemmed from the growing diversity among church members as a consequence of successful overseas

proselytizing efforts. In 1850, only 39 percent of church members were located in the United States. As the decade progressed, thousands of non-English speaking Mormons from foreign missions began to migrate to the new Zion.<sup>70</sup> Church officials firmly believed that the new alphabet could help unify the diverse group of Mormon colonists, as well as provide distinct educational benefits. It must also be remembered that the Mormons of Utah were isolated from mainstream American society--an isolation they chose deliberately. A distinct language would help ensure their insularity.

The Deseret Alphabet was considered to be a superior symbol system by Mormon educators because of its simplicity, and was supposedly much easier to learn. The regents of the University of Deseret, along with the territorial superintendent, first introduced the concept of a separate Mormon alphabet in the early 1850s. The antecedent of this idea occurred as early as 1845 in Nauvoo by suggestion of English convert George D. Watt who had, "developed some skill in phonography" and "became interested in shorthand writing" . . . "serving as the official church reporter for many years."<sup>71</sup> Watt was significant for his influence on the regents of the university, as well as Brigham Young, who demonstrated a keen interest in the new alphabet, offering

his full support to its implementation in all the territorial schools.

It is moreover an opportune time to introduce the New Alphabet, in forming which, the regency have performed a difficult and laborious task. I recommend that it be thoroughly and extensively taught in all the schools combining, as it eminently does, a basis of instruction for the attainment of the English language, far surpassing in simplicity and ease any known to exist.<sup>72</sup>

The Saints' effort to achieve their own language was far from half-hearted. They attempted to publish "all of the educational books for the schools and the general reading of the people" in the new characters of the Deseret Alphabet.<sup>73</sup> This was a monumental undertaking. They were so committed to the adoption of the new language that it was utilized in the evening schools to teach the alphabet to adult Mormons and foreign converts. The common schools were also used as an "agency in establishing the Deseret Alphabet as the accepted pattern of spelling, writing, and reading among the people."<sup>74</sup>

Although the Mormon attempt to adopt the Deseret Alphabet was embraced zealously by the majority of church members, it was an effort at social reform that was destined to fail. As the boundaries of the intermountain West began to diminish with advances in transportation and communication, the expansion of the railroads, and the lure of gold in the fields of California, implementing a language

that isolated the Saints from the larger national population was antithetical to a prosperous Mormon economy. Such efforts at isolation only fueled an ever-growing anti-Mormon sentiment, and contributed to the rise of public education in the kingdom of God.

#### Public Education Comes to Utah Territory, 1870-1896

Secularization infiltrated the kingdom of God in the form of public education, and marked another turning point in Mormon educational history. Anti-Mormons astutely recognized the advantage of controlling education in Utah, and utilized three primary means of doing so; by creating denominational schools that could "educate Mormon children" and "wean them from the faith of their fathers," by implementing restrictive secular legislation that dramatically limited Mormon influence in the schools, and by establishing a territorial public school system, supported through taxation.<sup>75</sup>

#### Creation of Denominational Schools

Mormon dominance over education continued until large numbers of non-Mormons began to arrive in the territory. Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, commercial mining for precious metals, and the discovery of coal were some of the factors that caused thousands of Gentiles to migrate to the Great Salt Lake Valley during the last half

of the nineteenth century. As a consequence of economic opportunities, and as a result of deliberate proselytizing efforts, a wide range of religious denominations settled in the Great Basin region during this period. These groups were intent on converting the Saints to religious beliefs more consistent with conventional Christianity. One way to accomplish this goal was to establish denominational schools.

With a powerful conviction of the errors of Mormonism, many Protestant sects (especially the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Baptists) began a nationwide crusade to arouse public sentiment against the Mormons and to establish denominational schools in Utah, where Mormon children could be redeemed from the errors of their parents.<sup>76</sup>

By 1884, there were seventy-nine denominational schools throughout the territory; five Episcopalian, ten Methodist, twenty-six Congregational, thirty-five Presbyterian, two Baptist, and one Catholic. By 1888, that number had increased to ninety.<sup>77</sup> Many of these denominational schools were supported financially by successful fund-raising campaigns "to Christianize" the Mormons, initiated back East. In the ten-year period between 1882 and 1892, nearly \$2,000,000 was allotted for education by non-Mormon denominations.<sup>78</sup>

The "mission schools," as they were referred to by the Mormons, often provided superior education in comparison

with the poorly funded, crudely developed Mormon systems, causing some Mormon parents to send their children to the competing denominational schools.<sup>79</sup> One response to the onslaught of denominational schools (as well as mounting anti-Mormon legislation), was an increase in stake-sponsored Mormon academies known as the LDS academy movement, designed to "keep their [Mormon] children away from the influence of the sophisms of infidelity and the vagaries of the sects."<sup>80</sup> Three major problems hindered the success of this effort; the church was unable to adequately fund the schools, non-Mormons viewed the schools as creating further polarity between already strained relations, and general lack of acceptance of the academies by church members.<sup>81</sup>

#### Restrictive Secular Legislation

While the creation of denominational schools thwarted Mormon educational efforts, perhaps the most lethal blow to Mormon culture in general during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, was the successful passage of countless pieces of anti-Mormon legislation, most of them centering around the practice of polygamy. Much of the legislation passed between 1860 and 1890 seriously effected the process of education in Utah, as well. The most damning of these was the infamous Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, which the Mormons challenged as a violation of their constitutional

rights. President Grover Cleveland held the bill for ten days, refusing to sign or veto it. It became law on 3 March 1887 without his signature. The church challenged the act, but on 18 May 1890, the United States Supreme Court upheld the provisions of Edmunds-Tucker by a vote of six to three.<sup>82</sup>

For education, this act had serious implications. It stipulated that the Utah school laws be placed under the control of the territorial supreme court. The attorney general was to implement proceedings that would seize church property and transfer it to the Secretary of the Interior for the use and benefit of the public schools. All sectarian instruction in common schools was forbidden, and compulsory attendance was implemented for all children through age fourteen.<sup>83</sup>

Four months after the passage of Edmunds-Tucker, the church responded with the Polygamy Manifesto of 1890, submitting to the provisions of the act, and entering into "an era of concession and compromise leading to Utah statehood in 1896."<sup>84</sup> In the Manifesto, issued on 25 September 1890, Mormon President Wilford Woodruff declared that:

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the Court of the last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the

members of the Church over which I provide to have them do likewise.<sup>85</sup>

Anticipating the inevitable, as early as 1875, Mormon leaders had begun organizing experimental church schools. By 1888, these leaders had devised an entire educational system known as the LDS Church School System, that sponsored religious instruction for students at both the elementary and intermediate levels on a weekday basis. Part of this plan included the development of a system of stake academies patterned after Brigham Young Academy. Karl G. Maeser was appointed general superintendent of Church Schools in 1888.

The LDS Church School System was a very sophisticated plan that included both the expansion of its academy system, and the implementations of a program called Religion Classes, in which Mormon doctrine was taught to elementary students on a weekly basis. Religious instruction also occurred through church-supported auxiliaries, such as Relief Society and the young Men's and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations. This elaborate system of religious training was no small undertaking for the church, considering the mounting financial pressures it faced as a consequence of anti-Mormon legislation. The system was officially sanctioned just weeks after the Manifesto of 1890 was announced. Because of the pressure from competing denominational schools, combined with the economic



restrictions imposed by anti-Mormon legislation, by 1890, the church agreed to support a free, territorial public school system.

#### Creation of Territorial Public School System

The campaign for public education was spawned by a variety of social and political factors. Mormon teachings were considered offensive to Gentiles, and the newly arrived non-Mormons strenuously objected to the dominant influence of Mormonism in the classroom. Efforts to implement a public school system in Utah became "a battleground for the larger Mormon/non-Mormon conflict that characterized the territory during the late nineteenth century."<sup>86</sup>

Between 1851 and 1890 a series of bills were introduced into the state legislature that attempted to establish a free system of education, but the progress was slow, given that taxation did not become a major source of school funding until 1890. In 1851 the territorial legislature approved the first public school law that supported, through tax dollars, the establishment of one or more schools in every town. This law had also created the office of the Territorial Superintendent of Primary Schools. School districts were created with a legislative act that was passed in March of 1852. This law also provided some

nominal tax support.<sup>87</sup> The school law of 1865 provided that:

Each school district may, by a two-thirds vote of the taxpayers of the district, assess and collect a tax not to exceed two percent for the purpose of assisting to pay qualified teachers, and to provide suitable books.<sup>88</sup>

Finally, in February of 1890, a bill that had been introduced in January by Clarence E. Allen, a prominent member of the Congregational Church, and chairman of the territorial legislature's standing committee on education, was passed into law, establishing a free public school system in the territory.<sup>89</sup> This legislation altered the form and function of education throughout Utah. The bill established a fixed system of tax-supported schools, and mandated that denominational doctrines could not be taught in Utah's public schools.<sup>90</sup>

The church recognized the financial burden of a dual education system, and ultimately relinquished the task of elementary education to the state, relying on the strength of its LDS Church School System to provide Mormon children with religious training. While public education allowed for a system of free schools to develop in Utah, it necessarily forced the secularization of those schools, effectively terminating a Mormon tradition of education that combined academic training with religious instruction. Secularization also had consequences for higher education. In 1896, when

Utah entered statehood, the University of Deseret became the University of Utah, replete with a state board of education and a superintendent of public instruction.

In the period between 1847 and 1896, when the Mormons first arrived in the Great Basin Region under the leadership of Brigham Young, until statehood was secured during the presidency of Wilford Woodruff, education would undergo a significant transmutation. The poverty-stricken Saints who first arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley were incapable of providing publicly financed education. By the end of the century, however, a thriving Mormon economy would support a respectable system of primary and secondary education. As demographic and economic circumstances changed in the territory, so did education. The influx of Gentiles brought about the secularization of the public schools, and necessitated that the church develop an alternative system of religious instruction.

The unique circumstances that forged a thriving Mormon community in a veritable wasteland, contributed to the development of specific educational practices that would become the hallmark of Mormon education for generations to come. The primitive circumstances of colonization that had contributed to educational development, also had specific ramifications for Mormon women. These circumstances allowed education to become a means of opportunity for Mormon women,

and also necessitated that they adopt new roles and responsibilities. These changes in gender identity not only influenced the development of education, but also contributed to an often belabored relationship between Mormon women and their church. Susa Young Gates was acutely aware of the environment created by the Mormon experience in Utah with respect to education, and she committed a substantial portion of her life to operating within that social and political climate.

## NOTES

1. Brigham Young, as cited in Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widstoe, The Life Story of Brigham Young (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1930), 292. This quote was also inscribed on the portals of the Utah Building in the California Exposition.

2. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 304.

3. Doctrine and Covenants, 88:77-78 and 93:36.

4. Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widstoe, The Life Story of Brigham Young (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930), 217.

5. Susa Young Gates, p. 1 of typescript draft entitled "Women in Education." Box 18, Susa Young Gates Collection, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

6. Cited in Robert Bruce Flanders, Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 52, from Joseph Smith's History, 4:267-273, "A Proclamation of the First Presidency to the Saints Scattered Abroad", January 15, 1841.

7. Overlanders were Easterners who traveled westward in search of gold during the California Gold Rush of 1848-49.

8. Wallace Stenger, The Gathering of Zion (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 11.

9. The concept of "gathering" is associated with the biblical reference to the Gathering of Israel and "involves the bringing together of members of the Church in designated places where they can perform sacred ordinances in temples." See, "First Gathering to Zion" in Historical Atlas of Mormonism, Kent S. Brown, Donald Q. Cannon and Richard H. Jackson, (eds.). (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 34.

10. Journal of History (Published by the Reorganized Church), VX, 259.

11. Flanders, 69.

12. Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 366.

13. Dale J. Stevens, "Doctrine and Covenants" in Historical Atlas of Mormonism, in Brown, Cannon and Jackson (eds.), 36.

14. John Clifton Moffitt, The History of Public Education in Utah (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1946), 4.

15. Over the years, eight editions of Doctrines and Covenants have been published, with several changes incorporated into each edition, reflecting the revelations received by modern-day prophets of the Church.

16. Arrington and Bitton, 21.

17. Doctrine and Covenants, 55:4.

18. Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1966), 169.

19. This building played a substantial role in early Mormon history serving a multitude of important functions. It served as a mercantile store, a post office, and a place where Joseph Smith received many divine revelations.

20. Moffitt, 19.

21. Brodie, 168-9.

22. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath R. Canon and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992) 95. It should also be noted that Brigham Young had hoped the decision-making process that occurred in such forums would produce a successful solution to the pending railroad crisis that he feared would threaten Zion with an influx of Gentiles. See Arrington and Bitton, 174-5.

23. As quoted in Fawn Brodie's No Man Knows My History, 169.

24. Doctrine and Covenants, 88:78.

25. Although the quote is directly cited from chapter 88, verse 79 of Doctrine and Covenants, the academic disciplines listed parenthetically refer to the most common

interpretation of the passage by Mormon scholars. For a listing of the various scholars who embrace this interpretation, see footnotes in Ernest L. Wilkinson, Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years Vol. 1 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 6.

26. Richard H. Jackson, "First Gathering to Zion", in Brown, Canon and Jackson (eds.), 34.

27. Ibid.

28. Max Parkin, "Independence, Missouri" in Brown, Canon and Jackson (eds.), 40.

29. Max H. Parkin, "Jackson County and Vicinity" in Brown, Canon and Jackson (eds.), 38.

30. History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1886), 120-121.

31. Quoted in Moffitt's History of Public Education in Utah, p. 6, from "Oration" delivered on 4 July 1838 at Far West, Missouri.

32. Alma R. Blair, "Conflict in Missouri" in Brown, Canon and Jackson (eds.), 46.

33. Mark P. Leone, Roots of Modern Mormonism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 14.

34. Arrington and Bitton, 69.

35. Flanders, 14.

36. "The City Charter of the City Council of Nauvoo" (Nauvoo, IL, 1842), 8.

37. Although the University of the City of Nauvoo was one of the earliest municipal universities established in the country, the University of the City of New York was established eight years earlier in 1832. Also, although it was a city college and not a municipal university, the College of Charleston was established in 1770. See Milton Lynn Bennion, Mormonism and Education (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1939), 22 and Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University: A History (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 128.

38. See chapter on "Early Mormon Education" in Wilkinson's Brigham Young University Vol. 1, 8-12.

39. Wilkinson, vol. 1, p. 11. Cited from Times and Seasons, 3 (1842):663.

40. Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Utah (San Francisco: History Company, 1890), 146.

41. Susa Young Gates, pp. 4-5, of typescript draft entitled "Women in Education". Box 18, Susa Young Gates collection, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City. While women comprised the bulk of teachers in the common schools, the professors at the University of the City of Nauvoo were males.

42. Doctrine and Covenants, 68:28.

43. "Common Schools", The Evening and the Morning Star 1 (1832):7-8.

44. Moffitt, 5-6.

45. Leone, 16.

46. Gates, p. 5 typescript, Box. 18.

47. Brigham Young, addressing the Twelve Apostles in a general epistle published in the Millennial Star 23 December 1847.

48. When the Saints petitioned for statehood, they had requested some 490,000 square miles of frontier land to be included. They justified this request based on the military service of Mormon men in defending against Mexican troops in the War that eventually won them the area.

49. Dean L. May, "The State of Deseret" in Brown, Canon and Jackson (eds.), 90. For an in-depth treatment of the creation of the State of Deseret, see Gustive O. Larson's The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood (San Marino, CA, 1971).

50. Susa Young Gates, p. 11 typescript, Box 18, entitled "Women in Education".

51. Richard T. Ely, "Economic Aspects of Mormonism", Harper's Monthly, CVI (April 1903), 557-668.



52. Leonard J. Arrington, "Economic Development in Utah" in Brown, Canon and Jackson (eds.), 100.

53. See Chapter on "Teacher Personnel: Supply and Training" in John Clifton Moffitt's, The History of Public Education in Utah (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1946), 300-326.

54. Laws of the Territory of Utah, 1852, sec. 3 of "An Act to Common Schools", as quoted in Moffitt, 300.

55. Brigham Young, "Governor's Message", Journal of the Joint Sessions of the Legislative Assembly of Utah Territory, 1851, p. 102.

56. Moffitt, 280.

57. Brigham Young, "Governor's Message", Journal of the Joint Sessions of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah, 1854, as cited in Moffitt, 279.

58. Moffitt, 302.

59. Ibid., 280, 302.

60. John D. Monnett, Jr. "The Mormon Church and Its Private School System: The Emergence of the Utah Academies 1880-1892" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1984), 8.

61. Leon R. Hartshorn, "Educational Institutions" in Brown, Canon and Jackson (eds.), 142.

62. Monnett, 44.

63. Wilkinson, vol. 1, 83.

64. Ibid., 88.

65. Brigham Young to Karl Maeser, 20 May 1865, "Brigham Young Correspondence," Church Historical Department in Wilkinson, vol. 1, 93.

66. Susa Young Gates, Box 18, p. 9 "Women in Education."

67. Ibid.

68. Although there were several efforts to "reform" American language, there were no other applied efforts to create a whole new written symbol system. For a full discussion of the various American attempts at reform in language, see Dennis E. Baron, Grammar and Good Taste: Reforming the American Language (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), and H.L. Mencken, The American Language ed. Henry Lewis (New York: Knopf and Co., 1949).

69. The Deseret News, (August 19, 1868), 7.

70. For statistical data regarding geographic distribution and migration patterns of Latter-day Saints from foreign countries see: Tim B. Heaton, "Vital Statistics," in Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Daniel H. Ludlow, Ed. (1992) 4:1518-1531 and; Rodney Stark, "The Rise of the New World Faith," Review of Religious Research 26 (1984): 1827.

71. Moffitt, 53.

72. Brigham Young, "Governor's Message," Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah, 1854, as cited in Moffitt, 54.

73. Moffitt, 63.

74. Moffitt, 55.

75. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Utah (San Francisco, CA: History Co., 1889); Milton Lynn Bennion, Mormonism and Education (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1939); Robert Joseph Swyer, The Gentile Comes to Utah 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971) and; John D. Monnett, Jr. "The Mormon Church and its Private School System in Utah: The Emergence of the Academies 1880-1892" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1984).

76. Wilkinson, vol 1, 103.

77. Bennion, 138-39.

78. See James R. Clark, "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" (Ph.D. diss., Utah State University, 1958).

79. As an example, "according to the 1887 report of the Presbyterian School in St. George, Utah, twelve of the fifteen students enrolled came from families where both

parents were members of the Mormon Church. The other three pupils had one Mormon parent. Even more alarming to the LDS leaders, ten of the fifteen students were enrolled in the Presbyterian Sabbath School. Miss P.J. Hart reported that of the forty students enrolled in the Presbyterian School in Kaysville in 1887, thirty-four were from homes where one or both parents were Mormons." Wilkinson, vol. 1, 556.

80. "An Epistle to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1886).

81. Monnett, 9.

82. To read the entire Edmunds-Tucker Act, see Supplement to the Revised Statutes of the United States, 2nd ed., 1874-91 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1891), 568-74.

83. For a full description of the ramifications of Edmunds-Tucker on education see Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience: History of the Latter-day Saints (New York: Knopf, 1979), 253 and; Ernest L. Wilkinson, Brigham Young University: The First One-Hundred Years, vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 566-58.

84. Monnett, 1.

85. Gustive O. Larson, The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood (San Marino, CA: 1971), 263-4.

86. Monnett, 44.

87. Moffitt, 106.

88. Laws of the Territory of Utah, 1865, sec. 12 of "An Act Consolidating and Amending the School Laws" cited in Moffitt, 111.

89. Wilkinson, vol. 1, 564.

90. Wilkinson, vol. 1, 564.

### CHAPTER III

#### WOMEN AND MORMONISM: THE UNYIELDING PARADOX

Defining the relationship between women and Mormonism has often been a complex and controversial enterprise. It is a relationship steeped in paradox. Throughout Mormon history, both a genuine equality and blatant disparity emerged between the sexes. The relationship that developed between women and the church during the last half of the nineteenth century was agitated by many inconsistencies. The Mormon perception of family necessarily put women at the center of the church, while male priesthood often marginalized women's status. Perhaps the most poignant example of the tensions in Mormonism were the concurrent phenomena of suffrage and polygamy. The socio-political anomaly of ground-breaking legislation and non-traditional family arrangements created unprecedented freedoms for women, while assaulting their individual dignity.

It was apparent throughout much of her expository writing that Susa Young Gates grappled with this polarity, as well. She could vehemently challenge social practices that defined Mormon culture in one article, and then, valiantly defend the patriarchal system of priesthood

authority in her next. She struggled to reconcile a tortuous tension between faith and feminism.<sup>1</sup>

The church maintained an official posture of religious equality regarding spiritual matters, yet Mormon doctrine disaffirmed such parity in temporal terms. Both the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants expressed the implicit understanding that both men and women enjoy equal opportunity for salvation, and yet both texts imply the "assumption that women are less significant than men."<sup>2</sup> Only males are allowed to hold the Mormon priesthood, and only priesthood-holders can govern church affairs and exercise spiritual gifts. Women have formal authority only in relation to their husbands, to whom they are bound for eternity through celestial marriage. Without marriage, and subordination to men in the family, women cannot be exalted in the afterlife.

As a consequence of this imbalance in religious authority which contributed to the tension between equality and subservience, gender identity was often a frustrating experience for women in the church.

As men and women struggled together, sex roles often merged. But in doctrine the Victorian concept of 'true womanhood' held sway: Women's duty was to be 'subservient and dependent', the women reminded each other, as they set about building houses, managing herds, establishing schools, creating communities, seemingly unaware of the irony.<sup>3</sup>

Mormon gender roles, though antithetical to traditional gender roles in many ways, perpetuated the principles of Victorian womanhood, while simultaneously promoting radical notions of female independence and self-sufficiency. Mormon doctrine exhorted feminine values of piety, chastity, domesticity, timidity and motherhood, while day-to-day living in the un-tamed wilderness of the early Mormon settlements demanded that women be strong, independent and decisive. This was crucial considering that Mormon men were often removed from the family for long periods of time on church proselytizing missions.

Brigham Young's interpretation of women was an aggregate of contradiction, as well. In one vein, the visionary Mormon leader was a staunch advocate of many issues that could expand the role of women in the society such as their physical abilities and political rights. Young was diligent in his efforts to obtain woman suffrage in Utah, and advocated that women pursue careers in fields ranging from banking to medicine. Even the disposition of his estate revealed a gender equity uncharacteristic for men of the period.<sup>4</sup> Yet, Brigham Young was often criticized for debasing women. When asked by a British journalist what he thought of women in general, Young responded; "They will be more easily saved than men . . . They haven't sense enough to go far wrong."<sup>5</sup> And Brigham claimed that he

ruled over his wives "by virtue of his superior intelligence," and that Mormon women were to "submit to the rule of their husbands as God's curse upon Eve demanded."<sup>6</sup> Young once revealed that there were "probably but a few men in the world who care about the private society of women less than I do."<sup>7</sup>

During the latter portion of the nineteenth century, many church leaders maintained a Victorian perspective of womanhood; yet despite this restrictive perception of their ability, Mormon women were encouraged to partake in church and charitable activities outside of the home. While their Protestant counterparts were also encouraged to do so, Mormon women enjoyed additional sets of freedoms not extended to most mainline Protestant women during this period. Until the second decade of the twentieth century, Mormon leaders allowed women to operate church auxiliaries with an unprecedented measure of autonomy. Mormon women were also encouraged to enter into a wide array of professional fields typically off-limits to women. Not until the Grant administration of 1922 would the general supervision of women's organizations be assumed by male church leaders.<sup>8</sup>

Although many factors influenced the relationship that developed between women and the church, three features of Mormon society were particularly influential in shaping the

lives of Mormon women during the half-century between 1870 and 1920: women suffrage in Utah, Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association. These three phenomena were directly connected to the development of women's roles in the early church, and unequivocally influenced the personal and professional spheres in which Susa Young Gates lived and worked.

### Suffrage

The fight for women's suffrage was the arena in which Susa Young Gates distinguished herself as a crusader for women's rights. Both Relief Society, and the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association were not only important service auxiliaries to which Susa contributed her time and talent, but each published an official journal in which she served as editor or contributor. Both publications, Women's Exponent and the Young Women's Journal, offered Mormon women a vehicle by which to express their ideas, and transported those ideas to sisters all over the world. Much of what we know about Susa Gates is revealed in her writings published in these journals.

Susa earned international celebrity as a champion of the suffrage movement that occurred during the first two decades after the turn of the century, but to better



understand the relationship that evolved between women and the church, it is significant to examine the circumstances of the first wave of suffrage that occurred in Utah fifty years prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. The story of suffrage in this country is a tale of struggle and tribulation. Securing the right to vote was a privilege that required great organized effort, and insisted on many individual sacrifices.<sup>9</sup>

The circumstances of territorial suffrage in Utah were particularly tragic since the vote had been granted to Mormon women in 1870, and then repealed in 1887 as a casualty of the Edmunds-Tucker Act. The victory in 1870 had been the culmination of exhaustive political maneuvering spearheaded by Brigham Young in an effort to stave off federal efforts to sabotage Mormon social, political and economic structures. Tensions had been mounting as early as 1857 when a force of 2,500 troops had been dispatched by President James Buchanan to "oppress the Saints and force officers upon [them] contrary to [their] wishes and the constitution."<sup>10</sup> Anticipation of this confrontation resulted in Brigham Young's "scorched earth" policy of defense. "The Saints would move, destroying everything behind them, rather than tolerate once again the depredations of a mob, official or vigilante."<sup>11</sup> While Gentile military force often threatened Mormon development

in Utah, it did little more than cripple it. Anti-Mormon legislation, however, was lethal.

In 1862 the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act was passed in Congress outlawing not only the practice of polygamy, but reducing the church's economic base by disincorporating it, and reducing its total real estate holdings to \$50,000.<sup>12</sup> In 1867, the Cragin Bill proposed that the right to trial by jury in Utah be abolished, and in 1869, the Ashley Bill attempted to reduce the Territory by annexing large portions of it to Colorado, Nevada, and Wyoming. In 1870, a bill proposed by Illinois Congressman Shelby M. Cullom included, among other things, a measure by which plural wives would not be eligible for immunity in anti-bigamy cases involving their husbands. In 1872, two bills were introduced aimed at providing federal control over all Utah courts and elections.<sup>13</sup>

Contributing to this onslaught of anti-Mormon political efforts, the Anti-Polygamy Society, which had been organized by Gentile women in 1878, "sought local and federal means to eradicate polygamy, beginning with the disenfranchisement of Mormon women, even at the expense of losing their own political rights."<sup>14</sup> Eastern suffragists rejected such efforts, however, and subsequently did not participate in anti-polygamy efforts. Significant for their support of the Anti-Polygamy Society were the, "militant Protestant reform

women who were equally anxious to extirpate polygamy, which they considered an affront to Christian womanhood."<sup>15</sup>

Angry and frustrated by continuous attempts to stifle Mormon practices, the Saints retaliated against Gentile legislation efforts, and the national propaganda campaign mounting against them in a number of ways. A key weapon in this fight against federal control, and social subjugation was woman suffrage. Five thousand Mormon women congregated in the Salt Lake Tabernacle to express their outrage against anti-polygamy legislation in 1870. Eliza Snow, a prominent Mormon leader who had been a plural wife of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and an organizer of the protest event, responded with a comment that reflected the general sentiment of most Mormon women:

Our enemies pretend that in Utah woman is held in a state of vassalage--that she does not act from choice but by coercion--that we would even prefer life elsewhere, were it possible for us to make our escape. What nonsense!<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after this "indignation meeting," Mormon leaders moved to have the Utah legislature grant women suffrage.

It is believed that Augusta Adams Cobb Young, of the famous Massachusetts Adams family, who was sealed in marriage to Brigham Young in 1843, first introduced the idea of women suffrage to her husband. According to Mormon scholar, Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young recognized female suffrage:

. . . as a means of demonstrating that the image of the ignorant and helpless Mormon woman was inaccurate. He also seems to have recognized that the enfranchisement of Mormon women would rally the eastern-based female suffrage organizations and congressmen favorable to women voting and that these lobbyists would counter the attempts to pass the Cullom Bill.<sup>17</sup>

There is a tendency to adopt an idealistic assessment for the causes of early suffrage in Utah. Its passage is sometimes offered as evidence of the Saints' liberal world-view with regard to civil rights. A desire for gender equality was at best, a peripheral factor. Granting Mormon women the vote was far more pragmatic than idealistic, given the circumstances of political sabotage threatening Mormon society at the time. It is within a context of political and economic expediency that we need to consider the role of woman suffrage when assessing its relationship to women and the church. Proponents of Utah's early suffrage efforts recognized that restrictive legislation was indicative of Gentile social engineering. This was designed to obliterate Mormon practices that ran counter to mainstream American values, and were potential death-blows to Mormon culture. Woman suffrage was a means of deflecting those blows.

Anti-Mormon legislation continued to mount, culminating in the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887. This legislation disenfranchised all Utah women and subsequently reduced the Mormon electorate, minimizing the Mormon political voice.

The Edmunds-Tucker Act also diminished the legal status of the church, confiscated the majority of its temporal holdings, and mitigated the powerful People's party which was eventually replaced by the national two-party political system.<sup>18</sup> Inadvertently, however, Edmunds-Tucker achieved an unanticipated result. As Mormon women organized to protest the act, the image that emerged was anything but "ignorant and helpless." A primary catalyst for propelling the issue of suffrage (and a new image of Mormon women) into a national spotlight, was the organizational acumen of the Relief Society.

### Relief Society

According to Susa, "one of the first great outgrowths of the Relief Society was the right of suffrage for women."<sup>19</sup> Suffrage efforts served as an ideological conduit that linked the geographically isolated Mormon women to sisters all over the country who were active in the nineteenth-century women's rights movement. The organizational structure of Relief Society was efficiently designed, and allowed for mobilization of large political efforts. These mobilization efforts included mass "indignation meetings" and major petition drives. By the time of the first suffrage movement in Utah, Relief Society had established a chapter in each ward. Church officials

recognized the Society's political potential, and subsequently allowed an administrative autonomy not rendered to other special interest organizations supported by the church.<sup>20</sup> The penchant towards political activity was characteristic of the second generation of Mormon women, however.

The Relief Society was originally founded to provide benevolent and charitable service to the small community of Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo. Founded on 17 March 1842 by first president Joseph Smith, the Relief Society was established as an elect body of women to serve as "counterpart and companion" to the men's priesthood quorums. Charitable, literary and anti-slavery organizations were common components of American society during the late-eighteenth, through early-twentieth centuries. Voluntary associations for missionary, reformatory, and benevolent purposes had been organized in this country as early as 1649.<sup>21</sup> Of all the auxiliaries that supported the function of the church, however, no other organization had provided a wider range of social services to church members specifically, and to the state of Utah in general, than that of the Relief Society.

The first meeting of the Relief Society took place in the lodge room above Joseph Smith's red brick store in Nauvoo. The original membership consisted of nineteen

Mormon women, selected by Smith, and ranging in age and marital status. The first name given to the society was the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, and its first president was Joseph's wife, Emma. The society was designed to provide "new opportunities for service and learning" and its members were responsible to "save souls and to look to the poor and needy."<sup>22</sup> Under Emma's direction, the early society focused on benevolence. "In addition to visiting and soliciting aid, women performed other services, many of them reflecting the peculiar skills of the women themselves."<sup>23</sup> "An employment committee sought work for women who needed it and supervised the purchase of goods rather than giving outright donations to the poor . . . The emphasis was then, and continued to be, on working for one's benefits."<sup>24</sup>

For more than two decades after its inception, Relief Society struggled to survive amidst the turmoil of forced resettlement and political persecution. The desire to provide "service and learning" was superseded by the need to secure basic survival in the struggling years of persecution and migration.<sup>25</sup> By 1866, though, the Relief Society was fully resurrected by the order of Brigham Young, and put under the direction of Eliza R. Snow. When he delegated this influential Mormon woman to "reinstate the society. . . Young put in motion an organizational whirlwind that would

continue unabated until every Mormon settlement had its women's group."<sup>26</sup>

While the hardships of resettlement certainly contributed to the nine-year interruption in the Relief Society's operation, the temporary hiatus has also been explained as a consequence of strained relations between Joseph Smith's Widow, Emma, and church officials-- specifically Brigham Young. Emma Smith often challenged church doctrine, and overtly rejected the practice of polygamy, claiming on her deathbed that "there was no revelation on either polygamy or spiritual wives."<sup>27</sup> It has been suggested that, "Part of her private agenda for the Relief Society had been if not to abolish, at least to retard the practice . . ."<sup>28</sup> Minutes from Relief Society meetings during the Nauvoo period indicate that Emma exploited her position as president to undermine her husband's revelation concerning polygamy. Her attempts to organize efforts against plural marriage caused much dissent within the ranks of the church. Arrington suggests that after Joseph Smith's death, "Brigham Young and his associates thought it best to defer (i.e., suspend) the operations of the Relief Society organization."<sup>29</sup> After the assassinations in 1844, Emma separated from the church and with her son, Joseph Smith III, established a competing



denomination, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The tension that existed between Brigham Young and Emma Smith was hardly a secret among members of the church. It would appear that Susa Young Gates adopted her father's negative attitude toward Emma Hale Smith. Many of Susa's references to the first lady of the church were often less than flattering. She commented in her personal papers that:

Emma Smith . . . possessed splendid executive ability but she lacked the fundamental element of greatness: the power to subordinate her own will to the will of those who had the right to direct her and the wisdom to counsel her.<sup>30</sup>

Although the original function of the Relief Society accentuated charity and benevolence, according to historian Leonard J. Arrington, by the time the society had been re-ignited in 1866, Brigham Young had reconstructed the objectives of the society to include a variety of issues. The Mormon leader hoped to have the female members of the church minimize extravagance in their manner and dress; he hoped to encourage the women to engage themselves in political activity as a means of successfully lobbying against anti-Mormon legislative efforts; he directed the women to educate their daughters, and lastly, he recommended the women develop commercial outlets for their handicraft.<sup>31</sup> With these goals in mind, the Relief Society that emerged under the direction of Eliza R. Snow served a

wide range of efforts that were social, political and economic in purpose.

In 1872, the Relief Society began publishing an independent journal called the Woman's Exponent. Without sponsorship from the church, the Woman's Exponent "printed poetry and prose, household hints, Relief Society news, and support for the women's movement" for almost half a century.<sup>32</sup> It was one of the first magazines for women west of the Mississippi. Although the Exponent was an independent journal supported largely by Relief Society and the church-sponsored Retrenchment Association (the first name assigned to what would eventually become the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association), it was highly regarded and read with respect by Mormon and gentile women in America and abroad. Publication continued until 1914 when it became the "official organ of the women's Relief Society and the name was changed to Relief Society Magazine."<sup>33</sup>

Susa Young Gates was made editor of the magazine in 1914 and expanded the monthly bulletin to include a wider range of educational lessons and a variety of literary pieces. R. Paul Cracroft, in his Master's thesis, Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Her Work, asserts that publication of this journal had allowed Susa to develop what would become a distinctive editorial style. "In 1914 Mrs. Gates

established and edited the Relief Society Magazine as an outgrowth of the old Relief Society Bulletin. In 1915 she [Mrs. Gates] finished and published in the Relief Society Magazine her best novel, The Prince of Ur.<sup>34</sup> Susa's editorial cachet, combined with the many original articles she contributed to the Magazine, provided keen images of the public persona she intentionally sought to project, and an occasional glimpse of her private persona, as well. Susa often published her articles under the pseudonym, "Homespun." In 1911, she was appointed to serve on the Relief Society General Board, and became corresponding secretary in 1913. Susa served on the Board until 1922.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to charitable service, and as a means of supporting and expanding benevolent efforts, the Relief Society also focused on economic development. Shortly after settling in the Great Basin region, the Relief Society created several cooperatives, the most successful being granaries, and the manufacture of silk. During the 1860s, Brigham Young encouraged "sericulture," the production of silk, largely as a consequence of his desire to create a totally self-sufficient Zion, but also to provide fine clothing for his own many wives and daughters, as well as the Mormon women of Utah. Young imported mulberry trees and silkworms from France to develop this industry. Large cocooneries were maintained, and Mormon women were

instructed in the tending of silkworms, and the method of extracting silk from their cocoons. In 1875 Mormon women formed the Utah Silk Association, but by the turn of the century, the industry would "dwindle to oblivion, leaving only occasional rows of mulberry trees to shade the streets and stain the sidewalks with their falling berries."<sup>36</sup>

During the mid-1870s, Brigham Young had called for grain-saving programs in which grain would be collected and stored for future consumption in the event of famine.

Mormon women, organized under the direction of the Relief Society, responded with enterprise and enthusiasm.

Individual wards worked tirelessly, many members gleaning the wheat themselves. According to Susa, Brigham Young:

deprecatd the careless, wasteful methods of farmers who so lightly left thousands of bushels of grain out in the fields up and down the country. Gathered up and stored, they would provide against a day of famine, would give outdoor summer employment for women and girls while furnishing means with which to do good when the necessities of the poor required it, or when calamity might overtake the state or the nation.<sup>37</sup>

Mormon women became adept in financial matters as a consequence of granary operations. Members sold stock subscriptions in the society as a means of purchasing seed, and building fireproof granaries. They shrewdly invested their monies, and then purchased grain from the dividends.

Susa observed that there were three primary benefits in the mission to save grain:

One was the ultimate possession of a tremendous amount of grain stored in granaries first and then in elevators. The second came from the out-of-door contact for women in gleaning fields, and sometimes in owning them as Relief Societies. Third, the business acumen gained by the Ward units of the Relief Society through the accumulation and handling of this commodity which constitutes an important result of all their industrial enterprises.<sup>38</sup>

The church relinquished tremendous autonomy to the Relief Society with respect to wheat production and storage. It was an investment in self-rule that was rewarded by overwhelming economic success.

In the area of education, the Relief Society was instrumental in developing a broad range of instructional programs that improved the lives of Mormon women. Though the earliest educational efforts were informal in structure, by the end of the nineteenth century, the society was offering courses in: civics, mother education, genealogy, home ethics, gardening, literature, art and architecture. Three of the four monthly meetings were devoted to educational lessons, while the fourth was used for business purposes and sewing. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, course offerings were expanded to include "theology, genealogy, literature, history, art, citizenship, parliamentary procedure, home economics, gardening, law

enforcement, health, sanitation, poverty, crime, unemployment, social legislation, motherhood, and home education."<sup>39</sup>

### The "Progressive" Influence

The turn of the century also marked a transition in Mormon education--a transition that influenced the educational programs of the Relief Society, as well.

'Progressive' was one of the buzzwords of the period. It connotated not only moving forward or advancing, but specifically implied advances in the application of science to everyday life. Progressive education, for example, meant education based on new methods resulting from experimentation and research into psychology and pedagogy.<sup>40</sup>

Although direct influence of progressive thought on Mormon education is difficult to identify, topics of debates formally sponsored by the Relief Society indicated a progressive strain. Subjects that were discussed included, "government ownership, business regulation, and direct democracy."<sup>41</sup> While government ownership was not as critical to the progressive mentality as it was to populism, the progressives did embrace, with similar enthusiasm, the need to regulate business and the advocacy of direct democracy.<sup>42</sup>

The influence of progressivism was also evident through the many efforts of the Society to support legislation that benefitted women and children, and its vigorous campaigns to

promote public health issues. Susa Gates was influenced by progressive thought, as well. Her efforts to organize and teach in the "Domestic Science" department at Brigham Young Academy, and her countless activities in many organized reform campaigns, affirmed Susa's unquestioning commitment to civic responsibility, as well as moral and social reform.

In addition to providing social and benevolent service to both the Mormon community and beyond, the Relief Society established opportunities for women to participate in many significant political and economic activities. It served significant educational functions, and provided Mormon women with deep spiritual fulfillment, as well as a sense of accomplishment. More importantly, perhaps, it fostered independence and pride in an era plagued by the tensions of polygamy, and liberated Mormon women from the private sphere, allowing them a public forum in which to live the gospel they cherished.

#### Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association

While the Relief Society provided women of the church with opportunities for public service, Brigham Young felt the need for an organization in which younger Mormon women could serve their community, as well as develop habits of thrift and modesty. Young, who advocated simplicity as a morally superior way of living, became increasingly

concerned with extravagances that began to infiltrate Mormon society during the 1860s and 1870s. The Mormon leader was concerned that the young women of the church were developing pretentious mannerisms in speech and dress. According to his daughter, Susa, the Mormon leader was alarmed by young women's fascination with current trends in fashion such as, "bustles, ruffles, shingled hair and the mincing gait of the 'sixties'."<sup>43</sup>

Advances in transportation and economic opportunity had not only introduced these popular trends, but ushered in a variety of secular influences that concerned the Mormon leader. Brigham Young decided to stave off such influences by proposing the creation of a 'Retrenchment Association' designed, in large measure, to dissuade Mormon girls from pursuing fashion trends popularized by Gentile culture. In her father's biography, Susa provided historical context for the creation of the society:

There was an effort made in the 'fifties, to introduce a stabilized dress for women, such as perhaps had marked the Shakers' and the Quakers' early attempts. "The Deseret Costume" was the result, consisting of bloomers and full skirts, without hoops, trimming or trains. The effort set thoughtless women to thinking, and paved the way for the Retrenchment Society, which was formed later."<sup>44</sup>

After the evening prayer on 28 November 1869, Brigham Young addressed the first meeting of the proposed organization which was held in the parlor of the Lion House:



All Israel are looking to my family and watching the example set by my wives and children. For this reason I desire to organize my own family first into a society for the promotion of habits of order, thrift, industry, and charity; and above all things I desire them to retrench from their extravagance in dress, in eating and even in speech. The time has come when the sisters must agree to give up their follies of dress and cultivate a modest apparel, a meek deportment, and to set an example worthy of imitation before the people of the world . . . Retrench in everything that is not good and beautiful. Not to make yourselves unhappy, but to live so that you may be truly happy in this life and the life to come.<sup>45</sup>

Although originally established among the members of Brigham Young's own family, by 1875 the "Junior Retrenchment Association" had members in wards throughout the territory. In 1878, the name of the association was changed to the "Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association," and under the auspices of the Relief Society, MIA General Boards were established in each ward to develop and supervise the various programs. By 1880, the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association was "organized on a general church level" under president Elmina Shepherd Taylor, "a schoolteacher who had been active in the local YLMIA organizations."<sup>46</sup>

The relationship between Susa and the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association was significant. While serving on a mission in Hawaii with her husband, Jacob Gates, Susa had conceived of a magazine that would serve the needs of single and teenaged women. Upon her return to Utah

in 1889, she established the Young Woman's Journal, designed to deliver "a message of freedom to every daughter of woman."<sup>47</sup> In 1929, the Journal would merge with The Improvement Era, a publication which had served as the literary organ for the young men's organization of the church. Also, as a member of the Women's Mutual Improvement Association General Board, Susa urged the adoption of uniform courses of study.

Although the impact of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association did not influence Mormon culture as pervasively as did Relief Society, this auxiliary organization played a significant role in the life of Susa Young Gates. Similar to her literary contributions in the Women's Exponent and the Relief Society Magazine, much of Susa's personal essence was disclosed within the articles and editorials of the Journal. In 1891, an article from the "Editor's Department" revealed one of Susa's childhood musings:

When I was a young girl all sorts of subjects connected with fortune-telling and magic had powerful charm for my imaginative mind. In fact, I don't think I shall confess to what an absurd extent these notions of mine were sometimes carried . . . It was not until I was old enough to be ashamed of myself that I lost all apprehension of seeing a fairy jump out of every flower I plucked, or of hearing a genie roar every time I threw down the seed of a date.<sup>48</sup>

In a 1894 article entitled, "Boy Versus Girl," Susa admitted to being "one of the most dissatisfied members of my sex."<sup>49</sup>

In the first decade after the turn of the century, the YLMIA conducted an annual reading program which met with minimal success. While the program included several works written by Gentile authors such as Charles Dickens, and James Finimore Cooper, it also attempted to incorporate significant Mormon literary works. Susa's novel, John Steven's Courtship, was one of the books selected for study in this program. Though many considered her 1915 work, The Prince of Ur, to be a superior literary achievement, John Steven's Courtship was connected to the history of Utah since the setting was constructed around the invasion of Johnston's Army. Additionally, many traditional customs of the pioneer days were depicted in the piece. As the second generation of Utah Mormons strove to establish a separate Mormon literature, John Steven's Courtship was touted as a classic.

Under the organizational sponsorship of Relief Society, the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association provided young Mormon women with cultural, recreational and educational opportunities. It provided Susa Young Gates with a means by which to utilize her literary gifts in a religious mission to shape the minds and morals of the young

women of Zion. In addition to the avenues of women's suffrage, and the Relief Society, the Young Woman's Mutual Improvement Association provided Susa Young Gates with a forum in which she could express her aspirations, not only for her own benefit, but for future generations of Mormon women.

In many respects, the relationship that emerged between women and Mormonism was similar to the interdependence which developed between women and other religions. To say that the Mormon Church was a male-dominated structure would be stating the obvious. To claim that this arrangement was unique to Mormonism would be naive. It was a construction that could be identified in every major world religion. However, because Mormon theology placed a unique focus on the family, both in this life and the afterlife, the centrality of women in the church was fundamental. Additionally, the circumstances that forged a frontier civilization in the intermountain West, altered the traditional role of women. This reconstruction of gender resulted in measures of independence and opportunity not afforded to women of other denominations. Early suffrage, and the social, political and educational opportunities provided through Relief Society and the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association were examples of these unconventional liberties.

As the second generation of Mormon women came of age in the new Zion, they struggled with the internal tensions that beleaguered Mormonism during the last half of the nineteenth century. The Mormon construction of womanhood had evolved into a strange hybrid of Victorian timidity and pioneer tenacity by the turn of the century. This peculiar and often contradictory framework of gender, replete with radical freedoms and traditional restrictions, contributed to an often frustrating duality that stifled the lives of many Mormon women.

Among those Mormon women who experienced this duality with all of its frustrating limitations, was Susa--who sought most desperately to achieve what was allowed her. Her birthright and her nature pushed her in directions that came dangerously close to challenging the fine and prominent line that separated Mormon women from areas permitted only to men.

## NOTES

1. Rebecca Foster Cornwall provides a succinct, yet thorough analysis of Susa's struggle to reconcile Mormon doctrine with her feminist convictions in her article, "Susa Y. Gates," in Sister Saints, ed. Vicky Burgess-Olson, (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1978), 63-93.

2. Melodie Moench Charles, "Precedents for Mormon Women from Scriptures" in Sisters in Spirit, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 49. The Doctrine and Covenants is a companion book to the Book of Mormon and the Bible, and an additional work of Mormon literature known as the Pearl of Great Price. Doctrine and Covenants is comprised of revelations that were administered to Joseph Smith as early as 1823. It defines church organizational practices, and is embraced by Mormons as, "the will of the Lord, the Mind of the Lord, and the word of the Lord, or the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation." Doctrine and Covenants, 68:4.

3. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience: History of the Latter-day Saints (New York: Knopf, 1979), 224.

4. Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985) 422-430. Arrington provides an in-depth treatment of the disposition of Young's estate in Appendix D. Brigham's will was read on 3 September 1877 and witnessed by "seventeen wives, sixteen sons, twenty-eight daughters, and a few friends" (424). Arrington specifically indicates that Brigham Young attempted "an equitable division among his heirs" and that his "will was carefully drawn to try and make sure that all heirs were treated fairly" (425).

5. Ibid., 327.

6. Charles, 57.

7. Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. (Liverpool, England, 1854-1886), 5:99.

8. During the 1920s, Church officials became increasingly concerned with the independent nature and far-reaching power of women's organizations such as Relief Society. In 1924, Church President Grant urged Mormon women not to "join any society outside of the regularly organized

institution in the church." See Thomas G. Alexander, Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 134-137.

9. For an in-depth discussion of the many difficulties in obtaining suffrage, see Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920 (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 165.

10. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses, 189. This is a partial quotation from the Journal of Isaac C. Haight, page 21. The original entry was dated September, 1857.

11. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath R. Canon and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991), 80.

12. "An Act to Punish and Prevent the Practice of Polygamy in the Territories of the United States, and Other Places, and Disapproving and Annuling Certain Acts of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah," 12 Statute L., 501 (1862).

13. Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed. Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years Vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

14. Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Schism in the Sisterhood: Mormon Women and Partisan Politics, 1890-1900," New Views of Mormon History: Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington, eds. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 213.

15. Ibid.

16. Quoted from the Minutes of the Women's Mass Indignation Meeting, Deseret News, 19 January 1870.

17. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses, 365.

18. As one of the many conditions to secure Utah statehood, the Woodruff Manifesto of 1890 officially called for the dissolution of the powerful Mormon "People's Party".

19. Susa Young Gates, page 1 of a draft of Chapter 14 of her unpublished manuscript Women in History. Box 18,

folder 8 of the "Susanna Young Gates Collection," the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

20. It is significant to note that this powerful women's organization operates without any written constitution or by-laws. According to Thomas O'Dea, Relief Society "works under the direction of the priesthood and on the basis of its own precedents." The Mormons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 182.

21. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 423. See also, Alexis De Tocqueville, Democracy in America Modern Library College Edition (New York: Random House, 1981), 102, 413; and, Jill Mulvay Derr, "'Strength in Our Union': The Making of Mormon Sisterhood," in Sisters in Spirit, eds. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, 158-9. Derr claims that by 1840, benevolent organizations numbered well into the thousands.

22. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath R. Canon and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992) 1.

23. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, 2d ed., (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 33, 108.

24. Ibid. 33.

25. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher briefly discusses some of the circumstances that prevented the continuation of Relief Society between 1847 and 1866 in her article, "Relief Society (1884)" in Historical Atlas of Mormonism, ed. Kent S. Brown, Donald Q. Cannon and Richard H. Jackson (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 104.

26. Ibid.

27. "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," Saints' Advocate 1 (October 1879): 50-51, as quoted in Arrington and Bitton, The Mormon Experience, 223.

28. Derr, Cannon and Beecher, 61.

29. Arrington and Bitton, The Mormon Experience, 223.

30. Susanna Young Gates, "My Recollections," Box 12, file 2, Utah State Historical Society, p. 2.



31. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses, 351.
32. Thomas G. Alexander, Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 135.
33. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses, 366.
34. R. Paul Cracroft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Her Work" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1959), 3.
35. According to Rebecca Foster Cornwall, Susa resigned under less than cordial circumstances. During the 1920s, she disagreed with the perspective toward social work training, and other new ideas that were introduced by the younger Relief Society committee members. Susa objected to the suggestion of "homes for the elderly and orphans," and suggested in their place, and insurance program to be administered by the Society. Her autonomy on the magazine was also severely reduced. See, "Susa Y. Gates" in Sister Saints, ed. Vicky Burgess-Olson (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 77-79.
36. Derr, Canon and Beecher, 105.
37. Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widstoe, The Life Story of Brigham Young (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1930), 301.
38. Susa Young Gates, typescript, entitled, "The Mission of Saving Grain," Susa Amelia Young Gates Collection, box 18, folder 8, Utah State Historical Society.
39. Handbook of the Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: National Women's Relief Society, 1931), 42, 48, 49, 51.
40. Derr, Canon and Beecher, 159.
41. Alexander, 126.
42. For comprehensive discussions regarding the specific features of populism and progressivism see: Samuel Haber Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); John D. Hicks The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931); Norman Pollack The Populist Response to Industrial America (New

York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1962); and for a discussion of progressive influence on education see Lawrence A. Cremin The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education (New York: Knopf, 1961).

43. Gates and Widstoe, 303.

44. Gates and Widstoe, 300.

45. Brigham Young to his family on the evening of 28 November 1869 in the parlor of the Lion House, as quoted by his daughter, Susa Young Gates, in Gates and Widstoe, 305-306.

46. Ibid.

47. "The Editor's Department," Young Woman's Journal 1 (1889-90): 32.

48. Susa Young Gates, "Editor's Department," Young Woman's Journal (Nov., 1891) III, 86.

49. Susa Young Gates, "Boy Versus Girl," Young Woman's Journal (Oct 1894) VI, 30-31.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EDUCATING THE 'THIRTEENTH' APOSTLE

I was once jokingly referred to by one of the church authorities as the Thirteenth Apostle. He told me that if he could just put breeches on me, he would put me in the quorum.<sup>1</sup>

Susa often repeated this comment to family and friends, and deliberately recorded the observation in many of her personal papers. She did so, perhaps, to ensure that the flattering analogy might become firmly ensconced in Mormon lore. The prospect of being considered for such a distinction must have seemed exciting to a woman who grew up in the shadow of her father, the great Kingdom-builder of Mormondom, yet one can sense the tension that must have tormented Susa's psyche. She longed to aspire to the lofty heights available only to Mormon males, but the social and theological needs placed on women by the society restricted her to very defined limits.

Susa's worldview was shaped by a variety of factors, and those factors also influenced her educational perspectives. The church she revered, the schools she attended, and the men she attempted to emulate--her father, her mentor, her husband--all contributed to the way in which Susa would come to understand the nature and goals of

education. Notwithstanding the importance of these influences, it was Susa's spiritual and familial kinship with women that was intrinsic to her self-concept, and essential to her growth as a Mormon, activist, and educator. Susa enjoyed many formal educational opportunities, but the informal learning experiences she acquired through her relationships with other women affected the principal impact on her personality and perspective.

Within the framework of communal living, Susa was inspired by the many wives of Brigham Young, her beloved "Aunts". These relationships came to fruition as a consequence of the plural household that characterized life in the "Lion House". In her personal recollections intended "for my children only," Susa poignantly depicted that idyllic life, and many of the remarkable women who resided in Brigham Young's most celebrated domicile.

#### Life and Learning in the Lion House

Susa had the distinction of being the first child born in Brigham Young's famous "Lion House," and in a family of forty-six children, distinctions were an important means of self-definition. That same manner of distinction would characterize Susa's life and career as she continued to distinguish herself in a variety of personal and professional pursuits. Officially dedicated in 1856, the

Lion House was a Mormon home of considerable celebrity, and served as an architectural testament to Mormon community life. Susa claimed that the Lion House was:

. . . an economic and spiritual experiment on my father's part to house his numerous young wives comfortably with the least expenditure of means--for that was a tremendous problem--where each wife and child should have equal opportunities and treatment, and where father could see all his dear ones every day at meal time and at prayer time.<sup>2</sup>

A long, white building decorated with green shutters and cream plaster trim, the Lion House was an attractive structure, yet very practical. Its solid construction included thick walls that had been fashioned from adobe, a substance native to Utah. Brigham Young strongly advocated the economic advantages of communal living, and the Lion House was intended to comfortably, yet sensibly, accommodate the many wives and children of the powerful Mormon president. The second floor of the three-story structure had over twenty rooms, ten on each side, most of them equipped with a fireplace or stove, large windows and spacious clothes closets. The Lion House was designed by Brigham's brother-in-law, Truman Angell, and its floor plan reflected features of comfort and utility.

It had many windows, good chimneys, stone flagged cellars, connected by long-outstretching halls. There were kitchens, store rooms, a large dining-room, a weave room, a wash-room, and a temporary schoolroom in the lower or basement floor.<sup>3</sup>

Brigham Young closely supervised the construction of the Lion House himself, as he had always been a craftsman and carpenter of some repute.<sup>4</sup> The name of the house derived from the large stone lion which was perched atop the front portico. William Ward, an English artist who had created the stone font erected at the temple in Nauvoo, also designed the stone lion which graced what was one of Brigham Young's largest homes.<sup>5</sup> Although Brigham Young had other residences, such as the Beehive House, the Mansion House, and his winter residences in St. George, Utah, it was in the Lion House that he took his evening meal and said the evening prayer within the midst of his large family. During the fourteen years that Susa lived in the Lion House, it was "home" to twelve of Brigham Young's wives, nineteen daughters, and eight sons.<sup>6</sup>

Susa's birth in the Lion House on 18 March 1856 occurred while the "boards were being nailed on the floor" of her mother's sitting-room suite.<sup>7</sup> Her delivery was assisted by plural wife Zina Huntington Young, who often served as nurse and midwife to the many wives and children of Brigham Young. Apparently Susa's mother, Lucy Bigelow Young, was disappointed with the arrival of a second daughter. "Mother wanted a son so badly--what woman does not?"<sup>8</sup> Susa often recalled the following story regarding her birth:

I am told that my mother, upon finding out my sex, exclaimed with great force, if not elegance, 'Shucks!' Aunt Zina . . . who was presiding high priestess [midwife] of the occasion, responded . . . 'No, it isn't all shucks, it's wheat, and full weight, too!' . . . and now you have a thumb nail sketch of my life ever since. Some one else, either inside of me or outside of me is usually saying 'shucks' after my hurried entrance most anywhere. And I am usually trying to convince my other self and the rest of the folks that it is all wheat and full weight at that. Sometimes, of course, I don't care and let it go at 'shucks'.'<sup>9</sup>

Another story often told by Susa, was the explanation of how her name originated. The story goes that Brigham named his sons, while their mothers named his daughters, and so Lucy decided to name her second daughter after an English-trained nurse by the name of Susannah Liptrot Richards, who was also a cousin by marriage. Years later, however, while in his office in St. George, Brigham declared to Susa that she had been named after one of his older sisters, "Susan." In an effort to please her father, the dutiful Susa began to refer to herself as Susan. After her father's death, the clerk who drafted Brigham's will misspelled her name, dropping the "n" and inadvertently altered Susa's name once more. Many years after her father's death, she had decided to change her pen name back to "Susan." Upon hearing of the proposed change, her dearly beloved "Aunt Susan B. Anthony" urged Susa to "keep the Susa Young Gates as it was rather unusual and the three names fitted in together nicely."<sup>10</sup>

Susa's middle name was Amelia, a name that was added in the summer of 1864 when Susa was confirmed by her father. A year earlier, Brigham had married the beautiful and refined Amelia Folsom, who became one of his "favorite" wives. With her mother's consent, Susa asked to be confirmed under the name "Susannah Amelia". The name Amelia was eventually dropped over time, although it was maintained in the official Temple record. As a young girl, Susa was typically referred to as "Susie" or "Sukey", and sometimes the boys would call her "Susannah Amelia Snuff-bottle" because of her chronic wheezing as a consequence of asthma. Susa had suffered a severe case of whooping cough when she was quite young, and during her adult years she often attributed her asthma and heart-disease to this childhood affliction, as well.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that one of the many pseudonyms under which Susa wrote was "Dr. Snuffbottle."<sup>12</sup>

From the conventional perspective of an adult, the communal arrangements that characterized life in the Lion were awkward, if not utterly repugnant. From the standpoint of a child, however, life in the Lion House was a joyous experience, providing safe and comfortable surroundings, and a host of playmates:

Our life in the Lion House was so full of childish happiness and youthful play that, I think, no one ever had so happy a childhood as did I. I have often said that I never heard a quarrel between my father's wives in all my life. They may have had



words with each other, I suppose they did have on occasion, but at least they had the decency and dignity to keep such differences from the ears and understanding of their children.<sup>13</sup>

The wives of Brigham Young worked hard at projecting an image of harmony, largely as a means of providing the children with a healthy and happy environment.

Additionally, since life in the Lion House was regarded as both a social experiment and a religious obligation, it was important to the Mormon community that the women of the Lion House succeed in their efforts to maintain a well-managed, harmonious household.

The harmony that existed in the Lion House . . . could only have been brought about by very careful planning and directing. All the wives had equal rights and privileges and each was, in turn, expected to do her share in keeping the establishment running smoothly.<sup>14</sup>

As significant as the joy and abandon it provided, the plural household necessarily exposed Susa to a wide array of female personalities during the most formative years of her life, providing her with a myriad of examples on which to pattern her own identity. She described her many "Aunts" as,

. . . splendid women, nearly all of them were of Yankee parentage, only one was of English birth. Above all they were women of strong character, powerful wills and were it not for their religious convictions, which informed and inspired every waking hour of their lives we would have had chaos instead of peace, constant bickering and hatred in place of comparative harmony and love.<sup>15</sup>

It was through these women that Susa first learned to appreciate music, dance, and literature. She gained valuable knowledge about health and hygiene, and household management, as well. Although Susa was not closely acquainted with each wife who occupied a place in the Lion House, the influences of a handful of these remarkable women would become clearly discernible in her distinctive personality.

Namah K. J. Carter Twiss (1821-1909), known to the children of the Lion House as "Aunt Twiss," married Brigham Young in 1846. Although she was not a connubial wife, and bore Brigham Young no children, Aunt Twiss was the painfully efficient housekeeper of the Lion House. Twiss was "in charge of the kitchen staff in the Lion House . . . she loved her work. System was her second name. She had two hired cooks and two dish washers and she needed them."<sup>16</sup> Aunt Twiss seems to have influenced Susa's organizational skills. Susa's youngest son, Franklin, once commented that, "Mother had a great capacity for work . . . she never wasted a minute . . . She'd come home and she'd have dinner on the table in no time . . . She systematized everything."<sup>17</sup>

Zina D. Huntington Jacobs Young (1821-1901), was sealed in marriage to Brigham Young in 1846 and played an extremely important role in Susa's life. Zina had been married to Henry Jacobs while living in Nauvoo, but separated from him

before the migration west. It was, perhaps, Zina's firsthand experience with the pain and humiliation of divorce that caused her to become a lifelong confidante of Susa's. Zina Young was a powerful Mormon woman, and served as an officer in the Relief Society. It was Aunt Zina who delivered Susa, and who accompanied her as an adult on her mission to Hawaii in 1879 where she was courted by her future husband, Jacob Gates. Susa described Aunt Zina to be:

. . . father's wife for time only, having been sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in his life time but she had, without exception, the tenderest, livingest, most forgiving heart that beat in a woman's body. She was the mid-wife for the whole family and to scores and hundreds of other poor and needy women. She was always ready, night or day, to go at the call of need, to nurse the sick, soothe the fretting child or to soften the last moments of the dying or to clothe the dead with clothing fashioned by her own patient and skillful fingers. She was an angel of mercy not only in her home in the Lion House but wherever she went into the homes of the Saints throughout the land.<sup>18</sup>

Susa claimed that by the time she was eight years old, she had developed a passion for reading, writing, and music. Her obsession for literature was augmented by Aunt Clara Decker Young (1828-1889), who was sealed to Brigham Young in 1844. Aunt Clara gave Susa her first copy of the Arabian Nights, a novel that Susa devoured.

Aunt Clara Decker . . . one of the three pioneer women of Utah, was one of father's loveliest wives . . . She and mother were always his nurses when

sick . . . She obtained some way, a few books in those early pioneer days books were both rare and precious. She loaned me every book she ever had and I remember when I took back to her the Arabian Nights Entertainment. That day I was 13 years old. I said to her: "I am now thirteen years old, Aunt Clara, and I have just finished reading this book thirteen times."<sup>19</sup>

The first book Susa ever owned had been given to her as a gift from her teacher, and was entitled, Golden-Haired Gertrude. Her "kind-hearted" mother, Lucy, loaned it to other children in the Lion House, much to Susa's chagrin.

. . . my worshipped one book, the only book I ever owned till I was old enough and rich enough to buy one for myself, was sequestered in some of my careless sisters' closets and I searched and mourned in vain. I, too, borrowed books--relentlessly and voraciously. I read everything I could lay my hands on, from the almanac--and that was pretty lively reading in those days--to Phebe's spirit-rapping book which sent ugly shivers of fear rippling down my spine at each perusal but which possessed a morbid fascination for my unwilling opening mind.<sup>20</sup>

Reading and writing emerged as the primary focus of Susa's intellectual energy. Not only did she read voraciously, but her passion was writing--books, articles, personal letters, and even poems.

Another aunt whose influence was substantial on Susa's life was Harriet Campbell Cook (1824-1898), who was one of Susa's first teachers. She had been sealed to Brigham Young in 1843 by the prophet Joseph Smith, and was a caretaker wife only, never bearing any children of her own. She taught the children of Brigham Young in the basement of the

Lion House until a separate schoolhouse was built in 1865 on the northeast corner of South Temple and State Streets. It may seem curious that Brigham Young would choose such a role model for his children given that Harriet "loved to startle and shock people with rough words and vulgar references,"<sup>21</sup> but Harriet was also considered to be the model of Mormon faithfulness. "Her courage was invincible, her reckless daring was modified only by her deep conviction that the Gospel was true."<sup>22</sup> Susa admired Harriet in many ways, and in many ways, Susa would come to resemble the curt and contentious Aunt Harriet. Despite her shortcomings, Harriet Campbell taught Susa many valuable lessons:

. . . in spite of her caustic facade, Harriet had a taste for symbolism and taught this appreciation of gospel ordinances to her students . . . I must add that Aunt Harriet was one of the readiest speakers among the early women of the Church. She was a great student of the Bible and of any other book which she could lay her hands on. She it was who taught me in my youth to see the wonderful symbolism in our church ordinances and especially in the endowments. She also gave me a taste for ancient symbolism through her occasional references to the old Egyptians and Babylonians.<sup>23</sup>

Aunt Harriet was known to behave oddly at times, and was often considered to be mean-spirited. Susa had been quite sickly as a youngster, and Harriet took fiendish delight in telling Susa's mother, "You will never raise that child, Lucy."<sup>24</sup> When Susa reached adulthood (and achieved some measure of fame), Harriet recanted by stating that, "I

always told your mother, Susa, that she would raise ye if she would only be careful of ye."<sup>25</sup>

Although she did not live in the Lion House, step-sister Charlotte Cobb, provided Susa with some formal training in music--which is ironic since Susa claimed that Charlotte was hopelessly tone-deaf! She was the daughter of Augusta Adams Cobb, "who was a widow to whom father gave a home and his name."<sup>26</sup> Susa also received music instruction from Dr. Romania Bunnell-Penrose, a tutor hired by her father. Music was an important feature of Brigham Young's household. He indulged his children's musical interests and provided them with the finest equipment. "Pianos and organs were brought across the plains, a magnificent harp was supplied and music was an integral part of every waking hour in Brigham Young's family."<sup>27</sup> By the time Susa had moved to St. George, she was providing music lessons to other children. On the invitation of Karl Maeser, in 1878 Susa organized the first Music Department in the territory at Brigham Young Academy. (Susa's daughter, Lucy Gates Bowen, became a famous coloratura soprano opera and concert singer).

Susa was taught 'fancy dancing' by Sarah Alexander "who lived in our house and was a good actress and danced on the stage for four years: Sailors Hornpipe--Spanish Dance with castanets--Drum Polka, and all kinds of fairy dances."<sup>28</sup>

Unlike many Protestant denominations, dance was a significant form of expression and a respected means of recreation in Mormon culture. Brigham Young observed:

The world considers it very wicked for a Christian to hear music and to dance. Many preachers say that fiddling and music come from hell; but I say there is no fiddling, there is no music in hell. Music belongs to heaven, to cheer God, angels, and men . . . Music and dancing are for the benefit of the holy ones . . .<sup>29</sup>

Living in the Lion House also taught Susa "hygienic principles and rules of simple living and high thinking"<sup>30</sup> fostered largely by the precepts of the "Word of Wisdom," a revelation announced by Joseph Smith in 1833 that admonished the use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and excessive consumption of food. Brigham Young also advocated this perspective, as did Susa's mother. Lucy Bigelow Young must have been instrumental in the development of Susa's character, but with the medley of female role models in the Lion House, it is difficult to discern her specific mark. It would appear that Susa's deep religious faith, her interest in hygiene and physiology, and her spousal obedience, may have been a consequence of her mother's example.

Lucy acquired little formal education, yet supported and encouraged her daughter to pursue an active, intellectual life. She was a simple woman, uncomplicated and un-assuming, "who feared romantic notions as she did

riches and other worldliness."<sup>31</sup> She married Brigham Young at Winter Quarters, Iowa, in 1847, in a ceremony that included her sister, Mary Jane, who also became a plural wife to the Mormon president. Brigham was almost thirty years older than the two sisters, but age was not the barrier that challenged Mary Jane, it was the difficult circumstances of plural marriage that the young sister could not accept. She asked to be released from her vows to Brigham, citing her inability to embrace the practice of polygamy. The divorce was granted on amiable terms.<sup>32</sup>

Often characterized as an obedient and religious woman, Lucy was deeply committed to the faith, which very probably enabled her to accept, with grace, the emotional hardships of plural marriage. She also had the privilege of being considered to be one of Brigham Young's "favorite" wives. Lucy, along with Clara Decker and Eliza R. Snow were reputed to be "the various nurses and authorities on all the ills humanity is heir to."<sup>33</sup> Lucy often cared for Brigham during his illnesses. She was unquestionably obedient to her husband, and toward the end of his life Brigham commented to Susa that, "your mother never gave me a cross word in her life nor did she ever refuse to take my counsel."<sup>34</sup> Upon her death in 1905, Lucy's obituary in the Deseret News read:



Her greatest work in life had been connected with the temples of her chosen people . . . Refinement of character and the social graces were the strong traits for which she was noted and loved among her wide acquaintanceship with women of Utah and the east . . . Mrs. Lucy Bigelow Young's whole life has been one of devotion to the Church, whose standard she adopted as a child when to acknowledge its name meant to be driven and exiled from home and city after city in the States leading westward to the great train to Utah.<sup>35</sup>

Susa also shared a close relationship with her two sisters, Eudora Lovina (1852-1922), and Rhoda Mabel (1863-1950). She loved her older sister, "Dora" very much, but it was a love that caused Susa to betray her parents in an episode that she often recalled with great regret. Dora had been dating a man of whom Brigham and Lucy both disapproved, Marley Dunford. They considered Mr. Dunford to be a "drunkard." In October of 1870, outside of a school house where a party was being held, it seems that Dora had threatened to take poison unless Susa accompanied her to the Methodist preacher's house where she intended to elope with her boyfriend. Dora also pleaded with Susa to shoulder some of the responsibility for the episode when Brigham and Lucy were told. It was a painful dilemma for the fourteen-year old Susa who, horrified by the stated alternative, agreed to assist in the scheme, paying a dear price for her part in the conspiracy.

I had always worshipped Dora, and when I had to face father in mother's sitting-room, I told the lie--and O--I can't tell or recall his talk to me.

Poor dear, betrayed father and mother! I was shut up in my bedroom three weeks alone--then Aunt Zina begged to have me given into her care down at little Zina's--that saved my reason and my life.<sup>36</sup>

Shortly after this fiasco, Susa and her younger sister Rhoda Mabel were banished to St. George with their mother. It was an exile that would prove to be of tragic proportion in many emotional ways.

St. George was a town in the southern part of the state known as Utah's "Dixie," and Lucy maintained one of two homes that Brigham Young owned in the area. In December of 1872, two years after arriving in St. George, Susa met and married a successful dentist, Dr. Alma Dunford, a cousin of Dora's husband. She was sixteen-years old at the time and, like his cousin, Alma Dunford was also known to drink heavily. Susa was admittedly unprepared for marriage, both psychologically and sexually. She had two children with Dr. Dunford. Daughter, Leah, was born in 1873, and son Bailey in 1875. For reasons that are difficult to verify, but relatively easy to infer, the marriage was painfully unsuccessful.<sup>37</sup> In addition to Dr. Dunford's drinking problem and Susa's immaturity, the protective confines and idyllic conditions that had been fostered in the Lion House contributed to Susa's unrealistic understanding of what marriage involved. Susa did not become the plural wife of a financially secure Mormon leader as her mother and many

aunts had been. She had no frame of reference for the roles and responsibilities that would be expected of her as the only wife of a young and struggling dentist from St. George, Utah.

Shortly after Brigham Young's death in August of 1877, Susa filed for divorce from her husband while he was on a mission in England. This action so enraged Dr. Dunford, that upon his return in March of 1878, he had Susa arrested and jailed overnight. As a consequence of the divorce, Susa eventually lost custody of both her children. Given the primal connection that exists between mother and child, and the sacred role of marriage in the Mormon faith, the divorce was understandably an experience of pain and guilt that Susa carried with her to her deathbed. One of the last statements she made before dying of cancer on 27 May 1933 was, "I hope I have not wronged Dr. Dunford."<sup>38</sup>

The move to St. George marked a significant shift in the life of young Susa. The carefree existence she had enjoyed in the Lion House was soon replaced by the adult responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, but the lessons Susa had learned in her first fourteen years in a plural household would remain with her for the rest of her days. Being raised in the Lion House had provided Susa with valuable knowledge regarding thrift, health, fashion, dance, and music. She acquired her love of literature while under

the communal roof of her father's house, and learned the value of time-management and organization.

Despite the illusion of harmony that was deliberately fostered by the many wives of the Lion House, Susa would indicate in later years that circumstances may not have been as congenial in the plural household as Mormon historians have often portrayed. In 1928 Susa recounted an observation made by her father:

. . . he told me at the close of his life that he had made a mistake. If he had it to do over, he said he would deed each wife her own home and let her pay her own tithing and have her own belongings around her.<sup>39</sup>

Regardless of any regret that may have troubled Brigham Young concerning his experiment in communal living, life in the Lion House had provided Susa with the rare opportunity to appropriate the strengths of several remarkable women--strengths that would become obvious in her own multifaceted personality. The educational experiences she acquired during her years in the Lion House were diverse, and just as the influence of Susa's mother and many aunt's was crucial to her development, so was the overwhelming influence of her famous father, Brigham Young.

#### The Influence of Brigham Young

Because of the many demands on his time as leader of the Mormon community, Brigham Young did not have as intimate

a connection to Susa's daily life as did her mother and many aunts, yet he was unquestionably a strong influence on much of her personal and professional development. Susa described her father as "a man who loved order, system, decorum and dignity as he loved truth."<sup>40</sup> In her personal papers, she further commented on the nature of her father's influence on his entire family:

Father was an object almost of worship to his wives and his children. He was so solicitous of our childish needs in education, amusement and social ways, so tender of us in illness, so understanding in the vagaries of the child-heart that we all loved him with infinite devotion, even if he was too busy to spend much time with each or all of us in our mothers' private sitting-room . . . father was our guiding star of hope and delight.<sup>41</sup>

Susa's attitudes toward education were shaped, in large measure, by the man who was "worshipped" by his many wives and children, and who shaped the nature of Mormonism in the new Zion of Utah. The influence of Brigham Young can be traced to many of the educational perspectives that Susa espoused. Such perspectives included; the need for education that was practical rather than ornamental; equal educational opportunity for both boys and girls; the role of the mother to the education process; the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment as a behavioral modification tool; and above all else, education as a means of promoting the faith.

To better understand Susa's educational outlooks, it is helpful to recognize the educational views of Brigham Young.

Susa's father often commented on the limitation of his own education, having spent only eleven days in a formal school setting. "His mother taught him to read, and his father inculcated a love for the stately prose of the Bible."<sup>42</sup> Brigham Young mistrusted intellectuals, and once commented to one of his counselors that he felt "the classics had been used by the learned to keep the unlearned in subjection and ignorance."<sup>43</sup> Brigham believed that education should be practical, and in 1877 when he provided land for Brigham Young College, he stipulated that in addition to a liberal education, young male students should also focus on trades such as blacksmithing, carpentry, and masonry. He requested that the young female students learn to spin, weave, and sew, as well as develop skills in dairying, poultry raising, and flower gardening.<sup>44</sup>

Brigham felt that schools should accommodate three categories of learners. They included:

. . . mature men and women like himself, who loved and eagerly sought knowledge. Second, there was vital need of a pedagogical school where future teachers might receive suitable training. Third, the children of all ages must be put in school, the older ones in the winter when farms and homes could best spare them and the younger children throughout the year. Added to this was the industrial training for both boys and girls.<sup>45</sup>

It is often recorded that Brigham Young was committed to providing equal educational opportunities to both male and female students. According to Susa, when the University of Deseret was founded in February of 1850 under Young's patronage the principle of co-education was firmly established. Susa regarded her father as "a pioneer of pioneers. Like the Prophet, he held to the equality of the sexes in education as in all life."<sup>46</sup> Also, noted Mormon historian, Leonard J. Arrington, maintains that Brigham Young required church academies to have at least one woman on their board of trustees in order to ensure educational equity among the sexes.<sup>47</sup> This would appear to be an inaccurate statement.

During the time in which Susa was conducting general research for her manuscript, Women in History, she inquired of several Mormon institutions as to their policies regarding the hiring of women as teachers and administrators. Responding to one of her inquiries in 1922, Brigham Young College President W.W. Henderson indicated that:

No women have ever served upon our Board of Trustees. The Deed of Trust and the Articles of Incorporation provide that the Trustees are to be named by the President of the Church. Up to this time the President has apparently never seen fit to appoint a woman on the Board. The first, or original Board of Trustees, was appointed by Brigham Young. All those appointed were men and I

presume that successive presidents have considered it best to follow the example.<sup>48</sup>

A similar reply was received in October of 1922 from G.C. Wilson, President of Latter-day Saints University in Salt Lake City. This institution was initially founded as a central church school under the generous sponsorship of Brigham Young. Wilson responded in his letter, "So far as I know, no women have ever served on our Board of Trustees."<sup>49</sup>

Although Brigham Young may have promoted gender equity in a variety of contexts, the Mormon leader had very defined ideas about the role of women within the home. He charged "mothers" with the primary task of ensuring the educational development of children, believing that:

. . . education commences with the mother, and the child in connection. It depends in a great degree upon the mother as to what children receive, in early age, of principle of every description, pertaining to all that can be learned by the human family . . . It is the experience of people generally that they imbibe for their mother in infancy is the most lasting upon the mind through life. This is natural, it is reasonable, it is right.<sup>50</sup>

Brigham Young believed that a woman's "natural calling" was to motherhood. He once commented to his ambitious daughter:

If you were to become the greatest woman in the world and your name should be known in every land . . . and you should neglect your duty as wife and mother, you would wake up in the morning of the first resurrection and find that you have failed in everything!<sup>51</sup>



Brigham Young rejected the use of corporal punishment as a means of discipline. Although physical reprimands were a common form of discipline during the period, Mormons adopted a much less brutal approach to discipline, and the gentler approach was largely inspired by the personal philosophy of Brigham Young:

Parents should never drive their children, but lead them along, giving them knowledge as their minds are prepared to receive it. Chastening may be necessary betimes, but parents should govern their children by faith rather than by the rod, leading them kindly by good example into all truth and holiness.<sup>52</sup>

Susa claimed that, "whipping in school was not approved by him [Brigham Young] or his associated leaders . . . If there was any punishment needed he preferred to do that himself."<sup>53</sup> Brigham Young had two sayings regarding the "rearing of children" that were often repeated and practiced by Mormon educators; "Never humiliate a child" and, "Praise before blame."<sup>54</sup>

Susa embraced several of her father's educational philosophies. She regarded education as an instrument of social policy, and agreed that a primary goal of education was to imbue students with a sense of moral purpose. "Education in a specific sense is the studied effort on the part of parents or teachers to develop intellectual and moral characteristics."<sup>55</sup> Like her father, Susa also held

that education should develop practical skills that could serve fundamental needs.

Susa committed much of her time and talent to the development of "Domestic Science" for women. She believed that "Mormon girls needed the atmosphere of dignity which attended a domestic process or function given only when cooking and laundering were called sciences."<sup>56</sup> In 1893 Susa established "a primitive attempt at classifying and regulating domestic labor"<sup>57</sup> and organized the Domestic Science Department at Brigham Young Academy with the help of her daughter. Leah had graduated from the State University majoring in chemistry and physics, and had studied domestic science at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.<sup>58</sup>

Susa was a staunch proponent of equal education for both sexes. She campaigned vigorously for female enrollment in colleges and high schools. Susa's attitude regarding the role of the mother was obviously influenced by her father.

In Women in History, Susa made the following observation:

Brave, self-reliant, intelligent, progressive sons are not born to stupid, lazy and ignorant mothers. The stream never rises higher than its source, and the source of life is life. Find a nation where the men are intellectual, refined, progressive, courageous and wise, and there you will find mothers who have trained their sons to be such men.<sup>59</sup>

Susa also emulated her father with regard to the use of corporal punishment. "Father never antagonized or

humiliated children. He corrected very rarely . . . I learned one of his secrets in later years when I was myself a mother."<sup>60</sup> Susa had brought her daughter, Leah, on a visit to her father shortly before his death. Brigham asked the toddler to come and give him a kiss, and Leah fearfully clung to her Mother. He continued to coax the youngster with smiles and nickels, but nothing seemed to work. Susa, embarrassed and angry with the child, threatened to "take her out and give her a good spanking and teach her to mind when she is spoken to."<sup>61</sup> Brigham interceded and told Susa, "I learned a long time ago not to tell a child to do a thing which I was sure I would not do."<sup>62</sup> Susa commented that her father's observation "was a big lesson to me in the rearing of my family of willful boys. I am the mother of sons, and three daughters, and I have never forgotten that lesson."<sup>63</sup>

Although he encouraged reading, Brigham Young rejected novels. Shortly before his death he commented to one of his sons, "novel reading appears to me to be very much the same as swallowing poisonous herbs."<sup>64</sup> He urged his children to read historical and scientific works as well as the revelations of God. In this regard, Susa differed from her father. She loved to read novels, a love she acquired when she was a young girl. In an editorial discussing the possible harmful influence of novel reading on the minds of

young Mormons, Susa commented, "I never found myself injured by the perusal of the Arabian Nights . . . I believe that much of the imagination and invention of my mind, such as it is, was engendered by beautiful and quaint stories."<sup>65</sup>

Brigham Young believed that education should be practical, and equally accessible to both boys and girls. He believed that corporal punishment was unnecessary and undesirable, and contended that it was the primary responsibility of the mother to supervise a child's education development. He advocated historical and scientific works over novel reading, and maintained that education should promote strong moral character, foster the word of God, and develop faithful Saints. He was not "an advocate of the free school. The Mormon leader felt that education should be striven for it is to be appreciated."<sup>66</sup> With little exception, Susa embraced the educational attitudes espoused by her father. The philosophies of another man, however, would also dramatically impact Susa's outlook on education.

#### The Influence of Karl Maeser

The German-born convert, Karl Maeser, first influenced Susa's life when he became the tutor for Brigham Young's children in 1865, replacing Harriet Campbell Cook. Later, he would become the principal of Brigham Young Academy where

his path would cross, once more, with the gifted daughter of Brigham Young.

Maeser trained in Dresden at the Friedrichstadt Schullhrerseminar, which was the German equivalent of a teachers college. The program of study was intensive, and prospective teachers concentrated on didactics and the history of pedagogy.<sup>67</sup> During the years that Maeser matriculated at Freidrichstadt (1844-1848), social and political changes were occurring rapidly in Europe, effecting the form and function of education. New philosophies had been advanced by educators such as Froebel, Herbart and Pestalozzi. When Maeser became an established educator in the new Zion, his teaching methodology, which incorporated concepts of contemporary German pedagogy, earned him the title of "The Pestalozzi of the Rockies."<sup>68</sup> Though considered to be more strict in his approach to discipline, Maeser espoused several Pestalozzian philosophies of education. According to Susa, her mentor felt deep compassion for children of the poor, was concerned for the emotional security of all youngsters, and advocated the use of object lesson instruction.

Maeser served in a variety of educational positions in Utah, at one time even operating his own school, the "Deseret Lyceum." He served as principal of the Union Academy for a short time, and conducted night classes at the

Twentieth Ward Seminary, considered at the time to be one of the most successful private schools in Utah. He was then hired to teach at the private school built by Brigham Young to accommodate the Mormon leaders' growing family. Eventually, Maeser became the principal of Brigham Young Academy in Provo, Utah.

In 1878, shortly after her bitter separation from Dr. Dunford, Susa was asked by Karl Maeser to organize a Music Department at Brigham Young Academy in Provo. It was a sizable task emotionally, given the painful losses she had recently experienced--her father's death, and the dissolution of her marriage--but Susa managed to establish a program of music instruction by the first term of 1879. She would spend hours practicing, and hours teaching, and somewhere in between, Susa would also engage in her own academic studies. It should be noted that although Susa's young daughter was in the primary care of Alma Dunford's parents during this period, Susa had custodial responsibility for her toddler son, Bailey.

Susa described her mentor as a "simple, direct, and dynamic German pedagogue" with an "unslacked thirst for spiritual and mental truths."<sup>69</sup> She admired his teaching style and referred to him as the "ideal teacher" who had the:

power to reach the hearts of children and youth, to love them with all his soul, win their love and confidence, and in the crucible of adolescent character cast the regent of his own and his pupils love.<sup>70</sup>

Karl Maeser was significant to Susa in a number of ways. Perhaps the most important feature of their relationship was that Maeser taught Susa to appreciate the Book of Mormon, and to study it systematically. Susa once commented that, "Brother Maeser taught me to think out the answer of my problem," and "set my feet on the road of thorough self-development."<sup>71</sup> It was Maeser who encouraged Susa to pursue her literary gift, taking great interest in her writing studies at Harvard University Summer School in 1892.

Many individuals influenced Susa's love for learning, including her mother, her aunts, Brigham Young and Karl Maeser, but Susa's formal education experiences also had a significant impact on the perspectives she would come to embrace as an adult.

#### The 'Schooling' of Susa Young

Susa attended five different schools in her life. The first school was in the basement of the Lion House. The second, was the private school that Brigham Young had built across the street from the Beehive House in 1865. In 1870 Susa attended the University of Deseret, and later she

matriculated at Brigham Young Academy. In the Summer of 1892, Susa attended Harvard University for a single term.

At different times during the 1850s and 1860s, three different schools were built and equipped by Brigham Young to accommodate the educational needs of his children. In 1852, a fourteen by fourteen-foot adobe structure was used as the first school for the Young children until the Lion House was constructed in 1856. It was taught by plural wife Zina Young, who rewarded obedient children with molasses cookies; foul language was punished with soap suds, and lies with red pepper. Educational equipment was primitive during the early period of Utah settlement. Books were extremely scarce when the Mormons first arrived in Utah. The textbooks available in Brigham Young's first family school consisted of a "battered" spelling-book, a primer, a first and second reader, and the Book of Mormon.<sup>72</sup>

Shortly after the Lion House was completed in 1856, a long hall on the north-west side of the basement was organized as a school for the children of Brigham Young. Many neighboring children also attended. This is the first formal school that Susa attended. Classes were conducted by plural wife Harriet Campbell Cook, and the daily routine included "school from nine to ten, recess till eleven, dinner [lunch] at twelve, school again at one-thirty, recess from two-thirty to three, and out by four."<sup>73</sup>



Additionally, the Lion House boasted a home gymnasium, when Brigham had a long porch added to the west side of the structure in the early 1860s. It was here that the children engaged in regular exercise. Brigham feared that:

sitting in school so much would cause bent backs and feeble limbs for his growing sons and daughters, so the Lion House porch was fitted up with step-stools, with back-boards, wands and hoops for the girls, with wooden swords for the boys, trapeze, vaulting poles, dumb bells and special instructions were given at regular hours in gymnastics.<sup>74</sup>

In 1865, Brigham Young had a free-standing, private school constructed across the street from the Beehive House to provide for his growing family. Shortly after the new facility had been constructed, Albert D. Richardson visited the school and commented that:

By Brigham Young's invitation I spent an hour in his school. Its register bore the names of 34 pupils; three Brigham's grandchildren; all the rest his own sons and daughters. There were 28 present from 4 to 17 years of age, on the whole looking brighter and more intelligent than the children of any other school I ever visited.<sup>75</sup>

The construction of the school house was meticulously designed with the same initiative and precision that was characteristic of the organized and efficient Brigham Young.

Direct light was not good for children's eyes so he [Brigham Young] had the windows high enough from the ground to make light fall indirectly on the pages of the book . . . There was a sizable entry where double rows of hooks took the caps and hats of the children . . . in the roof . . . hung the immense and mellow-toned bell which called the morning and afternoon hours of assembly, as well

as the fifteen minutes recess given to the restless children during both morning and afternoon sessions.<sup>76</sup>

When the new schoolhouse was completed, Harriet Cook was replaced as the children's instructor with Karl Maeser who became the primary tutor to Brigham Young's children.

In 1870, Susa attended the University of Deseret--now the University of Utah. "The University of Deseret opened in 1868 for regular course work at all levels--primary, secondary, and advanced--Brigham's family made up the largest single group attending."<sup>77</sup> Despite the designation of "university," the curricular structure of the University of Deseret more closely resembled that of a modern high school. Classes were held at various locations including the City Hall and the Council Hall.

At thirteen, while attending the university, Susa was an active student who "edited the school's paper, studied telegraphy, stenography, and took a course in baking."<sup>78</sup> Susa was co-editor of Lanterns, the University's literary magazine,<sup>79</sup> and she attended special shorthand lessons with fifty other students, receiving training in both stenography and record-keeping. Her stenography instructor, David Evans considered her to be,

one of his star pupils, and she became proficient enough to be her father's clerk at conferences from northern to southern Utah and to record the dedicatory services of the St. George, Logan, and Salt Lake temples.<sup>80</sup>

At the prompting of Karl Maeser, Susa attempted to further develop the considerable literary talent that she had demonstrated since she was a young girl. Many years later, in 1892, she studied a combined course in Elementary English Composition and Introduction to English Literature at the Summer School of Harvard University. It was also at Harvard that Susa formally studied physical education.<sup>81</sup> It was very common for the children of Mormon leaders to attend tertiary institutions in the East, and then return home to apply their new-found knowledge for the betterment of their religious community. According to one of Brigham's daughters:

Father told al his sons that any of them who wished might go East to college provided they would prepare themselves by first obtaining the best education that the state had to offer. Another conditions was that when they returned to the state they were to disseminate the knowledge they had gained among the young people here.<sup>82</sup>

Susa Young Gates' perspective of her world and her place in it was clearly molded by the female role models occupying the Lion House, the men she strove to emulate, the formal schools she attended, and the faith she embraced. The junction of these forces, her ambitious character, and her remarkable birth rite, propelled Susa to extraordinary levels of achievement. The 'thirteenth apostle' would evolve into a dynamic presence who forged her own mark on social systems in Utah.

## NOTES

1. Susa Young Gates, "Notes on Her Testimony", typescript, Susa Young Gates Collection (hereafter cited as SYGC), Utah State Historical Society (hereafter cited as USHS).

2. Susa Young Gates, SYGC, USHS, "My Life", hand written notes. Box 1, folder 2.

3. Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widstoe, The Life Story of Brigham Young (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1930), 323.

4. As a young man in New York state, Brigham had helped to construct a marketplace, a prison, a seminary and several homes. He was also known to create lovely furniture. See Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 13-18 and Gates and Widstoe, 3.

5. Susa observed that her father revered symbolism, and was a biblical scholar. The lion is the biblical symbol for the tribe of Judah.

6. Susa Young Gates, SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 1.

7. Gates and Widstoe, 326.

8. Susa Young Gates, SYGC, USHS, "My Life", hand written notes dated 17 Sep 1928, box 1, folder 7, 3.

9. Susa Young Gates, "The Editor Presumes to Talk About Herself", Young Woman's Journal (Jan., 1896), VII, 200-203. See also Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections" SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 1, 1.

10. Susan B. Anthony as quoted to Susa Young Gates in "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS. See also "The Editor Presumes to Talk About Herself" Young Woman's Journal 7:200-203.

11. Susa Young Gates, "Life Items of Susa Young Gates", SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 7.

12. R. Paul Cracroft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Her Work" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1959), 32. Other aliases under which Susa wrote included, "Amelia,"

"Mary Foster Gibbs," "Maggie Farnham," "Mary Howe" and her most common pen-name, "Homespun."

13. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 1, 2.

14. Clarissa Young Spencer and Mabel Harmer, Brigham Young at Home (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1940), 65.

15. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS, box 12, folder 2.

16. Gates and Widstoe, 328.

17. Rebecca Foster Cornwall, "Susa Y. Gates", in Sister Saints, ed. Vicky Burgess-Olson (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978). As quoted to the author in an oral interview conducted with Franklin Gates (Susa's son), on 1 April 1976).

18. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS, Box 12, folder 2.

19. Ibid.

20. Susa Young Gates, "Lion House Memories", 6.

21. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 1, 2.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 4.

24. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 1, 2.

25. Ibid., 1.

26. Ibid., 4.

27. Susa Young Gates, SYGC, USHS, "The Brigham Young Schoolhouse", 5.

28. Susa Young Gates, "Life Items of Susa Young Gates", SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 2, 2.

29. Gates and Widstoe, 81-82.

30. Ibid., 324.

31. Susa Young Gates, "Lion House Memories", SYGC, USHS, 6.

32. Gates and Widstoe, 342. Mary Jane was only one of two women who asked to be released from her plural marriage arrangement with Young. Brigham evidently agreed without a struggle, maintaining that women should have "complete free agency" with regard to such matters.

33. Gates and Widstoe, 327.

34. Susa Young Gates, "Life Items of Susa Young Gates", SYGC, USHS, 4.

35. "Passing of a Pioneer Woman", Deseret News 4 Feb 1905, quoted on page 246 of "Lucy Bigelow Young" manuscript by Susa Young Gates, SYGC, USHS.

36. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 12, 2.

37. Based on information acquired during an oral interview conducted by the author on 27 Jan 1995, with Mrs. Florence Stamm and Mrs. Lurene Wilkinson at Salt Lake City, Utah. Mrs. Stamm and Mrs. Wilkinson are granddaughters of Susa Young Gates. Also, see Cracroft thesis, 8.

38. Cracroft, 38.

39. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections", SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 2, 4.

40. Susa Young Gates, "My Father as His Forty-Six Children Knew Him", SYGC, USHS.

41. Ibid.

42. Gates and Widstoe, 4.

43. This comment was made to Daniel H. Wells who served as chancellor of the University of Deseret. See Ralph V. Chamberlain's, The University of Utah: A History of Its First One Hundred Years, 1850 to 1950 (Salt Lake City, 1960), 95.

44. A.N. Sorensen, "Brigham Young College", in The History of a Valley: Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho, ed. Joel E. Ricks (Logan, Utah, 1956), 349-69.

45. Gates and Widstoe, 286.

46. Susa Young Gates, "The Brigham Young Schoolhouse", SYGC, USHS, 6.

47. Arrington, 397.

48. W.W. Henderson, President of Brigham Young College, in a letter to Susa Young Gates dated 28 October 1922, responding to her request for information regarding the role of women as teachers and trustees at the institution. SYGC, USHS, box 18.

49. G.C. Wilson to Susa Young Gates, 26 October 1922, Letter in SYGC, USHS, box 18. Latter-day Saints University, located in Salt Lake City, was one of several institutions that comprised the tertiary level of the Church School System. Other tertiary schools included Brigham Young University, Brigham Young Collage, and Weber Academy in Ogden.

50. Susa Young Gates, "Women in Education" a chapter from her unpublished manuscript, Women in History, SYGC, USHS, box 18, 1-2.

51. Brigham Young quoted by Susa Young Gates in "My Recollections," SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 5, 6.

52. Brigham Young in John D. Widstoe's Discourses of Brigham Young (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1954) 12:174 (p. 208).

53. Gates and Widstoe, 285.

54. Mary Grant Judd, "Susa Young Gates," Relief Society Magazine XX (July, 1933) 7, p. 402.

55. Susa Young Gates, "Women in Education," SYGC, USHS, box 18, 12.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 13.

58. Ibid.

59. Susa Young Gates, SYGC, USHS, box 18, folder 8, 3 of her unpublished manuscript, Women in History.

60. Susa Young Gates, "My Father as His Forty-Six Children Knew Him," SYGC, USHS, Box 1.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid. The last line of this quotation is a 'handwritten' addendum that is added to the last paragraph of the typescript document.

64. Brigham Young to his son, Fera Young, in a letter dated 23 August 1877, cited in Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 397. Arrington indicates that there are "letterpress copies of about twenty thousand of his [Brigham Young] letters in the LDS Church Archives alone.

65. "Novel Reading" (editorial), Young Woman's Journal (July, 1894) V, 498.

66. Susa Young Gates, "The BY Schoolhouse," SYGC, USHS, 6.

67. Levi Seeley, The Common School System of Germany and Its Lessons to America (New York: E.L. Kellogg & Co., 1896), 138-139.

68. John T. Miller, "The Pestalozzi of the Rocky Mountains," The Character Builder 40 (October 1927): 1.

69. Susa Young Gates, "My Recollections," SYGC, USHS, box 18, folder 2.

70. Ibid.

71. Letter written by Susa Young Gates responding to an inquiry about what constitutes good teaching; SYGC, USHS.

72. Susa Young Gates, "The BY Schoolhouse," SYGC, USHS.

73. Arrington, 170.

74. Susa Young Gates "The BY Schoolhouse," SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 14, 5.



75. Spencer & Harmer, 143.
76. Susa Young Gates, "The BY Schoolhouse," SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 14, 1.
77. Arrington, 337.
78. 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 Book Co., 1982), 325.
79. John D. Widstoe, "Sketch of Susa Young Gates," unpublished essay written by Susa's son-in-law, SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 12, 3.
80. Rebecca Foster Cornwall, 66.
81. Widstoe, 2.
82. Spencer and Harmer, 144.

CHAPTER V  
THE INFLUENCE OF SUSA YOUNG GATES ON  
EDUCATION IN UTAH

As Susa matured, her reputation as an effective suffragist, writer, and genealogist would become firmly established throughout the intermountain West, and much of the rest of America. Her success as an educator, however, would not enjoy the same measure of prominence despite the fact that her professional objectives would remain focused on education throughout all of her adult life. The controversy of suffrage, the high visibility afforded Susa by her editorial positions, and the religious significance of Mormon temple work, overshadowed her many contributions to the comparatively mundane realm of education.

Susa was connected to education in a variety of ways for over sixty years. In addition to being a student in Utah's primitive education system, Susa was also a teacher and trustee. By contemporary standards, she was a life-long learner. When she was thirty-six years old, Susa took courses in writing and physical education at Harvard University.<sup>1</sup> During this time, Susa was also a working editor, wife, and the mother of several children. As a classroom instructor, she spent many years teaching a wide

range of courses including music, physiology, and domestic science. Susa was concerned for the development of education at all levels, but her efforts largely concentrated on higher education, and while her influence was felt directly in the classroom, her major contribution to educational systems in Utah were the consequence of her political posturing as a trustee. From the time she was thirty-five years old, until her death at age seventy-seven, Susa held politically important positions at two major institutions in Utah. She served on the board of trustees at both Brigham Young University in Provo, from 1891 until 1933, and the Utah State Agricultural College in Logan, from 1906 to 1912.<sup>2</sup> Although her relationship with Utah State Agricultural college (later to become Utah State University), and the University of Deseret (later to become the University of Utah), would be of significant consequence, Susa's association with the institution endowed by her father constituted a critical feature of her life, both personally and professionally.

### Brigham Young University

Susa attended Brigham Young Academy three years after it had been created as the premiere institution of the LDS Church Academy System. This was the Mormon system of private education designed to stave off secularization that

would undoubtedly accompany a system of public education borne of statehood. The year after her father died, Susa had a "long and interesting conversation" with John Taylor about her "personal affairs."<sup>3</sup> Taylor had succeeded to the Presidency of the Mormon Church after Brigham Young's death in 1877 from complications suffered after an appendicitis. It was a difficult time for Susa, having lost her beloved father, and suffering the public humiliation of her divorce from Alma Dunford. Perhaps the most painful loss she endured, however, was losing custody of her young daughter, Leah. It was a time of confusion, guilt, and pain for Susa who was only twenty-three years old. Taylor offered Susa a Normal scholarship to attend the University of Deseret, but shortly after her meeting with the President, Susa happened upon Apostle Erastus Snow. She explained to Snow her circumstances, and he told her of a school founded by her father in Provo:

"If you want to go to school, I'll tell you the place to go, a school which has been founded and endowed by your own father and where you will not only be taught the different branches of education ,but a place where the Spirit of God burns in every line and word spoken and written by its preceptor. A place where you can fill your soul with the rich light of inspiration as well as crowd your mind with the learning of the ancients and the moderns. This is the Brigham Young Academy at Provo."<sup>4</sup>

Despite Taylor's generous offer to attend the University of Deseret, Susa determined to enroll at Brigham

Young Academy instead. It seems odd that she would not have been familiar with the institution. She confessed to being "utterly ignorant of the school, its purpose, or even of the manner in which it was founded and endowed,"<sup>5</sup> but the following day after her conversation with Erastus Snow, Susa was on a train headed for Provo.

Many of the family papers addressing Susa's life, and several articles detailing her many achievements, state that she graduated from Brigham Young University. It should be noted that Susa never received a degree from the school; in fact, the surviving historical record confirms that Susa was never awarded any degree. It is a fact of little consequence, however, from the standpoint of Susa's professional opportunities. Although Susa attended Brigham Young Academy as a student for only one year, her relationship with the school would continue until her death in 1933, and she would serve the institution as both educator and trustee.

Her early association with the academy as a young and carefree student afforded Susa an emotional and intellectual refuge from the painful aftermath of her divorce from Dr. Dunford. Susa had married in 1872 when she was only sixteen years of age, and separated from her husband in May of 1877, after Alma Dunford had left on a mission to England. Susa's father died in August of that year, and by March of 1878,

Susa had filed for divorce. It was only a few short months after her separation from Dunford that Susa and her younger sister, Rhoda Mabel, set off for Provo where they would both matriculate at the school their father had founded in 1875.

During her first year at the academy, Susa began to develop confidence in herself. Her commission to organize the Music Department in 1878, under the guidance of her mentor, Karl Maeser, helped her to recognize her abilities as an instructor. It was an appointment that was rewarding, but had been thoroughly unanticipated.

One day, some weeks after the opening of school, Brother Maeser was walking home with myself and my mother, when my mother mentioned to him that she would like me to arrange to give some music lessons while in school.

"Does Miss Susa understand music well enough to give lessons?" he asked . . .

"Of course she does. She has given lessons ever since she was fourteen," was the answer.

"I must think of that," said Brother Maeser musingly.<sup>6</sup>

Susa was credited with great success in organizing the department, and she was referred to as "our musical inspiration" by her students. Susa was also responsible for supplying the department with its first piano.<sup>7</sup> She committed much of her time and energy to the development of the fledgling department. By one account, it is said that she prepared ten hours each week for twenty-two hours of music lessons, as well as several two-hour choir rehearsals. By her own account, Susa declared:

"The Academy Choir (under me of course) learned ten chorries [sic], and anthems, in two weeks. I am obliged to sing each part with everyone . . . It is indeed very wearing on the lungs and nerves. But I love it, and am so glad I can assist the fresh, young and oftentimes sweet singers of Zion to praise God in melody and in song."<sup>8</sup>

As a student, Susa's involvement in recreational organizations such as the Polysophical Society helped to divert her anguish over the failure of her marriage. The Polysophical Society, a literary society that served as a kind of "social club," was founded by Karl Maeser "to supply the students with the opportunities for public training, and the means of obtaining useful incidental instruction."<sup>9</sup> It became a means by which students could express their opinions and showcase their talents through dance, singing, acting, and debate. The young scholars also shared their current research findings at Polysophical Society meetings, and conducted moot courts and operas as well.

While Susa attended the academy, she had parental responsibility only for her young son, Bailey. Her five-year old daughter, Leah was in the primary care of Alma Dunford's parents who were living near Bear Lake in the northeast portion of Utah. Why Susa retained custody of Bailey, but lost supervision of Leah is unclear, but it can be assumed that the courts determined Bailey, who was a toddler at the time of the divorce, needed the maternal nurturing only his mother could provide. The separation

from her daughter caused Susa incredible pain, as indicated by an excerpt from a letter she wrote to her mother in April of 1879:

. . . I do not love anyone on this earth as well as my precious Mother, except my little children. I want by next year, (don't mention this to anyone) to have my little girl here, and put her into the Kindergarten School, that is to be added to this Academy. Then you know I can devote myself to their education, have them with me, and try to rear them in the fear of God and wrongdoing. This is my bright dream. This is what I long for in the future. Should I every marry, my children might not be well-treated. And I must try to do all I can for them. Sometimes they tell me I must be saved by some good man. If that's all, I could be sealed so some one who has proved his integrity and passed away. I am happy, or at least as happy as mortals who have scared hearts and sore memories can ever expect to be. In short, I am busy, contented, and useful. I am only twenty-three so there is plenty of time, yet years and years of it for me yet. Let your heart be at rest for me, as long as I am in the Academy, I am safe. That is, as long as I am a partaker of the spirit that rules in these walls, I am all right.<sup>10</sup>

Her admissions in that letter serve as poignant testimony to the pain and guilt she experienced in those first few years after the divorce. Clearly, Brigham Young Academy represented a safe haven for Susa, insulating her from a society that did not look favorably on failed marriages, yet allowed her to continue a direct relationship with the religious community in which she had been raised since birth; a community in which her prestigious birthright may have entitled her to special treatment. Considering that



the academy had been founded and financed by her beloved father, it is reasonable to assume that as a daughter of its namesake, Susa enjoyed some measure of privilege. It might also be assumed that Karl Maeser, the academy's principal, and Susa's childhood tutor and mentor, helped to fill the void created by the death of Brigham Young. Later in life, she would write of her acquaintances and experiences at the academy with great fondness and appreciation.

The one year I spent in the dear old Academy was crowded full of experiences, and the many and valuable lessons I learned during that period have been of incalculable worth to me in these after years. It was here that I learned how beautiful and clear are the lessons taught by the Book of Mormon. It was here under Brother Maeser's gentle care that I imbibed a love for the application of the gospel to every study and every pursuit. And it was here that I received from him a stimulus to pursue my literary course, aiming always for that high standard from which, alas, I am still far distant. The friendships and acquaintances formed in this beloved institution will go with me through all time and eternity. For the venerable principal of that great school I have always felt a respectful affection.<sup>11</sup>

Although Susa was only a student at the academy for a single year, she spent many years as a faculty member, teaching a range of courses in various disciplines. In addition to creating and organizing the Music Department where she conducted the choir and taught lessons in piano, during the 1878-1879 term Susa also served as an assistant instructor in "phonography," later referred to as "stenography." Susa had studied stenography since she was

twelve years old, and had developed a great deal of proficiency in a subject that was widely regarded "one of the most difficult arts and one of which no feminine brain could master."<sup>12</sup> She taught classes in the Domestic Economy Department which she organized in 1891, and was head of that Department until 1897. Although she never formally received a degree, Susa was issued a "special diploma as a domestic science lecturer."<sup>13</sup> She also taught courses in nutrition and theology while at the academy.

The course for which Susa acquired substantial distinction, though, was her course in special physiology "which treated basic anatomy, hygiene, and sex education."<sup>14</sup> She was largely self-taught in the field, although the course work she completed at Harvard in 1892 may have contributed to her knowledge of physiology. Not only had Susa taken a literature course during that summer, but she also studied the "Practice" of physical education.<sup>15</sup> Early sex education was a cause to which she was deeply committed. Susa often commented on the extent of her early ignorance concerning human sexuality, and the emotional and psychological pain she endured as a consequence of such ignorance. While living in the Lion House, she had never "so much as changed the diaper of a baby boy," and knew nothing about the male anatomy.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps Susa's naivete contributed, in some measure, to the painful demise of her early marriage to Dunford.

Susa became a virtual zealot on the subject of sex education, and while serving as a member of the General Board of the Relief Society from 1911 until 1922, she vigorously campaigned for early sex education in the home. In 1893, Susa traveled to Chicago where she attended the World's Fair, and helped to organize the National Household Economic Association. A year later, she went to Toronto, as a delegate of the same association. Susa spent so many years lecturing on the systematic treatment of sex education and general physiology, that she eventually earned the title of "Mother of Physical Education" in Utah.

Although it is unclear from the surviving historical record whether or not Susa held a full-time teaching appointment in any one department, it would appear that she was indeed considered to be a prominent faculty member at the university. Susa's announcement in 1897, that she would be leaving her teaching post to fulfill expanding church obligations, a common occurrence among dedicated Mormon educators, was met with grave disappointment by university President, Benjamin Cluff, Jr.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to being an educator at Brigham Young University, Susa also served as a member of the Board of Trustees from 1891 until 1933. Her appointment to the Board

resulted not only as a consequence of her intellectual gift and organizational talent, but also as an expression of gratitude for her success in having gained the appropriate releases from various family members in order that the church could assume control of Brigham Young Academy after her father's death in 1877. It should also be noted that in 1896, when the Board of Trustees at the academy succeeded in having the school incorporated as a means of saving it from financial ruin, the original articles of incorporation stipulated that at least three of the twelve directors must be lineal descendants of Brigham Young.<sup>18</sup> They included Brigham Young, Jr., Joseph D.C. Young, and Susa Young Gates.

It would appear that Susa's activity on the board was substantial, as her name appears countless times in various Brigham Young Academy board minutes published between 1891 and 1922.<sup>19</sup> In 1892, Susa moved to appoint Thomas R. Cutler and Reed Smoot to investigate the possibility of securing a consolidation loan at a lower rate of interest to pay off the academy's various debts.<sup>20</sup> Susa was also a member of the 1896 board that determined to incorporate the academy as a consequence of its financial indebtedness. Perhaps her greatest contribution was not so much her keen eye for detail, albeit significant, but Susa never lost sight of the larger spiritual calling she attributed to the unique purpose of Mormon education. She served as a sort of

moral compass, navigating fellow board members in the direction of Mormon faithfulness.

When Susa died in 1933, her daughter, Leah Dunford Widstoe, was appointed to fill her vacancy on the board. Not only did Leah's appointment help satisfy the requirement that three lineal descendants of Brigham Young hold positions on the board, but Mrs. Widstoe's appointment provided a host of other benefits. Leah was professionally respected in her own right, and well-connected politically. She had served as a home economics professor at the university, as well as "an administrative officer (matron) to supervise and assist women students."<sup>21</sup> Leah and her husband, Dr. John Andreas Widstoe, a Harvard graduate whom Susa had met while attending summer school there in 1892, eventually established the College of Family Living at the university, considered one of the first of its kind in the country. Susa had courted John Widstoe on her daughter's behalf while at Harvard, and quite literally "arranged" the marriage between the two.

John Widstoe was clearly a "favorite" of Susa's, and it would seem that she was duly impressed with his penchant for success. Widstoe graduated from Harvard in 1894 with a B.S. in Chemistry, and served as President of the European Mission of The Mormon Church for many years.<sup>22</sup> In 1934, he was appointed Commissioner of Education for the General

Church Board of Education. Widstoe also served as president of the University of Utah, as well as the Utah State Agricultural College, where his influential mother-in-law was a trustee on the Board of Directors.

#### Utah State Agricultural College

Susa was not as personally connected to the Utah State Agricultural College as she was to Brigham Young university, possibly because the college did not share the same familial link, or possibly as a consequence of the eighty-mile distance between the school's location in Logan, and Salt Lake City, where Susa was living during her years on the Board at the college. Her second appointment as trustee of a major educational institution reflected the level of power she had attained in Utah politics, particularly educational politics.

Both Susa, and her husband Jacob Gates were active Republicans in the state, and it was an association that reaped political benefits for Susa in a number of ways. Her appointment as a trustee of the agricultural college in 1906 came at the request of Governor John C. Cutler, who had been elected in 1904 with the support of a Mormon-Republican political machine to which Susa had strong ties. Reed Smoot was a member of the Quorum of Twelve, and the United States Senator who spearheaded efforts to get Cutler elected in

1904. A prominent Mormon, and influential state Republican, Smoot served with Susa as a long-standing member of the board of trustees at Brigham Young University, and had been a Young family friend for many years.

Shortly after Cutler took office, he forced the resignation of the entire board of trustees at the college, which was comprised largely of Democrats, and replaced the majority of positions with Republicans. One of these Republicans was the influential Mrs. Gates. The first act initiated by the new board was to replace President William J. Kerr, with Dr. John A. Widstoe. It can be assumed that this action was fully supported, if not directly instigated, by Widstoe's ambitious mother-in-law, Susa Young Gates. Although Susa made many fine contributions to the college, it is perhaps her efforts to secure the talent of John A. Widstoe that served as her most significant contribution to the school. Widstoe would serve a distinguished career at the agricultural college for sixteen years, "strengthening its organization and raising its scholastic standards in a manner that brought general recognition and confidence."<sup>23</sup>

It is useful to provide a bit of institutional history pertaining to the college shortly after the turn of the century, and just prior to Widstoe's appointment. Radical curricular changes had been instituted at the college during Kerr's administration, ". . . a consolidation controversy

had gripped the state legislature, and the curriculum at the Agricultural college was restricted to courses in agriculture only."<sup>24</sup> Prior to 1905, John Widstoe had served at the college in a variety of positions, including as a professor, but he had been released as a consequence of the same internal controversy that produced the dramatic curricular changes. Widstoe returned, however, to serve as president of the institution shortly after Cutler's election, and remained affiliated with the school until 1916, when he accepted an appointment as president of the University of Utah. He was well suited for his many roles at the agricultural college. Not only was he a highly regarded educator and administrator, but he enjoyed international recognition for his expertise in the areas of dry-farming and irrigation.

It is extremely difficult to chronicle the influence that Susa may have had with regard to changes at the college, but considering her forceful character, and the close relationship she had with her son-in-law, Susa's impact on Widstoe was probably substantial, albeit largely behind-the-scenes. Cutler lost his re-election bid in 1908, as a consequence of losing the support of Gentile Republicans who did not embrace the Mormon position on statewide prohibition, but Widstoe would hold onto his position as President of the college for another eight



years. Susa, however, relinquished her position on the board in 1910.

Although there is no official record of Susa having ever held a faculty position at the agricultural college, it can be assumed that she delivered guest presentations on various topics while in Logan to attend board meetings. Given her prestigious heritage, and her well-known reputation among the Mormon community, such appearances would have been a significant drawing card for the college. Also, Susa needed little prompting to deliver her message to any audience. Daughter, Leah, was directly involved with the domestic science program at the agricultural college, yet she too, is not listed in any of the catalogs as a faculty member. Given the nature of the relationships involved, this may have been a deliberate oversight intended to minimize any suggestion of nepotism on the part of Widstoe.<sup>25</sup>

#### Influencing the Public at Large

Independent of her association with any specific institution, Susa exerted a great deal of energy in the interest of women's education not only in Utah, but nationwide. In early 1922, she began conducting research for her ambitious work, History of Women. In the process of that endeavor, Susa corresponded with many educational

institutions and government agencies inquiring about the relationship between women and education. In a series of letters she wrote and received between 1922 and 1926, Susa's reputation as a "bulldozer in motion"<sup>26</sup> is often obvious in the tone of her inquiries, and it would appear that one of her goals was to identify the historical treatment of women at Eastern institutions. Susa corresponded with schools such as Oberlin College and Antioch College, as well as government agencies such as the State of Utah and the U.S. Department of Labor. Her influence and reputation is evidenced by the fact that the responses she received were invariably written by the head of whatever institution or agency she was addressing. She received a host of letters directly from state attorney generals, college presidents, and federal bureau chiefs. Susa produced a great deal of hand-written correspondence on a daily basis. Her "Notes for the Days Work" (what was essentially a "to do" list) for 19 August 1895 included the following references:

. . . Answer Leah's, Sterling's, Sis. Taylor's, Marie's and Mrs. Grey's letters, and Carlos . . . Write to Pres. Joseph F. Smith, Pres. George A. Cannon, Apostle F.S. Richards, and Elder B.H. Roberts about writing for Journal . . . Also write Mrs. M.E. Potter and Marie D. Write and thank Carol for her lovely gift . . .<sup>27</sup>

Because Susa abhorred the lack of co-education in secondary and tertiary institutions across the country, she called for the admission of women to colleges and

universities during the meeting of the National Council of Women held at Washington, D.C. in 1899. In an editorial she wrote for the Young Woman's Journal, Susa lamented:

Prof. Stewart of the University of Utah said the other night that there was not a University nor college in any civilized country, in which the curriculum had not been planned, arranged, and enforced wholly and solely in the interests of boys and men . . . This has been called the Woman's Century, and you and I, my girls, have most certainly a right to enter our protests against this one-sided state of things as to education.<sup>28</sup>

Susa actively promoted the adoption of curricula that would prepare women for the responsibilities of parenthood and homemaking. She believed that, "the necessity for making home work beautiful and desirable ever lifted the drudgery of toil and domestic labor into the realms of science and art."<sup>29</sup> Although she was a staunch proponent of liberal thinking, Susa was apprehensive about what she considered to be a trend to secularize education, favoring science over faith. It was a common concern among many Mormon educators.

The one great danger, which, to my mind, threatens the college students who are the children on Latter-day Saints threatens not only the young people who are out in the world in Eastern or Western colleges and universities, but threatens also the youth who attend our home University and Agricultural College. The great danger is apostasy . . . There are two elements of this dangerous situation--the constant association of our young people with those not of our faith . . . and the habit a student forms of placing himself

on the much vaunted rock of scientific demonstration.<sup>30</sup>

This concern emanated not only from the dissolving geographical isolation that the Mormons experienced during the latter part of the nineteenth century, but also represented the larger shift in educational focus that characterized American higher education in the decades after the Civil War. Historically, religion--specifically Christianity--had been the cornerstone of the American college, but with the rise of the university, this vital foundation would undergo a significant shift in importance. By the turn of the century, tertiary institutions became increasingly secularized and the natural sciences and specialized research became permanent features of American higher education. Although it would remain a significant feature, religion began to lose ground as the dominant focus of the educational process.<sup>31</sup> This pedagogical transition affected mainstream American education and eventually reached the intermountain West, rippling through the Mormon 'Kingdom of God.'

It was a shift that Susa would not experience without comment. By the 1920s, time and circumstances had elevated Susa to an almost godlike status in Mormon society, and she wielded substantially more power than she had in her younger years. Susa thought nothing of "scolding" significant

Mormon leaders if she felt they were leaning in a direction unfavorable to the faith. In a letter written in 1930 to Franklin S. Harris, who was then President of Brigham Young University, Susa was characteristically frank about the educational philosophy of the institution:

I want to tell you that I keep track pretty closely to the LDS University, and I think they have a fine Latter-day Saint spirit there. I have no fault to find with any of their methods and teachers so far as I am able to learn. I wish I could say the same about your own university. Outside of yourself, and two or three others, most potent suggestions would be to get a new class of teachers; real Latter-day Saints men instead of philosophers and theorists. But I love you, and always pray for more power to be given you in the splendid work you do.<sup>32</sup>

After the turn of the century, many new approaches to education emerged. Susa embraced some of the concepts of modern pedagogy, and rejected others. She continued to believe that "education which trains only the mind had always proved a failure and yet pioneer communities revert naturally to the primitive conception of mental training apart from physical or spiritual discipline and development."<sup>33</sup> Although Susa believed that religion should continue to serve as the defining feature of formal education, she recognized this was not feasible given that free public education had been adopted throughout most of the territory as early as 1890, and was fully realized in 1896, when Utah achieved statehood. Susa, like other

concerned Mormon leaders, relied on the strength of the LDS Church School System, which her father had initiated, to impart the faith to Mormon children. It was a system which had been organized specifically to counteract the secularization that necessarily accompanied free public education.

Susa advocated small group instruction, and believed that students learned best when they had direct, personal contact with their teachers. She commented that:

. . . an education which develops individuals in large groups standardizing information and training to fit the average mind will always fall into the same unfortunate, unsatisfactory lines . . . the individual should be reached by an individual and trained with idiosyncrasies in mind.<sup>34</sup>

To this end, Susa became well known for her belief that "every child is superior in some line; every child should be allowed to follow his natural talent and should be assisted by his family to reach perfection in that talent."<sup>35</sup> This conviction was best demonstrated, perhaps, by the encouragement and assistance she provided for developing the wide range of individual talents her own children possessed. Of her five surviving children, one became a well-known soprano; another was a professor and director of the Tabernacle choir; a third child became a screenwriter; and a fourth child became a leading expert in "vitaphone" research (radio). Leah, Susa's oldest daughter, was an educator,

serving as a professor of Home Economics, having been one of the first graduates of the Pratt Institute in New York.

Despite any concerns or reservations she may have experienced, Susa maintained throughout her life that education was the primary means by which individuals acquired truth, and improved the human condition. Susa never wavered in the underlying belief that drove her attitude toward co-education. She believed unequivocally that women as well as men were all children of God, equal in his eyes, and entitled to as much blessings as responsibilities.<sup>36</sup> Her son-in-law, John A. Widstoe, observed that, "From her earliest childhood Mrs. Gates has been devoted to education and the advancement of her people."<sup>37</sup> She worked tirelessly to shape the direction of higher education in Utah, and remained an activist in promoting women's access to higher education until her death in 1933.

Susa's influence on education in Utah was significant. She designed and implemented courses in domestic science, an area of study that had been largely ignored in most institutions of higher learning. She also spent considerable time acting in the capacity of a board member at two major institutions. More importantly, however, Susa's greatest contribution to education may have been one that cannot be measured sufficiently by the surviving

historical record, given that much of her influence was probably wielded behind-the-scenes. As one of the most famous children of Brigham Young, Susa served as a sort of "religious conscience" to Mormon society. Particularly as she became older, her advice and counsel, and certainly her public approval, was sought after by Mormon educators and politicians, alike.



## NOTES

1. R. Paul Cracroft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Her Work" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1959). In a letter written in 1949 by Marguerite Hildebrand, secretary of the Harvard Summer School, it was indicated that Susa took one English Literature course. Also, in an oral interview conducted on 27 January 1995, with Lurene Wilkinson and Florence Stamm, grand-daughters of Susa Young Gates, it was indicated that Susa also took courses in physical education while at Harvard in 1892.

2. Brigham Young University was first established as an academy in 1875, and in 1889, it was also recognized as the Latter-day Saints Normal College. The institution did not become a university until October of 1903. Susa would remain affiliated with the institution throughout all of its organizational transformations.

3. Susa Young Gates, Young Woman's Journal (April, 1892) III, 337.

4. Erastus Snow, as quoted by Susa Young Gates in, "The Original Music Department," Young Woman's Journal (April, 1892) III, 337-339.

5. Susa Young Gates, Young Woman's Journal (April, 1892) III, 337.

6. Susa Young Gates, "The Old B.Y. Academy," Young Woman's Journal (May, 1892) III, 388-89.

7. Zina Young Card, Circular of the Brigham Young Academy, April 1883, p. 7.

8. Susa Young Gates Collection (hereafter cited as SYGC), Utah State Historical Society (hereafter cited as USHS), Box 3, Folder 3.

9. "Doings of the Polysophical Society," The Academic Review 1 (October 1884): 1. Polysophical is a Greek word meaning "multiskilled, clever, and wise."

10. Susa Young Gates, letter written 4 April 1879 to her mother, Lucy Bigelow Young. SYGC, USHS.

11. Susa Young Gates, Young Woman's Journal (April 1892) III, 339.

12. Olive Woolley Burt, "Susanna Young Gates," The Westerner: The Voice of the New West (January, 1930), 18-19, 68-69.

13. At some point before her death, Susanna had received a form from the BYU Alumni Association requesting personal data from former students for possible publication in "The 'Y' News," which was the official magazine of the Association. In her response to the question regarding diplomas or degrees awarded, Susanna indicated that she had received the special diploma as lecturer. In a form she completed for the BYU Library, Special Collections Department in 1926, Susanna indicated that she held no scholastic degrees. Both forms were completed in Susanna's handwriting, and are held in the Special Collections Archives at BYU.

14. Wilkinson, vol. 1, p. 484

15. Phone interview conducted by the author on 21 November 1995 with Danielle Green, Senior Archivist at Harvard University Archives. Green confirmed that Susanna enrolled in one Literature course, and one "Practice" of Physical Education course at Harvard Summer School, during the Summer of 1892. Contrary to a statement made by one of Susanna's grand-daughters in an interview conducted by the author on 18 January 1995, Susanna was not one of the first women to attend Harvard. The Summer School, which first offered a single course in Botany in 1871, was formally organized by 1874, and twenty of the thirty-six students enrolled were women. (Perhaps she was one of the first Mormon women to attend Harvard.) The first degree granted by Harvard University to a woman was in 1963, and it was required to be co-signed by the President of Radcliffe.

16. Susanna Young Gates, "My Recollections," SYGC, USHS.

17. Wilkinson maintains that President Cluff was faced with a serious dilemma regarding the mission calls of significant faculty. Susanna was only one of several prominent educators that left BYU to fulfill various other church responsibilities.

18. Incorporating the Academy was determined to be the only means by which to solve the school's escalating financial problems. The church assumed full financial responsibility for the Academy's indebtedness as a consequence of the incorporation.

19. BYA Board Minutes, Brigham Young University Archives, Provo, Utah.
20. Wilkinson, 234.
21. Wilkinson, vol. 3, p. 212.
22. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years vol. 2. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1979), 212-213.
23. Ralph V. Chamberlain, The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850-1950 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1960), 344.
24. Robert Parson, University Archivist, Special Collections & Archives, Utah State University. Letter dated 22 November 1995.
25. Observation made by Robert Parson, Archivist in the Special Collections & Archives Division of Utah State University, in his letter dated 22 November 1995.
26. Vicky Burgess-Olson, "Susanna Y. Gates," in Sister Saints (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 81.
27. Susanna Young Gates, "Notes for the Days Work," SYGC, USHS, Box 3.
28. "Editor's Department," Young Woman's Journal (June, 1894) V, 448.
29. Susanna Young Gates, "Women in Education," SYGC, USHS, box 18.
30. Editor's Department, Young Woman's Journal (April 1895) VI, 334-335.
31. See D.G. Hart's chapter, "Faith and Learning in the Age of the University: The Academic Ministry of Daniel Coit Gilman" in George Marsden and Bradley Longfield (eds.), The Secularization of the Academy (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 107-145.
32. Susanna Young Gates, in a letter written to Franklin S. Harris on 27 February 1930, Harris Presidential Papers, as cited in Wilkinson, vol. 2, p. 221.
33. Susanna Young Gates, "Education." SYGC, USHS, box 18.

34. Ibid.

35. Olive Woolley Burt, "Susa Young Gates," The Westerner: The Voice of the New West (January, 1930), 18-19, 68-69.

36. R. Paul Cracroft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Her Work" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1959), 6.

37. John A. Widstoe "Sketch of Susa Young Gates," SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 12, 2.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PUBLIC MRS. GATES: ACTIVIST, EDITOR, GENEALOGIST

The public life of Susa Gates was multi-faceted, and her celebrity truly flourished during the thirty year period between 1892 and 1922. From the time she and Jacob settled their family in Provo, until her resignation from the General Board of the Relief Society Susa emerged as an influential force in Mormon society. Not only was she widely known in educational circles as a competent educator and university trustee, but Susa had also firmly established herself as a nationally-recognized suffragist, an effective writer and editor, and an innovative leader for the systematic study of genealogy. In these capacities, Susa continued to serve as an educator, however, using her diverse talents and public platforms to educate her people on a variety of issues she believed critically important to Mormon culture.

#### Susa as Suffragist

By the turn of the century, Susa had gained national recognition as an advocate for suffrage. Securing electoral rights for women had become her public passion, and during the course of her efforts she became acquainted with the

leading women activists of her day, including author Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Clara Barton of the Red Cross, and the famous suffragist Susan B. Anthony. The story is often recorded of how Susa selflessly rejected Susan B. Anthony's tempting invitation to join the national movement in an official capacity. In an article she published in the Young Woman's Journal in 1929, Susa indicated that the invitation to join had been contingent upon her rejecting Mormonism, given that the religion instigated such negative controversy. Without an instant's hesitation, she declined.<sup>1</sup>

There is no cause to believe that Susa would have responded in any other fashion, but not exclusively for the religiously noble reasons often depicted by Mormon historians. Although Susan B. Anthony is regarded as a heroine of women's rights from the vantage point of our contemporary understanding of what her efforts meant to the cause of suffrage, it must be remembered that during her own life time she was considered to be quite radical as a consequence of her zealous advocacy of women's rights. It would seem unlikely that an appeal from a non-Mormon feminist would seriously entice the daughter of Brigham Young to leave the only social structure she had ever known. Given that Susa's power and prestige derived largely from her privileged position as an heir, of sorts, to the Mormon

throne, it is doubtful that she would have ventured outside the protective confines of Utah into a Gentile world that was overtly hostile toward her own people, particularly her own father. Susa's prestigious lineage allowed her a public posture in the Mormon community; she could be reformer and champion of causes within the world she knew, and which knew her. Casting her fate upon the turbulent waters of a non-Mormon world would likely render her invisible, and neutralize the status she enjoyed largely as a consequence of her Mormon birthright. Rejecting the offer from Susan B. Anthony required far less personal sacrifice than is typically portrayed.

Despite the fact that Susa declined the invitation extended by the famous suffragist, she did take every opportunity to defend the cause of suffrage. Susa held many official posts in her crusade for women's rights. She served as a representative to the National Council of Women seven times and was appointed chairwoman of the Press Committee for three years. In 1889 she attended the convention of the International Council of Women in London. In 1902, Susa was the sole delegate chosen to represent the United States Council of Women at the international conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark, and in 1914, Susa was the official delegate to the International Women's Congress in Rome. Susa also crusaded for the vote by

utilizing her positions on both the General Board of the Relief Society, and the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association. A point which is often overlooked in the somewhat limited literature about Susa's life is the fact that she was considered by many to be a rather gifted speaker. In a day and age when mass communication reached only as far as the power of the human voice, it is plausible that Susa's oratorical skills contributed to her effectiveness as a suffragist during her extensive travels to promote the franchise.<sup>2</sup>

The process of securing suffrage in Utah varied distinctly from much of the rest of the nation. Mormon women had enjoyed the franchise as early as 1870, but suffered its revocation in 1887 with the successful passage of the anti-Mormon legislation known as the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Although the Act of 1870 had been revolutionary for granting the women of Utah the right to vote, it did not, however, provide them with the right to hold public office. This would require additional efforts, and by 1880, an amendment was passed to rectify the inequity.

Susa is often cited as being the second woman in Utah to ever cast the ballot in 1870 (Seraph Young, a grandniece of Brigham Young, was the first), but this claim is highly questionable.<sup>3</sup> Unless special dispensation was granted because of her status as a daughter of Brigham Young, Susa



did not qualify to vote under the conditions of the act. A Woman's right to vote was contingent on her age, and her status in relation to a man, i.e., husband or father. Susa was only fourteen years of age at the time the vote was first available, and she did not marry until 1872. The act which was approved 12 February 1870 read as follows:

"Be it enacted by the governor and the legislative assembly of the territory of Utah that every woman over the age of twenty-one years, who has resided in this territory six months next preceding any general or special election, born or naturalized in the United States, or who is a wife, widow or daughter or a native or naturalized citizen of the United States, shall be entitled to vote at any election in this territory."

During the crusade to secure national suffrage after the turn of the century, Susa and other Mormon women approached the battle for the vote from a perspective slightly different than that of their non-Mormon sisters. Given that they had once enjoyed the ballot, their efforts to reinstate it were particularly fierce. To lose a right that had once been enjoyed was a difficult loss to bear and for Mormon women, such a loss only served to strengthen their resolve in retrieving what they believed to be rightfully theirs. An important point to remember is that the demand to restore the ballot to women was sanctioned by the church, and so it was an effort in which Mormon women were not only allowed to reach beyond the confines of home and hearth, but encouraged to do so. Because the struggle

for suffrage was such a socially progressive step, putting the Mormon church ahead of the rest of society and other churches, Susa could feel religiously justified in demanding from the federal government what Mormondom had earlier granted its women.

Susa published countless articles on the subject of suffrage, and her ability to write combined with her influential editorial positions allowed her to disseminate her thoughts to a somewhat extensive audience, firmly establishing her as one of the most powerful female voices of her day.

#### Author and Editor

As a writer, Susa exhibited creative competence as well as editorial efficiency. She was both an author of novels, and a widely published editor. Susa created the Young Woman's Journal in 1889 and edited that periodical until its merger in 1929 with the Improvement Era. She also served as editor of the Relief Society Magazine from 1914 until 1922. She wrote countless articles for a multitude of Mormon publications such as the Contributor, the Juvenile Instructor, The Relief Society Magazine, and the Young Woman's Journal. Her work was also published in several non-Mormon publications such as the Deseret News, and the Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine. In addition to

the numerous articles she wrote, Susa also published seven books.

Although her only formal training in writing came while attending Harvard Summer School in 1892, Susa contributed much to the genesis of a burgeoning Mormon literature that began to blossom in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and she was regarded as one of the first important female writers of Mormon society. Much of her work is representative of the faith-promoting literature that inundated Mormon culture during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but a portion of her efforts, particularly her early fiction, reflected both a creative impulse, and compulsive urge to express her hopes and fears, and purge herself of mortal flaws. As she matured, her writing became more bridled, and reflected what seemed to be a desire to repay the mantle of advantage she had enjoyed as a member of the first family of the Mormon church in Utah.

Susa wa a voracious writer throughout her life. She wrote personal correspondence on an almost daily basis, and a great deal of poetry, as well as short stories. Susa's writing talents were recognized at an early age. When she was only fourteen, she was appointed to the editorial staff of the College Lantern, an eight-page monthly paper published by the University of Deseret, and one of the first college publications in the West.<sup>5</sup> Susa's mentor, Karl

Maeser, also recognized Susa's writing potential, and encouraged her to pursue her literary talents while she was attending Brigham Young Academy as a student in 1878. It was Maeser who suggested that she attend Harvard in 1892. Susa's daughter, Leah, once remarked that, "Mother had a great gift of English and a dramatic power to paint stories with words. And she wrote from the time she was a little girl. [sic] Poetry, occasionally, but mostly stories."<sup>6</sup>

Over the course of her life, the recognition Susa received for her literary ability came mostly from within the ranks of Mormon society, although the publication of her father's life story by a major non-Mormon press (MacMillian) in 1930, garnished her some national attention. Many of her essays and editorials were superior, but Susa's most creative works were her novels. She wrote a total of seven books, four of which became extremely popular for various reasons; John Steven's Courtship (1909), The Prince of Ur (1915), the Surname Book and Racial History (1918), and The Life Story of Brigham Young (1930).

John Steven's Courtship was published in 1909, and is said to have been Susa's favorite work, although there is no written record as to why this might have been her personal preference. According to her younger sister Mabel, "She was proud of all her literary creations, but she believed, if

any of them was worth more to her and her people, it would have to be John Steven's Courtship."<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after its release, John Steven's Courtship was adopted by the General Board of the Mutual Improvement Association as part of their annual reading program which was designed to expose young adults, not only to great literature of the world but to a fledgling Mormon literature as well.

For many years past it has been my custom to speak . . . of the possibilities of a home literature for the Mormon people. For there are such possibilities . . . The time will certainly come when "Mormonism" will produce a great literature . . . Amongst the many stories and books founded upon Mormon life and history, and one that stands out pre-eminently as the best yet produced by any home writer is undoubtedly "John Steven's Courtship," by Susa Young Gates . . .<sup>8</sup>

It is easy to appreciate why the Board of the Mutual Improvement Association chose this novel to be disseminated among the youth of the church. Although it was written as a romance, it also provided poignant vignettes of early Mormon history. Susa wove together factual segments of Utah's early social history with fictional accounts of military history, and depicted the invasion of Johnston's Army and other historical events as they may have occurred when the Saints first entered the Great Salt Lake Valley. The central character of the book was a young soldier by the name of John Stevens. A large man who said little, John

Stevens exhibited a sterling character through his noble deeds. Susa also created two fictional female characters whose lives were directly related to the valiant Stevens. Diantha Winthrop and Ellen Tyler were depicted as polar opposites in looks and temperament, and John Stevens was ultimately faced with the prospect of having to choose between the two women. His choice was, of course, the wisest possible decision, and he would eventually triumph in love, in battle, and in life.

Susa also utilized the plot and setting of John Steven's Courtship to describe many customs of the Mormon's pioneer era in such a way as to glorify the early life of the Saints. This was an effort, perhaps, to perpetuate a pristine value system that was seen by many as being superior to the contemporary practices of modern Mormon society. Throughout the storyline, she also brought to bear many of Brigham Young's favorite witticisms, adroitly deifying the Mormon leader in a most subtle fashion.

Although John Steven's Courtship does not rank as an exceptional literary work when measured against standard non-Mormon criteria, it should be considered for its efforts to contribute to the burgeoning Mormon literature that took shape at the end of the nineteenth century. A Mormon reviewer made the following observations about John Steven's Courtship shortly after its publication:

. . . the book gives lasting pleasure to a large number; it contains plenty of truth, of beauty, and of active good to make it thoroughly worthwhile; and it leaves a kind of wholesome and fine feeling, and a determination to live a better life, in the mind of one who reads it.<sup>9</sup>

Susa's second major work of creative fiction, The Prince of Ur, was considered by many to be her most effective literary effort. Originally printed in the Relief Society Magazine in 1915, The Prince of Ur was later published as a novel by Bookcraft Publishers in 1945, twelve years after Susa's death. The story weaves together a religious theme depicting the events of a character name Abram, who returns to Ur, the town where he was raised, after spending two decades in exile. Upon his arrival, Abram discovers that he is but one of a very small number of townspeople who still embraces faith in the true God of the Hebrews. Although there is a rather compelling sub-plot involving his love of two engaging kinswomen, the central focus of the book involves not so much the process of Abram's decision to choose between his love of the two women but rather to choose faith in the true God of his people. At the climax of the story, Abram is also faced with the painful decision of having to offer human sacrifice, or die at the hands of an evil god, Nimrod. Abram is spared, of course, by divine intervention, and he flees Ur accompanied

by the people he loves who, like him, are now true believers.

Far more than just a story about a young man who succeeds in achieving spiritual prosperity, The Prince of Ur was a pointed illustration of the relationship between Mormonism and ancient Hebrew culture. The characters of Abram and Nimrod, as well as the setting of Ur, can be found in the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>10</sup> Mormons likened themselves to the Biblical Hebrews and the "New Israel". First prophet Joseph Smith strongly identified with Hebrew folkways and many Mormon practices were inspired by Hebrew culture, such as the Melchizedek Priesthood and polygamy. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had all taken concubines and fathered a vast progeny. Perhaps one of the most striking features of the Book of Mormon was its similarity to Hebrew scripture.<sup>11</sup> It is not remarkable that Susa would draw upon such scriptures to develop context for her novel.

Some common themes are developed throughout both John Steven's Courtship and The Prince of Ur. Perhaps the most obvious is "the story of triumph of good over evil by a man who comes from a downtrodden people."<sup>12</sup> A second theme centers around a tension that emerges between two women of diverse characters with somewhat competing interests.



Perhaps this second recurring theme is representative of Susa's own intellectual and emotional duality.

John Steven's Courtship and The Prince of Ur were examples of Susa's more creative endeavors, but she also published two books of wide significance that differed from her previous efforts. One being a biography of her famous father, and the other being a compilation of her extensive genealogical research. In 1918, Susa published the Surname Book and Racial History, which became an important work with regard to the study of family lineages. The book was a voluminous effort (576 pages of text), that traced hundreds of surnames common to Utah, as well as various other parts of the world, and provided accompanying family histories. From 1914 until 1922, a uniform course of study in genealogy had been offered by the General Board of the Relief Society, and the Surname Book served as a tremendous aid in that effort, given that no previous work of its kind existed.<sup>13</sup> The Surname Book and Racial History was a marked departure from Susa's previous works. Essentially, it was an inclusive compilation of vast genealogical inquiry, not a creative piece of fiction that developed plot, theme, and characters. It was, however, an invaluable tool for the study of family history in the West and helped to establish Susa as a leading pioneer in the study of genealogy.

Because Susa was often considered to be a favorite of her father, having served as his confidante and personal secretary for some time, she had been approached by family and friends for many years to author a biography of Brigham Young. Whenever asked about the possibility of writing the life story of her father, Susa would compare the long and arduous task of constructing such a work with "a molehill trying to write about a mountain."<sup>14</sup> In 1913, Susa became critically ill and was forced to reduce her demanding personal and professional schedules, and would spend many months convalescing. During her long recovery, and for the next several years after she had regained her health, Susa would jot down anecdotes of her life with Brigham Young, and recount many episodes involving the complicated Mormon leader which had never been published. For years, she would store her scribble reminiscences in a large box, in no particular order or sequence. After Susa retired from the General Board of the Relief Society in 1922, she began to approach the task of writing The Life Story of Brigham Young with more organized focus. By 1925, with the help of her oldest daughter Leah Widstoe, Susa had meticulously constructed a rough draft of the eventual biography.

Susa's voluminous manuscript addressing the life and achievements of her famous father was originally comprised of two volumes. Leah, who had been assigned the primary

responsibility of editing the work, traveled to New York City in the Spring of 1926 to secure an editor. She was told by Fannie Hurst of MacMillian Company that the manuscript suffered two fatal flaws: it was far too long, and far too religious to entice a significant audience outside of the Mormon community. It would be another five years until Susa and Leah could settle on terms with MacMillian Company that would finally see Brigham Young's life story in print.

In 1930, The Life Story of Brigham Young was finally published. It is estimated that the biography of Susa's father was her most widely-read work. Overall, the book was well received upon its release. Not surprisingly, however, its sharpest criticism came from Gentiles who felt sure that Brigham Young's devoted daughter perceived her father to be a Mormon demigod, and could not possibly provide a realistic treatment of a man who surely must have suffered from flaws intrinsic to all mortals.

This life of her father by Susa Young Gates is not an impartial or adequate biography of the prodigious founder of Utah. Mrs. Gates is too much of a missionary writing a tract. She is too bent on justifying, not to say whitewashing, the "old billy goat"--as he was sometimes known by his not-loving friends. In writing thus, dutiful daughter Susa reduces the stature of a splendid autocrat, a magnificent roughneck . . . Though Mrs. Gates is often more of a propagandist than a historian, she contributes new personal material, and it is well to have a life of Brigham Young for the general reader from the Mormon standpoint. . .

Mrs. Gates' account of the home life of the Lion House and the Bee Hive is interesting but a little short of convincing.<sup>15</sup>

Susa's greatest contribution to Mormon society as a writer, however, may not have derived so much from her role as an author of novels but rather from her position as editor. Her powerful positions at the Young Woman's Journal and The Relief Society Magazine provided her with two mighty vehicles for disseminating her own views, and those of her Mormon sisters. On many occasions, Susa also utilized her editorial positions to foster the official views of the church, as well.

Although Susa addressed a wide range of subjects in her articles, a consistent theme throughout much of her editorial writing was the role of women in a myriad of contexts. Susa addressed the role of women in the church, in the home, in the work place, and in society, at large. Throughout her life, Susa rejected, both in public and private, the popular image of women as weak and dependent, and utilized her pen and powerful editorial position to promote an image of female strength and intelligence. She also continued to proclaim that Mormon women enjoyed more rights than most women.<sup>16</sup>

Susa was extremely active in Republican politics during this time, at both the local and state levels, and she established the Young Women's Journal in 1889, serving as

its editor for forty years. During most of her career, and especially during the latter part of her life, Susa utilized both her editorial power and literary skill to encourage young people to contribute their time and talent to the service of church and community. Many of the articles she published in the Young Women's Journal, Relief Society Magazine, the Improvement Era, and the Juvenile Instructor, were direct calls to action, geared toward the Mormon youth—particularly young women.<sup>17</sup>

Susa's role as writer and editor was significant to the Mormon community in which she lived. Her creative writing helped to foster a burgeoning Mormon literature steeped in religious symbolism, and her editorial capacity allowed her to disseminate her ideas to a widely dispersed Mormon audience.

#### Systematizing Kinship in the Kingdom of God

Susa established herself in another significant area that left its mark on Mormon culture. She was a substantial force in the effort to expand and systematize the field of genealogy. Mormonism necessitates a religious obligation between the living and the dead, because deceased family members who lived prior to the advent of Mormonism are eligible for elevation to higher levels of the afterlife if

temple rites are performed by their living descendants, therefore tracing family lineage is a vital function.<sup>18</sup>

Susa was acclaimed as the founder of modern Mormon genealogical research, devising the card indexing system used for recording the temple work that had been done on a family. With the assistance of Mormon sister Elizabeth McCune, Susa spent several years investigating various genealogical libraries in an effort to develop a model for systematic research that could be used for temple work. It was a system that was eventually adopted by the church genealogical organization. Beginning in 1914, Susa was responsible for organizing major conventions in Salt Lake City that hosted a variety of workshops addressing the newest techniques in genealogical research and record-keeping.

As early as 1898, Susa was distinguishing herself as a semi-professional historian and genealogist. During that year she organized the first society of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Utah, and later in 1904, she served as President of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers where she created the concept that would eventually become the famous Hall of Relics. In 1903 Susa and Jacob spent a year in New York City in order for Jacob to serve a one-year mission to the New England states. During this period, Susa spent much of her time visiting libraries and museums, further

developing her genealogical skills. When they returned to Utah, Susa and Jacob removed from Provo and settled in Salt Lake City where Susa began to organize weekly genealogical classes that were held in a variety of locations, such as the Lion House, the Latter-day Saints Academy, and even Brigham Young University back in Provo.

Three years after Susa was appointed to the General Board of the Relief Society, she was successful in persuading her sisters on the board to incorporate the study of genealogy as part of the women's Guide lessons. The Relief Society Guide was a thirty-one page publication sponsored by the Relief Society, and designed to provide stakes with a uniform course of study for Mormon women. Susa was the editor of the Guide which was published in January of 1914.<sup>19</sup>

In April of 1923, Susa established the women's biography division of the genealogical society by invitation of the General Board of the Genealogical Society of Utah, and she designed classes to help those who wanted to record their family histories. She was appointed director of the Genealogical Society of Utah's Library and Research Department of the Deseret News for over twenty-five years. She wrote the first Mormon genealogical treatise, Surname Book and Racial History, published in 1918 by the General Board of the Relief Society. The work traced hundreds of

surnames common to Utah, and provided some accompanying histories. During her lifetime, Susa was a member of the New England Historic and Genealogical Society, the London Society of Genealogists, she was an honorary member of the California Genealogical Society, and an associate member of the National Genealogical Society in Washington, D.C.<sup>20</sup>

It is perhaps important to point out that although tracing family lineage is significant to Mormons for religious purposes, much of Mormon genealogical research is more or less "amateur history, basically chronicle and vignette, not interpretation; its skeleton is kinship, not politics or economics, and it is unreservedly uncritical."<sup>21</sup>

Susa's contribution to the study of genealogy was extensive. She contributed countless hours to temple work, and her voluminous Surname Book was the first compendium of its kind in Utah. The many courses she designed in family record-keeping provided Mormons with the ability to seal their deceased loved ones into eternal life--perhaps one of the most distinctive features of Mormon theology.

#### The Private Life of the Public Mrs. Gates

While her public pursuits gave rise to a number of worthy accomplishments, Susa would experience both triumph and tragedy in her personal life. The jewel in her crown of



personal achievement was her marriage to Jacob Gates on 5 January 1880. Jacob was a devout Mormon, and a loving husband and father. He was considered by many to be "a man of sterling integrity, simple and domestic in his tastes, a wide reader, and a keen observer,"<sup>22</sup> and his life with Susa seems to have been the model of marital success. Perhaps most important to the independent Susa, was Jacob's unyielding tolerance of her multiple commitments to church, community, and family. Susa enjoyed ceaseless support and encouragement from her patient and understanding husband.

Twelve years after they were married, Susa and Jacob settled in Provo, where they raised their growing family. Between 1880 and 1896, the couple had eleven children, seven of whom would die in either in infancy, or early childhood.<sup>23</sup> Because Susa had been effectively denied the legal opportunity to raise her two children by Alma Dunford, she was particularly devoted to the rearing of her second family. In addition to the eleven children she had with Jacob Gates, and the two with Alma Dunford, Susa also suffered six miscarriages.

Susa's life was marred by tragedy on many occasions, losing several of her children in tragic accidents, or as the consequence of illness. Joseph Sterling who had been born in Hawaii in 1886 was only five years old when he died. Sarah Beulah, born in 1891, was also a young child when she

was accidentally shot to death by a gun that was presumably unloaded and had been used as a prop in a family play. Heber died the day he was born in 1894, and Brigham Cecil who was born in 1887, died at three years of age after ingesting poison from a candy wrapper. Jacob and Karl were killed in a freak accident while the Gates' were on a second mission to Hawaii in 1887, and Bailey, Susa's son from her marriage to Alma Dunford, was killed in an explosion in 1885 while working in a powder factory in Butte, Montana.

In an essay addressing Susa's life, the comment was made without clarification, that she did not attend Bailey's funeral.<sup>24</sup> The absence of an explanation invites the implication that Susa was a dispassionate mother. The circumstances affecting Bailey's legal and emotional relationship with his mother are far too complex to intimate that Susa did not experience intense grief when he died. The same author indicated that after his death, "no comment about Bailey has been found in any of her [Susa's] papers."<sup>25</sup> Again, there is the implication that Susa was able to extinguish the memory of her son with little effort. It seems markedly oversimplified, if not somewhat irresponsible, to imply that Susa experienced anything less than agony when Bailey died. That she did not, or could not, attend her son's funeral may have been a consequence of

many circumstances that may never be realized by subsequent historians.

Because Susa projected an image of strength and fortitude, it seemed inconsistent with her powerful personality that she suffered from so many inexplicable fears. Susa was frightened by death, and suffered unreasonable anxiety from her fear of the dark, physical danger, animals, and the devil.<sup>26</sup> In an article she wrote in 1920 entitled, "The Deadly Foes of the Night," Susa described her fear of the darkness, ". . . when you wake . . . with a sudden panic of heart-strangling fright, or lie sleepless through the night fighting the good fight of faith against fear, prayer against evil . . ." <sup>27</sup> She once refused to enter a house in Idaho when she discovered a murder had been committed there ten years earlier. Susa's fear of death seems particularly paradoxical given her heralded faith in the spiritual afterlife, but perhaps she feared her mortal mistakes would prevent a heavenly reward. Her final comments before dying addressed her distress over the Dunford divorce, Hal's fall from the faith, and the fact the Leah had not been sealed to her in temple rites.

While Susa vocally and vehemently proclaimed her commitment to home and hearth, her public pursuits necessitated that she be separated from her family for extensive periods of time. Although she personally juggled

family, career and religious obligations, in 1916 she publicly admonished young women to conserve their energies, and not overwork to the point of nervous exhaustion. "No woman will be justified before God, angels, or men, who crowds herself daily to the breaking point and beyond it, no matter how good her motive, nor how unselfish the labor she may be engaged in."<sup>28</sup>

Susa was described by family and friends in a variety of ways, but a common profile emerged when defining Susa Young Gates. She was often considered to be vain and overconfident, impatient, short-tempered and painfully direct. "Mrs. Gates had a knack of sizing up a situation quickly, finding an answer, and accomplishing something before many persons were clear as to just what the issues really were."<sup>29</sup> It should be noted, however, that Susa was also considered to be forthright and honest, invincibly faithful to the gospel, and modestly self-deprecating.

Susa was often the exemplar of contradiction -- a contradiction that may well have been born of the duality that characterized the lives of many women enmeshed in an irresolute society, and indicative of the broader American culture during the latter part of the nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Social mores regarding the rights and responsibilities of women began to shift during this period, and the change in direction often resulted in what appeared

to be capriciousness as women fumbled for some sense of identity that could reconcile personal needs with public expectations. Susa also fumbled with identity. She was born not only into an era of change, but a revolutionary religious community, as well. She was raised in a household that served as the social experiment of the modern world, and she was blessed and cursed with a strong mind, and an equally strong will.

## NOTES

1. "Hail and Farewell," Young Woman's Journal (October, 1929) XL, 677.

2. When one of her grand-daughters, Lurene Gates Wilkinson was a young girl, she had occasion to hear her grandmother give a lecture at the school she attended. Mrs. Wilkinson remembers Susa's appearance as being a bit old-fashioned, with her hair pulled back ever so delicately in a tight knot, and her attire quite out of step with the current fashions. But as soon as the elderly Mrs. Gates began to speak, within a matter of moments, she held the young girls spellbound by her charm, wit and humor. Interview with Lurene Wilkinson, conducted by the author in Salt Lake City, 18 January 1995.

3. See Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985), 365.

4. The Act was fully cited in a letter Susa received from the Attorney General of Utah, Harvey Cluff, in March of 1923. Cluff was responding to a letter Susa had issued requesting information pertaining to the rights and privileges of women in Utah for her manuscript, Women in History. "Susa Young Gates Collection" (hereafter cited at SYGC), Utah State Historical Society (hereafter cited at USHS), box 3, folder 3.

5. Ralph V. Chamberlain, The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850-1950 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1960), 76.

6. "Leah Eudora Dunford Widstoe Papers" (1874-1965), Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Call no. 10827.

7. Mabel Y. Sanborn, younger sister of Susa Gates, in a personal interview conducted by R. Paul Cracroft in April, 1949. See R. Paul Cracroft, "Susa Young Gates: Her Life and Her Work" (Master's thesis., University of Utah, 1958).

8. Osborne J.P. Widstoe, "John Steven's Courtship," (review) Young Woman's Journal (March, 1911) XXII, 156-7.

9. Ibid.

10. Gen. 10:6-12, 11:28-31, 15:7 (King James Version).

11. See John L. Brooke, The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 213. See also, Jan Shipps, Mormonism: The Story of a new Religious Tradition (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 35-36.

12. Cracroft, Chap. 3, "Mrs. Gates as Novelist," p. 2.

13. History of the Relief Society, 1842-1966 (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Relief Society, 1966), 99.

14. Susa Young Gates as cited in Cracroft, Cap. VI, 2.

15. Arthur Warner, New York Herald Tribune Books (Dec. 7, 1930), 30.

16. Susa Young Gates, "A Message From a Woman of the Latter-day Saints to the Women in All the World," Improvement Era, (April, 1907), 447-62.

17. See, for example, the following articles written by Susa Young Gates: "Why Was the Manifesto Issued?" Young Women's Journal (March, 1893) IV, 275-8; "Editor's Department," Young Women's Journal (June, 1894) V, 448; "What is Modern Education Doing for the Modern Girl?" Young Women's Journal (June, 1895) VI, 408; "The Red Cross," Relief Society Magazine (Sep. 1917) IV, 498; "Suffrage Won By the Mothers of the United States," Relief Society Magazine (May, 1920) VII, 254 and; "Union Forever," Improvement Era (Nov., 1929) XXXIII, 50.

18. See Mark Leone, Chapter Eight, "The Uses of History," in The Roots of Modern Mormonism (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 194-209.

19. History of the Relief Society, 1842-1966 (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Relief Society, 1966), 96.

20. John A. Widstoe, "Sketch of Susa Young Gates," typescript, SYGC, USHS, box 1, folder 6.

21. Leone, 194.

22. Andrew Jensen (comp.), LDS Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 2:625.

23. For a complete listing of Susa's offspring see, "Brigham Young Genealogy," The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine (July, 1920) XI, 132-33, by Susa Young Gates and Mabel Y. Sanborn.

24. Rebecca Foster Cornwall, "Susa Y. Gates" in Vicky Burgess-Olson, ed., Sister Saints (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 72.

25. Ibid.

26. Both Mabel Young Sanborn, Susa's younger sister, and Leah Widstoe, Susa's daughter, confirmed Susa's phobias in interviews conducted by R. Paul Cracroft in April of 1949 when he was researching material for his Master's thesis addressing Susa's literary achievements.

27. Susa Young Gates, "The Deadly Foes of the Night," Relief Society Magazine (Oct., 1920) VII, 592.

28. Susa Young Gates, "Are You Conserving Yourself?" Relief Society Magazine 4 (October 1917), 580.

29. Cracroft, 30. Susa's daughters, Emma Lucy Bowen and Leah Dunford Widstoe, acknowledged their mothers' shortcomings in an interview conducted by Cracroft in April of 1949.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE LEGACY OF SUSA YOUNG GATES

Susa's life was exceptional. It was anything but typical, and it did not represent the common experience of women of the period, but examining the life of Susa Young Gates is significant for many reasons. Her educational experiences provide an example of 'schooling' during the pioneer years of Mormon settlement in the Great Salt Lake Valley. While Susa's educational opportunities were shaped by privileges not available to all Mormons, they do provide a model of education in Utah where Mormons enjoyed the advantage of being a close-knit religious culture with a felt need to provide educational opportunities for their young. This glimpse of early education in Utah may also have been typical of other rural and remote areas in the intermountain West during the last half of the nineteenth century.

Like some other faiths, the Mormon used education as a protective shield against the seductive liberalism of the dominant American culture, and certainly the efforts of Protestant denominations to win converts from among the Mormons in Utah contributed to win the Saint's educational and cultural concerns. The onslaught of denominational

schools, and the perceived threat of public education, served as an incentive to establish the LDS Church School System as a means of counteracting the influence of these Gentile assaults.

Perhaps one of the finest scholarly treatments of the development of Mormonism is provided by historian, Thomas O'Dea, in his 1957 work, The Mormons. Not only does O'Dea define the circumstances of Mormonism as a religious movement, but he also suggests that several internal and external tensions contributed to the development of a distinctive Mormon culture. He identifies one of those tensions as the strain that emerged between Mormon family ideals, and concept of equality of women.<sup>1</sup>

Examining Susa's life provides a concrete example of the friction between those two Mormon axioms.

The life of Susa Young Gates also serves as a model of the intellectual and emotional struggle that many driven yet obedient women experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries--a time of fundamental change for society and women. Born in the confines of a Mormon faith that was coming to grips with an emergence from geographical isolation to greater contact with the mainstream of United States society, Susa would find her life affected by the protective envelope of Mormonism and the accelerating flux of American culture. Caught in the swirl of events which

allowed her considerable though limited activity in the Mormon framework, she strove to be an influential force within that framework and the broader culture, as well.

Not unlike other prominent, successful, and strong-willed women of this period, Susa seems to have been affected by her powerful father as a role model. Distinct from these other women, however, the unique circumstance of polygamy which exposed Susa to a number of influential female role models that dramatically shaped Susa's perception of herself, as well as the world in which she lived and worked. Although it seems clear that Susa experienced frustration, it may not have been too different from that felt by her non-Mormon sisters of the same time period. Women of this era were confronted by resistance as they sought to realize their professional potential.<sup>2</sup>

Aware and respectful of her sisters in the non-Mormon community, Susa Young Gates was personally acquainted with Susan B. Anthony and labored for the women's suffrage movement. This advocacy for the vote was one of those curious aspects where the Mormons were far in advance of the mainstream culture. Whether Mormons had embraced this reform early on for reasons of political power in Utah or not becomes less important in this study of Susa's life, than the opportunity the reform afforded her to develop into a prominent social activist. Inasmuch as this was an

acceptable area of Mormon activity, it provided one more public platform for the ambitious Mrs. Gates.

Pursuing the cause of suffrage was an area of freedom allowed Mormon women outside of the domestic spheres of housework and motherhood. Broader American culture reluctantly moved toward allowing women a place in life outside of the home, as well, but the initial steps had to be seen as extensions of domestic life, or part of the quality of woman's nature in order to be socially sanctioned. The first acceptable arenas that emerged were church work, education, and health care, because these spheres could be seen as compatible with the nurturing instincts of women. The frontier experience of Mormon women, however, in combination with the missionary efforts of their men-folk, seems to have necessitated a greater range of independent activity by Mormon women.

Susa's professional efforts remained within areas deemed acceptable as extensions of women's spheres. She organized the Music Department at Brigham Young Academy in 1878 under the sponsorship of her mentor, Karl Maeser. Not only had music been an important feature of Brigham Young's household, and an integral component of the Mormon faith, but the study of music had also been an area allowed to women for generations because it was seen as a compliment to a husband and family, and did not pose a threat to a male-

dominated culture. Creating the Domestic Science Department at Brigham Young Academy can be seen in the same light--as an acceptable sphere of female activity. These efforts may suggest a confining aspect of Mormon culture, but they may have differed little from the gender restrictions imposed on mainstream American women.

Women of the era, both Mormon and Gentile, were allowed limited access to the opportunities available to males in the society. Acceptable roles for women outside of the home were restricted, and frequently mirrored domestic tasks, or those functions that were believed to be suitable to the feminine nature. Women were permitted to be the care-givers and nurturers because they were wives and mothers. It seemed a natural extension to expand women's maternal capabilities into the schools. Given this reasoning, women were permitted to enter the classroom possibly because they had always been entrusted with the duty of being the transmitters of culture and values to their children. It is also probable that women were allowed to enter the teaching field because it was economically expedient to enable males to pursue careers of greater value to society. This broad social pattern was true for society as a whole, however, not just Mormon society. Susa was permitted a greater range of activities, not only as a consequence of the special circumstances of the frontier existence in Utah during the

early stages of settlement, but also because of her family heritage and her own personal drive and ambition.

These areas of activity deemed acceptable for women to pursue, permitted them access to broader areas of human society, such as social work, suffrage and church work. Given a window of opportunity, Susa was able to make significant contributions to her community, and beyond. She may have smarted from frustration caused by the social and religious restrictions of her day, but Susa's feelings of disappointment were probably not considerably different from those experienced by non-Mormon women of her generation. Whether she operated within the confines prescribed by her faith willingly, or with reluctance may not be discernible, but she clearly left sufficient evidence of her many achievements. Susa contributed mightily within any arena she could penetrate. Quite possibly being the daughter of Brigham Young created expectations within her that, she too, was called on to provide leadership to her community. Feeling born to lead may have been both a burden and a springboard, but Susa appears to have managed the duality well, and she shines as a star of her family, gender, and her religious community.

The life of Susa Young Gates clamors for additional investigation. There are countless questions yet to be answered, and inconsistencies that require clarification.

One such conundrum is the relationship that existed between Susa and her famous father. The two are often portrayed as being extremely close. This would seem a difficult accomplishment, if only from the standpoint that Brigham Young's public obligations prevented him from spending a great deal of time with his family. It would also seem that Brigham Young's great number of offspring precluded him from lavishing special attention on any one child. Although the Mormon leader died when Susa was only twenty-one years old, if their relationship had, in fact, been one of great closeness, why was Susa unaware that her father had founded an academy of higher learning in Provo? She was first informed of the institution in which she would eventually matriculate by a family friend, and the revelation came three years after the school had been established.

In her personal papers, Susa described an episode that occurred shortly before her father's death, and bespeaks volumes of the emotional and familial dynamic that existed between the Kingdom Builder of Mormondom, and one of his most adoring children.

. . . I perhaps took advantage of his mellow sympathy . . . and went to ask him for financial help. I was in some considerable trouble at the time, and he had answered me rather sharply because as I found afterwards, several of the girls and one of his own sons had just preceded me with far more insistent requests and demands upon his resources. I said nothing. How could you say anything to father? Nobody ever answered father

back . . . I took the train the next day to go to Bear Lake with my little children beside me. When the train left Brigham City father happened to be there with my brother John W. and he must have seen my face in the window, for he wanted to speak with me outside. I would not go. John W. came again and I refused. The third time he told me that he would pick me up and carry me out if I did not mind and so I went along with my little Leah beside me and my baby in my arms. When I reached father's carriage he drew me up beside him and took me in his arms and kissed me and blessed me and healed all the hurt that he had made before although he did not mention it, or did I.<sup>3</sup>

Another circumstance that stands in contradiction of the close ties that presumably bound Susa to her father, is why she found it necessary to elope with Alma Dunford at such an early age. The entire episode of her early marriage, and more importantly, her lifelong attempt to deal with its aftermath, is another enigma that invokes thorough and thoughtful examination. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Susa suffered the shame of her divorce well into her later life, if not into her grave. As late as 1928, when Susa was a mature woman of seventy-two, in a letter to her son-in-law regarding the publication of an article she had written, her disgrace and discomfort was still apparent:

Of course, you know the one thing I disliked was the use of Leah's maiden name, especially since I was mentioned as her mother. This sets people guessing and asking questions at once, which is not very agreeable to me. However, I suppose I must pay my own price always for my past mistakes, and it wasn't a mistake when it brought Leah to my arms and heart.<sup>4</sup>



Begging forgiveness of Dr. Dunford was one of the last utterances made by Susa on her deathbed.

The circumstances surrounding the Dunford divorce require further examination for other reasons, as well. It would seem that the trauma of such a public failure transformed young and impetuous (if somewhat spoiled) daughter of Brigham Young into a thoughtful and conscientious member of the Mormon community. It is in the years directly after her divorce from Dunford that Susa underwent a major transformation into a socially aware and civically responsible adult. There also appears to be a relationship between this positive transformation, and Susa's experience at Brigham Young Academy. Being exposed to the liberating and enlightening effects of the educational climate of the academy seems to have awakened a hunger and appreciation for ideas in Susa. Having been seized by this hunger, Susa constantly reflected a drive to actively serve the educational needs of her community. She would spend almost her entire adult life involved in education as a student, teacher, or trustee.

The image of Susa Young Gates, whether real or created by a society desperately in need of role models, served as an important example for many Mormon women of succeeding generations. Susa was remarkable in many ways. She exuded boundless energy, and was unswerving in her faith, yet she

could also contradict herself and confound those around her. Susa's comments sometimes revealed a sort of reasoned insanity, where blatant contradiction seemed as natural as taking a breath. While she has often been described as a contradiction in terms, for a woman who committed her energies to such a wide array of causes, Susa was actually quite capable of connecting the various elements of her life to form a unified whole. Her ability to write supported her to publish views on women, and her views on women represented both a personal urge and a societal aim.

Susa's diversity of interests indicated her truest of talents-- she was, first and foremost and educator. As a suffragist, she educated people about the rights and potential of women; as a genealogist, she taught people to record their past and prepare for the afterlife; as a writer, she taught the Mormon people, particularly young Mormon women, all areas vital to the enhancement of the culture. Above all else, as a Mormon, Susa committed her life to teaching the meaning of the gospel.

There is a perception that Susa suffered from the confining aspects of a chauvinistic culture, and that her sometimes erratic behavior was a consequence of a restrictive environment. It is, however, all too easy to blame a male dominated society for the limitations imposed on Susa's life. She operated within a social structure that

paralleled most societies of the world. It is more probable that Susa exhibited the volatile behaviors typical of individuals who share a passion for life and knowledge, and spend their mortal existence balancing between the surrender to faith, and the chaos borne of unyielding questions. Let there be no doubt, however, that in each battle that ensued between Susa's gnawing desire for independence, and the restrictive provisions imposed by her religion, her faith emerged victorious every time.

Susa's life is best defined as a confluence of subservient faith and independent spirit. While Susa Young Gates represents a model of the independent, Mormon woman who lived during the interchange of two centuries, it must be remembered that she was an exceptional individual, born into privilege, with unique talents and purpose that contributed to her success in social welfare, editorial work, genealogy, and education. Impelled or inspired by the fame of her father, Susa confidently made her mark on many of the institutions that serviced the Mormon's 'Kingdom of God' on earth. Editor and educator, wife and mother, Susa proved to be a woman of ambition and accomplishment. That she had to operate within limits prescribed by her generation and her faith, makes her many achievements only more remarkable.

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1. Thomas O'Dea, The Mormons (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 249-50.

2. See Barbara Kuhn Campbell, The "Liberated" Woman of 1914: Prominent Women in the Progressive Era (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms Research Press, 1979); Allen Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Marjorie Housepian Dobkin, The Making of a Feminist: Early Journals and Letters of M. Carey Thomas (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1979); Ellen Lagemann, A Generation of Women: Education in the Lives of Progressive Reformers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979) and; Kathryn Kish Sklar, Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

3. Susa Young Gates Collection (hereafter cited as SYGC), Utah State Historical Society (hereafter cited as USHS), box 1, folder 5, p. 7.

4. Susa Young Gates, letter dated 7 January 1928 to John A. Widstoe. SYGC, USHS, box 2.

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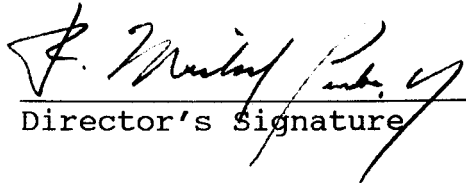
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

30 January 1996  
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