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“PROUD TO SEND THOSE PARACHUTES OFF”:
CENTRAL UTAH’S ROSIES DURING WORLD WAR II

by

Amanda Sue Midgley Borneman

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

Brigham Young University

August 2006

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

“PROUD TO SEND THOSE PARACHUTES OFF”: CENTRAL UTAH’S ROSIES DURING WORLD WAR II

Amanda Sue Midgley Borneman

Department of History

Master of Arts

World War II affected individuals across the nation, both on the home front and on the front lines. Manti, Utah received a new industry, a parachute plant, in connection with the war. Hundreds of women from Sanpete County and neighboring counties were employed through the duration of the war in everything from sewing and inspection to supervision of production. Some of the women utilized childcare facilities, some formed a union, and many found community and familial support. For many of them, this wartime wage work provided a welcomed alternative to the work usually found in rural areas, such as farm work, housework, and café work. Women were primarily motivated to work out of patriotic duty and economic opportunity.

In many wartime industries, women were in previously male-dominated occupations and lost their jobs at the conclusion of the war. In contrast, the parachute plant offered its women workers the opportunity to continue working when the plant

began manufacturing clothing after the war, and the surrounding rural community was largely supportive of its working women.

This study makes a case for the long-term impact of wartime work upon individual women. Work experience outside the home affected the women's estimation and definition of themselves. The war period was a crucial event in women's lives, not just an important passing stage. Oral histories allow interpretation in the context of their adult lives from a long-term perspective. By delving into community and family situations and looking at these women on an individualized basis in the long-term, this study goes deeper than surveys and makes substantive contributions to our understanding of the war's influence.

The period of wartime work, when viewed in the long-term context of the women's lives, was significant especially in that women had additional economic resources at their disposal and acquired new-found confidence and skills. Women's work experiences provoked desire for future work and served as a source of confidence to them. Personal, individualized victories for women, often ignored or concealed by aggregate statistics on women's work during and immediately following the war, were a reality for women in Manti and likely elsewhere in America.

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I was fortunate to enjoy the cooperation of several people in regard to source material for Manti's working women. Antonette C. Noble and Don Norton generously shared their research. Many people in Manti and surrounding communities were helpful and interested in the project, and I am especially indebted to several women and their families who were willing to share their life stories with me.

I owe a special thanks to my family as well. My parents and grandparents always encouraged my love of learning and were my enthusiastic supporters. And most of all I thank my husband Dustin, who has been there every step of the way, reading drafts, helping with interviews, and sustaining me when I needed it the most. It is to him that I dedicate this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Alice Fredricksen Clark worked on her family's farm in rural, central Utah from the time she was a small girl. She helped with the crops, harvested hay, and worked with livestock. On the eve of World War II, she was a young, married woman in her early twenties who now worked on her and her husband's farm. Farm work was what Alice knew best, but she had always found it hard and wanted something that would reward wages for her efforts. She disliked being enclosed by the four walls of her small home all winter long when farm work was slow. When Alice learned that a parachute company located in the nearby community of Manti was looking for women workers, she applied and was hired. Her wages were considered good for rural Utah, and she used her money for desired household conveniences. Alice's younger brother was in the Air Force at the time, and this fact gave her an increased motivation to support the war effort through her wartime work. When the war ended, Alice continued to work at the factory as it moved into the peacetime manufacture of clothing.¹

Several historians have debated the impact of such work on women like Alice and argued in a variety of ways for the war period's importance when examining the history of working women. Beginning in the early 1970s, scholars began addressing questions about the short- or long-range impact of the World War II on women's work

¹ Alice Fredricksen Clark, interview by author, 17 September 2005, Centerfield, Utah, transcript of digital recording in author's possession.

opportunities and about the subsequent significance of the World War II period in understanding the women's movements of later decades. Studies often focus primarily on urban areas and exclusively address women who worked in previously male-dominated industries such as shipbuilding or steel-working.² As a result, much has been done in the aggregate—large cities, huge wartime operations, and nationwide statistics—but comparatively little has been done in terms of smaller areas, lesser-known industries, and individual impact. I examine a small rural community's parachute factory that continued to employ women even after the war, and I argue that women's wartime working experiences were motivated by economic factors and patriotic duty and provoked community and family support. Work experiences during the war proved significant for individual women in a variety of ways, especially in the long-term. It was a defining time in their lives as many continued to derive a sense of pride and accomplishment from their experiences, and several continued to work after the war as well.

The first wave of historiography to examine working women during World War II was shaped by historian William Chafe's argument that the war represented a watershed in twentieth-century women's history. His 1972 study examined "the American woman" from the granting of suffrage in 1920 until 1970 and traced the changing social, economic and political roles of women. Though he admitted that the 1940s did not make women and men economically equal and problems for women in the workplace persisted, he

² For examples of urban studies with emphases on male-dominated industries see Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981); Alan Clive, "Women Workers in World War II: Michigan as a Test Case," *Labor History* (Winter 1979): 44-72; and Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987).

argued that in that decade women's economic status improved more than ever before and that "an important new area of potential activity," referring to paid work, "opened up to them." Whereas at the turn of the twentieth century, most wage-earning women were young, single and lower class, fifty years later the majority of working women were married, middle-aged, and more likely to be middle class. "In the story of that dramatic change," Chafe asserted, "World War II represented a watershed event. For that reason, if for no other, the war and its aftermath constituted a milestone for women in America." As such, he saw World War II as a catalyst for changing the economic behavior of women, which in turn set in motion attitudinal changes toward woman's place and "undermine[d] the structural basis for traditional views of male and female roles."³

Chester Gregory also claimed that the war was pivotal in his 1974 study, but differed from Chafe in regard to the depth and extent of change. Gregory asserted that many women chose to work because they wanted to emancipate themselves from the home and prove to themselves and others that they could do whatever men could do. Problems caused by women working included health risks, lack of child care, lack of housing, family adjustments, occupational adjustments, and environmental adjustments. Yet overall, Gregory argued that "women employed in the defense plants demonstrated such skill and praiseworthy performance that a kind of social, economic, and psychological equality between men and women which had not existed before in

³ William H. Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 195 [quotes 1 and 2], 254-255 [quote 3]. Chafe employed aggregate statistical data to support his claims, primarily from Women's Bureau, War Department, and War Manpower Commission reports.

American society was evolved.” Social and psychological emancipation accompanied women as they broke labor traditions and helped to democratize labor.⁴

In contrast, Leila Rupp took issue with these watershed interpretations in her 1978 study, pointing instead to short-term rather than long-term gains for women as a result of wartime employment. Leila Rupp compared German and American propaganda from 1939 to 1945 regarding women and the war effort and found that the image of American women underwent major but superficial and temporary changes. The woman wartime worker was supposed to be in the workplace only temporarily and her job was glamorized and feminized, creating “a new surface image without challenging basic assumptions about peacetime sex roles.” The patriotic nature of the appeals for women to work insisted that the “war did not have to bring any basic changes to society.”⁵

Alan Clive’s 1979 study about women workers in Michigan saw continuity rather than change in the war period as well. Using statistics and newspaper reports regarding working women in these wartime factories, he concluded that Americans wanted affirmation—of their political, economic, and social orders—not change. One of the institutions that many wanted to protect was the traditional concept of womanhood,

⁴ Chester W. Gregory, *Women in Defense Work during World War II: An Analysis of the Labor Problem and Women's Rights* (Jericho, NY: Exposition Press Inc., 1974), xii. Gregory also looked mostly at government documents and aggregate statistics.

⁵ Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War – German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 155 [quote 1], 160 [quote 2]. Rupp also made an important assertion in relation to the work of Sheila Tobias and Lisa Anderson. Although their research “has shown that a majority of women wanted to keep on working after the war, this particular piece of reality played little part in the public image.” Rupp, 142 and 161. See Sheila Tobias and Lisa Anderson, “What Really Happened to Rosie the Riveter: Demobilization and the Female Labor Force, 1945-47,” MSS Modular Publications, Module 9 (1974).

resulting in failed attempts to provide adequate childcare services and the efforts of society and employers to oust women from their high-paying war jobs. Women also largely failed to grasp opportunities to unite and protest this treatment. Overall, Clive argued, “There had been no revolution in attitudes, only a series of expedient measures, often implemented grudgingly in the face of national emergency.”⁶

In a similar vein, Alice Kessler-Harris asserted that personal and economic gains and opportunities of the 1940s were mostly temporary in her 1982 history of wage-earning women in the United States. Although she admitted that Chafe’s and Gregory’s assertions were true to some extent, women were neither willing nor ready to give up their traditional family roles and “employers and male workers could not readily overcome a tradition of segmentation so closely related to masculinity.” Kessler-Harris instead viewed the milestone of change coming after the war with “the dawning recognition within families that women’s functions of cushioning depression and fighting inflation, traditionally performed by economics within the household, might be more effectively handled by wage-earning” because of the increasing economic demands on the family in the postwar years. It was in fact the generation reared in the 1950s that would challenge traditional women’s roles and really begin to fight for equal women’s rights.⁷

⁶ Clive, 70.

⁷ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982; reprint, 2003), 274 [quote 1], 299 [quote 2]. Kessler-Harris also uses aggregate statistics, including Valerie Kincaide Oppenheimer’s statistics in *The Female Labor Force in the United States: Demographic and Economic Factors Governing Its Growth and Changing Composition*, Population Monograph Series 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

Karen Anderson's research focused the historiographical agenda for the 1980s on the personal and cultural consequences of women's war work and addressed new questions of women's lives socially, both at home and on the job. Anderson claimed that labor-force statistics used by previous studies provided an incomplete picture of the social consequences of the war. She looked at wartime industries in time and place in depth by examining three major defense areas (Baltimore, Seattle, and Detroit) culturally and economically. Anderson argued that the war reinforced male roles, primarily as warrior and protector, while emphasizing traditional female roles in the home. Anxiety about marriage and family life disruption caused intensified scrutiny of women's behavior and the role of women in the family retained popular appeal. Although the wartime effort to support public child care was the largest in American history, it served a minority of working women and in actuality, many were handicapped by the inability to provide for their children, often resulting in high rates of absenteeism on the job. The conclusion of the war found women disproportionately laid off from their jobs, even though many wanted to retain their jobs in the same occupational group, as employers moved to restore prewar barriers to employment, especially for older women and women of color. Even so, Anderson found that "women's work and family responsibilities became compatible rather than antagonistic" and the "wartime experience began the process of accommodation between family and work and pointed the way to a greater degree of choice for American women."⁸

Following the new agenda exemplified by Anderson, Susan Hartmann's and D'Ann Campbell's studies on women in World War II examined home and private life in

⁸ Anderson, 174.

addition to work experiences.⁹ Hartmann looked at women in the aggregate and in the public realm, examining everything from women in the labor force, the military, education, politics, and the law to images of women in popular culture and patterns of marriage, divorce, childbearing, childrearing and housekeeping. In examining women in the labor force, Hartmann found that the jobs available for women who wanted to work after the war “represented a considerable deterioration of their wartime economic status.” She also argued that the war resulted in larger numbers of working women, especially older women, but “did little to ameliorate permanently the secondary position of women in the economy.” Yet positive outcomes such as more availability of choice and experiences in occupations outside farm and household labor benefited women as a result of wartime employment.¹⁰

Campbell claimed that studies like Chafe’s reflected the optimism of the early 1970s, whereas later scholarship like Rupp’s was more pessimistic as it became clear to feminists that traditionalism was still very powerful. Campbell ventured a somewhat different approach, however. While agreeing with the former interpretation that the war did lower certain barriers and caused disruption for women’s roles as wives and homemakers, she claimed that the war’s disruptions of home life resulted in “little scope for careerism” and oriented many toward home and family concerns. Campbell examined a variety of women during the war: military women, nurses, volunteers, union members,

⁹ Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1982); and D’Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Hartmann, 70 [quote 1], 94 [quote 2].

housewives, service families, and working women. Campbell used quantitative data, primarily polls and government data, and grouped women according to the roles they played and resources they possessed in order to argue that the public's reactions to working women "were produced primarily by their attitudes and values, especially those expressed in the interaction of women and men, rather than by material factors such as paychecks. Wartime experience did set the stage for the future, but only for the 1950s and 1960s; it did not set in motion the liberation phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s."¹¹

Maureen Honey also asked questions about cultural impact through her examination of women during the war era in two mass circulation magazines: *The Saturday Evening Post* and *True Story*. She argued that there was a direct correlation between official government policy, which desired to temporarily employ women to fuel the American war machine, and depictions of women. Honey agreed most closely with Anderson and Hartmann that continuity primarily defined the long-term effects of WWII on women's work. Propaganda portrayed the war worker "as a paragon of virtue" and "war work became a vehicle for women to shoulder their civic and moral responsibilities as good citizens rather than a way to become more independent and powerful." Women were seen as "caretakers of national ideals and normalcy." From the late Thirties through the early postwar era, the media portrayed women as wives and homemakers. Working women became idealized images of the home front, and married women were shown as working temporarily during the war to protect their families and contribute to the war effort, not because they desired long-term careers. These images also varied by class—working-class women felt more pride in their class rather than in their gender. In all, "the

¹¹ Campbell, 4.

war's failure to alter traditional ideas about female capacities was in part due to propaganda strategies for unifying the home front and to a top-down impetus for social change that left the new images vulnerable to swift annihilation."¹²

Social change was also central to Sherna Berger Gluck's study, which used oral histories to piece together the meaning of the World War II period for women and contributed to the historiographical debate by viewing individual women in the long-term. In contrast to Anderson, Hartmann, and Campbell, Gluck desired not necessarily to debate the degree of change but to offer a study of the process of change. She found that the women interviewed realized what they could do and that their wartime work changed the way they felt about themselves. These individuals, when examined separately (in contrast to some of the other studies where women are grouped by age, length of work period, marital status), illustrated the problems of placing complex individuals into categories. In addition, looking at life histories presents a more long-term picture than "mere snippets about the war years" in order to view "women as rounded human beings with a past and a future." Gluck argued that in order for social values to change, women's definitions of themselves had to be altered, and women's wartime experience played "a vital role in that process of redefinition—the reverberations of which are still being felt today."¹³

¹² Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 6-7 [quote 1], 17 [quote 2].

¹³ Gluck, xiii [quotes 1 and 2], 270 [quote 3]. See also Sherna Berger Gluck, ed., *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women and the World War II Work Experience* (Long Beach: California State University Long Beach Foundation, 1983). Over two hundred former women aircraft workers in southern California were interviewed by telephone. Then a group of forty-five were selected for more in-depth life history interviews. There

In 1991, Chafe provided a sequel to his famous 1972 watershed pronouncement about women in World War II reflecting the impact of the 1980s scholarship initiated by Anderson. Although he still argued that the war represented a watershed, he qualified this assertion by claiming that not all women were affected equally—African-American and lower-class women enjoyed fewer gains in their private and public lives than white, middle- to upper-class women did. In contrast to his earlier study of the “American woman,” Chafe conceded that “American women” were divided by race and class and held a variety of roles.¹⁴

More recent studies of working women during World War II are by Emily Yellin and Leila Rupp.¹⁵ Yellin asked new questions about race, ethnicity and class by looking at previously unexamined groups of women such as spies, Japanese-American women, prostitutes, and anti-Semitic mothers’ groups throughout the war period. She did not, however, effectively engage in historiographical debates nor add substantially to understanding of the short- or long-term impact of the wartime work experience upon women in the twentieth century. Rupp connected the lives of American women with

are forty-five volumes of transcripts of interviews with women who worked in Los Angeles war factories deposited in various women’s history archives. Campbell refers briefly to the set at the Walter P. Reuther Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne St. Detroit, Michigan. Campbell, however, does not use oral history extensively because it is not enough of a “reliable sample.”

¹⁴ William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹⁵ Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster Free Press, 2004); and Leila J. Rupp, “From Rosie the Riveter to the Global Assembly Line: American Women on the World Stage,” *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History* 18 (July 2004): 53-57.

larger global forces and events on the world stage. Her central argument in regard to America's working women does not differ from her 1978 study; she asserted that although women desired to remain in their high-paying wartime positions, "employers moved to restore the prewar sexual division of labor."¹⁶ Rupp does, however, briefly compare the American experience to that of women in the Soviet bloc, Japan, and Germany.

The most recent scholarship regarding the impact of World War II differs from previous interpretations by asserting that the war had significant impact on people's lives and arguing decisively for the war as a crucial period which influenced the next five decades. Whereas the last fifteen years of scholarship, what Gary Gerstle called the "revisionist view," claimed that the significance of the 1940s remained "as much in what failed to occur as in what did occur," new interpretations point to the centrality of all that did happen.¹⁷ This direction in history also focuses heavily on issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

An excellent example of this new direction is a compilation of essays entitled *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II*. These essays argued collectively "that the war had a much larger impact on people's lives than historians have previously realized." Susan E. Hirsch discussed white women and black men and women as war workers in her essay and asserted that working white women influenced their families through their war work experience. Families saw working

¹⁶ Rupp, "From Rosie the Riveter to the Global Assembly Line," 53.

¹⁷ Gary Gerstle, "The Crucial Decade: The 1940s and Beyond," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1292.

mothers more positively and children enjoyed more affluent lifestyles, and although women did not demand better paying jobs in the public workplace, they influenced future generations by voicing their dissatisfaction in private. Elaine Tyler May explored the fact that women on the home front were wives and sweethearts in addition to workers. She argued that although the ideal of marriage and childbearing persisted throughout the war, women had more choices in the context of the war's dislocation and explored sexual autonomy.¹⁸

Similarly, the March 2006 issue of the *Journal of American History* featured scholarship arguing that World War II and its aftermath represent "a critical moment" and a "crucial decade." The three articles, which are "local histories set in an era of global war," all "agree on the centrality of the 1940s for U.S. history, and they share a belief in the value of local history for telling the story of that critical moment." New scholarship continues to present new angles and discover different ways in which the war altered American life, especially the life of ordinary people in an era of burgeoning government. Overall, Gary Gerstle commented that this development in historiography shares "a conviction of the centrality of the 1940s" and a "belief that local and regional history archives contain untapped riches that, if properly mined, can yield answers to important questions."¹⁹ In relation to these developments, my study of Manti, Utah's

¹⁸ Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch, eds., *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5; see Elaine Tyler May, "Rosie the Riveter Gets Married," 128-143; and Susan E. Hirsch, "No Victory at the Workplace: Women and Minorities at Pullman during World War II," 241-262.

¹⁹ David Paul Nord, "A Critical Moment: World War II and Its Aftermath at Home," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1211 [quotes 1 and 2]; Gerstle, 1292-1299 [quotes 3 and 4]; Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World

parachute factory workers probes the riches of local history to explore the war-work experience for rural women in the western region of the United States and argues for the centrality of their experiences in the history of their lives. These women gained new skills, redefined their vision of themselves, gained economic resources, pursued life-long careers, and largely enjoyed family and community support for their work.

Rural historians have argued that women were active participants in farm production in the years prior to World War II. Often, farms are mistakenly understood to be exclusively male-oriented, when in fact family farm agriculture depended on the labor of all family members and neighbors too. Many, if not most, of the women who came to work at the parachute plant in Manti grew up in households whose focus was agricultural. Although there were usually differences between the work that men and women did, these women from rural backgrounds did work. Women valued their roles as agricultural producers, and their work contributed to farm, family, and community production and fostered ties outside of the home. Men generally worked in the fields and barn, whereas the women worked in the house and garden. The women's sale of domestic commodities, especially dairy and poultry products, augmented household earnings and connected women to the marketplace and community. These connections with work and economic opportunity suggest why rural working women, their families, and their

War II Texas," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1212-1237; Anthony S. Chen, "The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas': Racial Conservatism and the Politics of Fair Employment Legislation in New York State, 1941-1945," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1238-1264; Laura McEnaney, "Nightmares on Elm Street: Demobilizing in Chicago, 1945-1953," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1265-1291.

communities were able to reconcile and adapt to the need for women to work during World War II.²⁰

Scholars generally agree that World War II had a sizeable impact on Western states. Carl Abbott recognized the pivotal nature of the war's impact on the West, claiming that the era "stands as an important turning point in the growth of the region and its cities, launching the entire West into a half-century of head-long urbanization." As historian Gerald Nash pointed out, World War II transformed the American West, with the federal government spending \$60 billion in the West between 1940 and 1945. Roger W. Lotchin has also argued that the war did not create only one kind of change; some change was temporary, and some change proved regressive. In Utah, this era aided in many ways the state's accelerating shift from rural to urban, to a consumer society, and to increased reliance upon the federal government, highlighting the experience of western states during this period. Manti, Utah's parachute factory and its workers' experiences provide a case study for the economic modernization and increasing federal involvement in westerners' lives in this war era.²¹

²⁰ Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundation of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 1-2; Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), ix-x-xxi; Jane Adams, *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890-1990* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 2; Dean L. May, *Three Frontiers: Family, Land, and Society in the American West, 1850-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 139; Susan Sessions Rugh, *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 65-67.

²¹ Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1993), 4; Gerald D. Nash, *The Federal Landscape: An Economic History of the Twentieth-Century West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1999), 42-54; and his *World War II and the West:*

Relatively little has been done specifically on wartime working women in rural areas or in the intermountain west. Utah women's work experiences have been examined by Antonette Chambers Noble and Miriam B. Murphy. Noble's thesis on working women in Utah during the war is an excellent survey and statistical analysis of the women's experiences across the state in a variety of wartime industries. She argued that the war was an important stage in the lives Utah's wartime working women but that "permanent on the job changes did not occur. Enduring effects, though, may have taken place in the socialization of the sons and daughters who came of age in the 1960s." Noble also made the case that many Utah women were pressured by the dominant religion of the state, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, not to work. In this light, Noble asserts that "what is most noteworthy about the Utah experience is how similar it was to the national experience." She does not, however, pursue the reasoning behind the disparity between the LDS Church's admonitions against women working and the large numbers of LDS women who did work.²²

Murphy also looked at Utah's working women during World War II and contended that the war gave women new work opportunities and that "long-term trends in the number, age, and marital status of working women in Utah were greatly accelerated."

Reshaping the Economy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah: The Right Place* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2003), 344-345; Roger W. Lotchin, "The Historian's War or the Home Front's War?: Some Thoughts for Western Historians," *Western Historical Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1995): 195-196.

²² Antonette Chambers [Noble], "Utah's Rosies: Women in the Utah War Industries During World War II" (M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1987), v [quote 1]; and "Utah's Rosies: Women in the Utah War Industries during World War II," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59 (Spring 1991): 123-145; 145 [quote 2].

Yet, women were also targets of harassment and condescension. She acknowledged the LDS Church's negative attitude toward working women, but said little more than that.²³

No study focuses specifically on Manti's parachute plant, although parachute making is mentioned in literature about the wartime era in Utah. Noble's articles, as well as Allan Kent Powell's article and book on World War II which give an overview of Utah's war industries and war experiences, only touch on parachute-making in Manti. As such, the parachute factory is a topic unexplored in much depth by Utah historians. My research will be the first extensive study of the parachute plant in Utah, and of any parachute plant for that matter. Unlike many wartime industries, the parachute plant is significant as well in that it offered the women opportunities for post-war employment. I also address the LDS Church's admonitions against working women at the time, the women's responses to this rhetoric, and the impact of religiosity upon individual working women.²⁴

Now a word about methodology. Of the twenty-nine former parachute factory workers about whom data has been collected, twenty-seven are women. Twelve were married (one married after working for a year then returned), eleven were single, two were widowed, and two were divorced (one divorced during her work at the plant).

Eleven of the women had children, who ranged in age from infants to teenagers. The

²³ Miriam B. Murphy, "Gainfully Employed Women, 1896-1950," in Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher, eds., *Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2005), 211.

²⁴ See Antonette Chambers Noble, "Utah's Defense Industries and Workers in World War II," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 59 (Fall 1991): 356-379; Allan Kent Powell, "Utah and World War II," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 73 (Spring 2005): 108-131; and his *Utah Remembers World War II* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1991).

information for nineteen of the women was recorded in oral interviews, whereas the information for the other eight women was gleaned from questionnaires.²⁵ Two men were interviewed as well. Both the men represented were married; one was a head security guard and the other a mechanic, typical employment for the handful of men at the plant.

Oral interviews and questionnaires are somewhat biased toward women who were younger at the time they worked at the plant and depend on women's memories, which will undoubtedly be altered due to sheer passage of time. Because of the nature of these sources collected forty to sixty years after World War II, memories will not be completely accurate, some memories will not be as detailed as they could be, and memories will likely be selective as well (as the interviewee probably prefers to remember the happy times rather than the difficult ones or vice versa). Another limitation centers around the impossibility of interviewing every person that worked at the plant.

Despite these limitations, the story of the women of Manti who chose to work during a difficult and transitional period in American history is a compelling one that deserves to be told. The experiences of these rank-and-file rural women will be lost to time if not recorded and examined now. The interviews and questionnaires provide a body of qualitative evidence that allow a sampling of the women's experiences at the plant and during the war. Remembrances of the women can be compared to each other

²⁵ These questionnaires were prepared and collected by Antonette Chambers Noble for her 1987 M.A. thesis on working women in Utah. For a copy of the questions she asked regarding women's background and work experiences, see Antonette Chambers, thesis, 116-118.

and to source material at the time, such as newspaper articles and letters, in order to be as representative as possible.

My research will also contribute to an understanding of the impact of Utah's wartime through its in-depth look at these women's lives. By using oral histories, war work can be interpreted in the context of their adult lives from a long-term perspective. By delving into community and family situations and looking at these women on an individualized basis in the long-term, this study goes deeper than surveys and can make more substantive contributions to our understanding of the war's impact on working women. As such, this study makes a case for the long-term impact of wartime work upon individual women. The war period was a crucial event in women's lives, not just an important passing stage. Their work experiences during that time provoked desire for future work and served as a source of confidence and personal redefinition to them. Personal, individualized victories for women, which are often ignored or concealed by aggregate statistics on women's work during and immediately following the war, were a reality for women in Manti and likely elsewhere in America.

This topic also has personal significance for me, and I was led to it in part through family experience. My great-grandmother was a supervisor at the Remington small arms munitions plant in Salt Lake City during the war. She encouraged her daughters to work and learn marketable skills in school. Three of her four daughters chose careers, including my grandmother who worked the majority of her life. Her full-time work was an avenue of escape from rural work as well. Thus, I saw a pattern in my own family—that of women entering the work force during the war and influencing their daughters to

do likewise. I wanted to explore why women worked during the war and what impact their decisions to do so had on the generations that followed them.

The subsequent chapters follow a largely topical basis. The first chapter provides background on the rural Manti community context and illustrates how women's work was part of the rural social fabric and local economy. It also details the background of the Parachute Company of Utah and Reliance Manufacturing and why and when they came to Sanpete County. The subsequent two chapters show how women were motivated to work and adjusted to work in part because of community support. Women primarily worked out of patriotic duty and for pay. Women chose to work even in the face of religious prescriptions against war work. They also experienced interaction with outsiders and enjoyed community and family support, even while trying to balance the many demands of childcare and family. The final chapter sums up the major conclusions of this study and will illuminate the impact this war-working period had on the women's lives, primarily in terms of long-term work experiences and personal pride in accomplishment and confidence.

CHAPTER 2

1940s MANTI, PARACHUTE FACTORIES, AND CENTRAL UTAH'S WORKING WOMEN

The small, rural community of Manti, Utah, situated in the heart of Sanpete County,²⁶ is 123 miles south of Salt Lake City. Settled in 1849 by Mormon pioneers, Manti had nineteenth-century leaders who hoped to “establish a theocracy of yeoman farmers and craftsmen.”²⁷ Manti and surrounding communities in central Utah were still decidedly rural, agricultural, religious, and close-knit in the early decades of the twentieth century. Some background information on Sanpete’s agrarianism, industry, standard of living, demographic homogeneity, and the role and activities of women will make clearer the significance of and provide a backdrop for the war era’s parachute factory in Manti, especially as the women’s circumstances shaped their decisions to work and indicated the meaning of work experiences in their lives. It is important to examine how parachute-making in Manti spanned several years and two companies as well in order to place these working women in context and understand their work opportunities during and after the war.

²⁶ See map in Appendix A.

²⁷ Albert C. T. Antrei and Ruth D. Scow, eds., *The Other Forty-Niners: A Topical History of Sanpete County, Utah, 1849-1983* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1982), 25.

Sanpete’s agricultural community, like other agricultural Mormon villages, is well described as “agrarian Mormonism,” where “agrarian values cut across the arts and education [and were] thoroughly intermixed with Mormonism.” Rural Mormon areas like Sanpete seemed to buy into Jeffersonian thought, values familiar to the American-born, where agriculture was seen as the basis of a social system and the yeoman farmer was viewed as the backbone of the commonwealth. Susan Rugh’s definition of pastoralism and the rural ideal “as an affinity for land and farming as a way of life” aptly describes Sanpete’s values. Such values kept many individuals near the land, as they felt security in having soil to farm. Indeed, as historian Charles S. Peterson observed, agriculture’s “rhythms and habits permeated life at the most fundamental level.”²⁸

Manti and its surrounding communities were rural, agriculturally-based villages where women lived and worked. Although Ephraim, located north of Manti, is not necessarily Sanpete writ large, Lowry Nelson’s sociological model of Ephraim as a Mormon village will serve here as an example of a Sanpete community as it appeared in the pre-war and post-war years (1925 and 1950, respectively). Nelson’s analysis found that regardless of the occupation of the family head, the majority of households had a family garden, a dairy cow or two, and assorted hogs and chickens. Even the households of merchants and professional men were mainly self-sufficient in regard to bacon, butter, milk, and eggs. Many of these commodities, especially poultry and dairy, were the products of women’s work. In addition to using poultry and dairy products in their

²⁸ Charles S. Peterson, *Changing Times: A View from Cache Valley, 1890-1915* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1979), 11 [quote 1], 18-20, 27 [quote 3]; Susan Sessions Rugh, “Pastoralism and the Rural Ideal,” in *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*, Vol. II, ed. Peter W. Williams and Mary Kupiec Cayton (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2001), 453 [quote 2]; Antrei and Scow, 258.

homes, the women also sold them to supplement the family income. These sales amounted to 2 to 4 percent of all farm incomes in Sanpete County in 1940. Home canning by women was also a strong tradition, along with baking bread, tending vegetable gardens and fruit trees, butchering, and making soap. Home production of food was supplemented by the wheat grown in the fields and by the beef and mutton raised on the range. Approximately two-thirds of all working men were employed directly in agricultural pursuits. Livestock was Ephraim's main support, with the sheep industry being paramount. By 1933, turkey growing was also practiced on a commercial scale.²⁹

After the turn of the century, many women in Sanpete County communities acquired some conveniences in their homes. Most villages obtained water mains and power plants in the early decades of the twentieth century, though some smaller villages did not have electrical power and running water until 1930 or later. Ephraim, for example, had its own municipally-owned power plant by 1925, so many homes were equipped with electricity. Ephraim's water was piped from a spring in a nearby canyon, and about two-thirds of Ephraim's households had running water. After the war, Sanpete's residents were similar to rural people across America who were gaining access to the same appliances and conveniences that urban people enjoyed. Postwar prosperity, in some cases propelled by women's wages in the parachute factory and greater demand for agricultural products, was largely responsible for this impact. Fully-equipped modern

²⁹ Lowry Nelson, *The Mormon Village, A Pattern and Technique of Land Settlement* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952), 146, 148, 152, 153, 163; *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Agriculture, Volume II, Part III* (Washington: United States Government, 1942), 196; David B. Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 250.

bathrooms were standard by 1950, and nearly every home had running water and all had electricity. Postwar Ephraim residents also had radios, 85 percent enjoyed electric refrigerators and other appliances, three-fifths had automobiles, and over a third had central heating.³⁰

Sanpete County's population was white and fairly homogeneous in the early decades of the twentieth century. Most of its inhabitants were descended from Scandinavian and English stock who as Mormon converts came to the area in the nineteenth century. In 1925, 90 percent of Ephraim's residents were native-born whites. Of the other 10 percent, or 206 people of foreign birth, 171 came from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, with Denmark predominating. According to the 1940 census, Sanpete County's population of 16,063 included 15,471 residents who were native-born whites, 539 residents who were foreign-born whites, and 53 residents who were of other races (excluding blacks). Of the foreign-born whites, 301 were Danish, 66 were Swedish, 57 were English, and 23 were Norwegian. In addition, the composition of Sanpete was further homogenized as the Scandinavians surrendered much of their language and culture in favor of the English language and Mormon folkways.³¹

³⁰ Nelson, 154-156, 170-171; Danbom, 248; Albert C. T. Antrei and Allen D. Roberts, *A History of Sanpete County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society and Sanpete County Commission, 1999), 243-246.

³¹ Nelson, 151; Richard C. Poulsen, "Folk Material Culture of the Sanpete-Sevier Area: Today's Reflections of a Region's Past," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Spring 1979): 130-147; Peterson, 18; *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Characteristics of the Population*, Volume II, Part VII (Washington: United States Government, 1943), 39, 50.

Notably, one Manti woman remembered that in the 1940s, Manti had no black residents and very few Indian or Hispanic residents. She could only recall one Indian family who resided in the village of Fountain Green. Betty Keller Anderson, interview by Don Norton, 7 July 1994, Manti, Utah, 6, copy of transcript of tape recording in author's possession.

Nearly all Sanpete’s inhabitants, including its women who would work at the parachute factory, were also members of the Mormon Church, officially known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Ephraim, for example, incorporated three wards, or congregations, and Sanpete County was home to two stakes, or large groupings of congregations. By 1950, Nelson noted that Church participation was not universal in the town of Ephraim, with approximately three-fifths of members attending some meeting once a month, contributing financially, and supplying congregational leadership. No more than half of those attending Church meetings “could be classified as regular and dependable.” Mormon scholar Jan Shipps also suggested that the older generation would have been less likely to attend public worship services because in earlier eras the “more expressive worship signs were irrigation canals, or neatly built and nicely decorated houses, or good crops of sugar beets. More significantly, living in the kingdom in the nineteenth century was the sign of citizenship in God’s elect nation.” In addition, men proved to be less active than women in general. Manti itself is important to Mormon history and religiosity as well because it is home to one of the Church’s early temples, dedicated in 1888 and standing atop a hill overlooking the village and the valley.³²

The Relief Society, an association of Mormon women, was the major organization for women in the area. The Relief Society contributed greatly to the temporal and spiritual welfare of those within and without the LDS Church and boasted of significant political, economic, educational and social achievements by the middle decades of the twentieth century. This society collected a small annual membership fee

³² Nelson, 173-174 [quote 1]; Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of A New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 125 [quote 2]; Antrei and Scow, 70.

from its women members, had its own meeting days and its own budget, organized bazaars, sponsored groups for women such as “Singing Mothers” choruses, published its own songbook, held its own yearly conference, built its own headquarters in Salt Lake City, and published its own magazine.³³ This magazine, the *Relief Society Magazine*, was taken in 1950 by 131 subscribers in Ephraim and was the second most popular magazine behind *Reader’s Digest* with 148 subscribers.³⁴

Local news as illustrated in the *Ephraim Enterprise*, *Manti Messenger*, and *Mt. Pleasant Pyramid* was an important component of Sanpete’s communities as it connected individuals through community events and forums, proclaimed a variety of local opinion, and related many important life events. Local news published on the front pages of these newspapers included Church news; agricultural prices and tips; local residents’ deaths, marriages, travels, and anniversaries; and pioneer stories. The Relief Society appears particularly publicized as it announced events from weekly meetings to celebrations and ward presidency re-organizations. These newspapers are also significant in that they published stories, updates, and advertisements for Sanpete’s parachute industry.³⁵

³³ Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1992), x; Jean Anne Waterstradt, “Relief Society’s Golden Years: The Magazine,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37 (Fall 2004): 99.

³⁴ Nelson, 172; Edward C. Banfield, “Mormon Hamlet,” (Unpublished sociological study, typewritten, 1953), 63. Also worthy of note was another Mormon magazine, *The Improvement Era*, which collected 61 subscriptions in 1950 according to Nelson’s data.

³⁵ Examples include: “Resume of Local Happenings of 1941,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 26 December 1941; “Rambouillet and Stock Show Plans Complete; Many Events Planned,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 15 May 1942; “Stake Quarterly Conference Called,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 24 April 1942; “Primary Girl Tells Story of Great Great

Ephraim, like other largely agrarian Sanpete communities, suffered from comparative lack of economic opportunity locally, often forcing younger generations, including women, to look elsewhere for work. As one Sanpete historian observed, in the twentieth century “economic uncertainty is currently the object of more hand-wringing than Indians used to be” in the nineteenth century. Even though Sanpete’s population had a high rate of natural increase, the average age of the community was higher than one might expect due to the out-migration of adults between the age of twenty-five and forty-four years of age. Economic discontent was provoking migration out of the county, and since 1900 Ephraim and surrounding towns had exported a sizeable portion of their natural increase. The county reached its peak population of 17,505 in 1920 and numbers have largely declined since then. Such was part of a larger national trend of great rural-to-urban migration with the production revolution in agriculture and a strengthened national economy. Economic growth in urban areas provided attractive opportunities for the young outside the farm and rural community.³⁶

Indeed, major industries were scarce in central Utah in the early decades of the twentieth century. The small industries in Sanpete mostly dealt with the processing of agricultural products. One plant of note was a canning company located in Ephraim, organized originally in 1914 and then enlarged in the 1920s. Named the Rocky Mountain

Grandfather,” *Manti Messenger*, 5 June 1942; “Attend Testimonial For Temple Officials,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 21 May 1943; “Ward Relief Society Reorganized,” *Manti Messenger*, 5 June 1942; “Centennial Program of Relief Society Ready for Presentation,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 13 March 1942.

³⁶ Nelson, 150, 148-149; Antrei and Scow, 256 [quote 1]; Danbom, 244-245. Edward Banfield, a sociologist, also observed that in small Mormon villages, “most of those who leave the hamlet are young people who have no opportunity to stay,” and most rural Mormons go from “one Mormon shrine or community to another.” Banfield, 47.

Packing Company, it canned vegetables, mainly Sanpete's pea crop. In the summer of 1942, the plant canned 70,000 cases of peas and employed 350 people, including women and teenagers.³⁷

Precisely because Sanpete was largely limited to agriculture economically, it often proved, like other rural, agricultural areas, to be sensitive to farm markets and often suffered from the tensions typical of farm regions. The decade of the 1920s was a time of depression for farmers throughout most of the nation, and as a result, agriculture moved into the Great Depression more gradually than some of the other sectors of the economy. By 1932, however, Sanpete County was really starting to feel the pangs of depression. Sanpete historians stated that "those hit earliest and hardest by the Depression [in Sanpete County] depended on wages or other cash exchange for their livelihood – banks, businesses, teachers, and farmers who grew cash crops." Sanpete County was so affected by the Depression that it had more residents working with New Deal government-sponsored programs than with private business relief, opposite of the situation of Utah at large. By 1939, \$4.4 million had been spent by the federal government to help Sanpete County residents. In short, central Utah on the eve of World War II was anything but a booming metropolis. The Great Depression was still very much with the people of this agricultural area of the state in the early 1940s.³⁸

³⁷ Centennial Book Committee, Ephraim, Utah, *Our Yesterdays, A History of Ephraim, Utah, 1854-1979* (Ephraim, Utah: Ephraim City Corporation, 1981), 73; "70,000 Cases Canned At Plant," *Manti Messenger*, 7 August 1942; Antrei and Scow, 249. The *Messenger* article claimed that the Rocky Mountain Packing Company had a payroll of \$16,000, but it is unclear how this money was divided in terms of pay periods or number of employees.

³⁸ Peterson, 12; Antrei and Roberts, 260-261, 262 [quote 1], 266.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, however, the United States entered World War II and began to accelerate its preparations for combat through the establishment and expansion of wartime industries, helping to ameliorate some Depression unemployment. The western portion of the country was fortunate to receive many of these industries, helping immensely to pull various western state economies out of the depths of the Depression.³⁹ Utah's governor at the time, Herbert B. Maw, traveled around the country seeking industries for his state. He remembered hearing rumors that a parachute manufacturer in California was looking to expand its operations. Maw contacted the manufacturer and "persuaded" him to set up a branch of the plant in Manti. According to a contemporary account from the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Maw claimed that there was "no other place on a railroad where people are having a harder time making a living than in Sanpete county and that is the reason we put the plant here [in Sanpete County]." Maw offered an inducement—the State Armory in Manti to house the operation—but later claimed that "the real reason for his [the manufacturer's] favorable response was what he learned from his investigation of the integrity and attitude toward work of the men and women in the area." Maw concluded that the "plant was a life saver for those people" of Manti and surrounding areas. Speaking of the plant, Sanpete

³⁹ This study contributes to the history of the West because scholars generally agree that World War II had a sizeable impact on the Far West in general and Utah in particular. For many people in the intermountain state of Utah, and in the West in general, the World War II period was the end of isolation and the beginning of a new era. Before WWII, Utah and other Mountain states had colonial economies that were heavily reliant on commercial mining and agriculture. As Thomas G. Alexander observed, the Great Depression left Utah's old colonial economy crippled, but a "new colonial economy based on expenditures by the federal government" began to rise during the 1930s. In Utah, the massive expenditures of World War II "fundamentally refashioned Utah's economy and society." The economic growth during the war reversed the pattern of out-migration that had held in Utah since 1910, as Utah began net in-migration. See Alexander, 344-345; and the introduction to this study.

historians similarly claimed, “In addition to a revitalized market for agricultural products, the war brought to Sanpete County the first promise of industrial development not directly related to agriculture” – the parachute manufacturing plant at Manti.⁴⁰

The parachute manufacturer was Colonel Cedric Errol Fauntleroy, a native of Mississippi and a member of the 94th Aero Pursuit Squadron, also known as “The Uncle Sam’s Hat in the Ring,” during World War I. A man of many achievements, Fauntleroy had also served with the French Foreign Legion, was an aviator for Poland in the Polish-Russian war of 1919-1920, and was involved in the banking and bond businesses and also in the manufacture of parachutes. Supplied with private government contracts, Fauntleroy opened the Standard Parachute Company of California in San Bruno and the Parachute Company of Utah in Manti.⁴¹

⁴⁰ “Manti Meeting Warned on Losing Plant,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 June 1942 [quote 1]; Herbert B. Maw, *Adventures With Life* (Salt Lake City: Herbert B. Maw, 1978), 164 [quotes 2 and 3]; Antrei and Roberts, 266-267 [quote 4]. Similarly, Governor Maw “gave as a reason of first considering Sanpete County as the possible site for the plant the fact that no county in the state, situated on a railroad, was having a harder time to make a living than this county, and humorously referred to the fact that if he didn’t do something for this section, he would probably face domestic troubles in his own home, as Mrs. Maw was a former Manti resident.” “Mass Meeting Airs Chute Plant Troubles,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 12 June 1942.

⁴¹ “C. E. Fauntleroy, Aviator, Was 71,” *New York Times*, 6 December 1963, 35; Vera A. and Mayo Sorensen, “Colonel C. E. Fauntleroy,” typescript, copy in author’s possession; Jacquie [Fauntleroy] Howard to Albert Antrei, Fremont, California, 1 February 1987, copy in author’s possession. One observer thought that Fauntleroy “wasn’t there to make money; he in fact wanted out, but the government insisted that he stay in the parachute business, because he understood it so well.” Vertis Leroy Nielson, interview by Don Norton, 21 February 1997, Ephraim, Utah, 4, copy of transcript of tape recording in author’s possession. Even if Fauntleroy wasn’t there to make money, however, it was a private business that did make money from which Fauntleroy did profit.

The plant's opening was heralded by large, front-page headlines in the county's three major papers on April 10, 1942. The *Ephraim Enterprise* headline covered the entire width of the front page with the words "Sanpete Gets First Defense Unit"; the *Manti Messenger* wrote, "Parachute Plant to Employ Hundreds"; and the *Mt. Pleasant Pyramid* (notably farther away from Ephraim and Manti), wrote less dramatically and with smaller letters: "Parachute Plant Given to Manti." Governor Maw and Gus P. Backman of the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce came down to Manti on Wednesday, April 8, to introduce the plant and its owner and to show their support. Backman and others had previously made a survey of Sanpete's employment situation and claimed that the area had a sufficiently large number of unemployed residents to avoid having to import workers.⁴²

Fauntleroy's Parachute Company of Utah was a private enterprise with government contracts that manufactured parachutes for the armed forces from April 1942 to July 1944. The plant was located in the National Guard Armory, which was subsequently enlarged with a new building about four times its size to provide for more sewing machine work space, office space, and a cafeteria. Fauntleroy lived with his two daughters in an apartment above the plant. He brought supervisors from California with him and also sent a handful of Manti employees to be trained in California.⁴³

⁴² *Ephraim Enterprise*, *Manti Messenger*, and *Mt. Pleasant Pyramid*, 10 April 1942.

⁴³ "Parachute Plant Given to Manti," *Mt. Pleasant Pyramid*, 10 April 1942; "Ground Broken for New Parachute Building," *Manti Messenger*, 26 June 1942; "New Building for Chute Plant Started; Age Limit Raised," *Ephraim Enterprise*, 26 June 1942; Luzon Sondrup Longaker, "Memories of the Parachute Company of Utah and Reliance Manufacturing Company, World War II," typescript, January 1985, 1, copy in author's possession; Antrei and Roberts, 271; Betty Anderson, 2.

Workers at the plant primarily came from Sanpete and Sevier counties, though some came from Emery and Carbon counties in central Utah as well. Word of job openings spread quickly among residents of the small towns nearby, and the company posted many advertisements for work in the papers. Local theatres, employment services, and churches cooperated in publicizing work at the plant. Personal recruiting also spread the word. Down in Emery County, Gene Braithwaite, who was a mechanic at the plant, stopped by houses to persuade prospective women workers such as sisters Dora and Nita Price. Another man, John R. Nielson, recruited workers in Koosharem, Emery County, and convinced Georgia Torgerson and Dortha Braithwaite to apply.⁴⁴

The plant was staffed and supervised primarily by women, who ranged from sixteen (though the advertised and legal age was eighteen) to forty years of age. The plant, located at First North and Main in downtown Manti, repaired and produced individual parachutes, cargo parachutes, and bomb parachutes over the course of its operation during the war. The first shift operated from approximately 6:00 am. to 2:30 p.m. and the second from 2:45 p.m. until 11:15 p.m., for a total shift of forty-eight hours per week. Men at the plant were primarily mechanics and security guards. At any point

⁴⁴ Betty Anderson, 1-2; Paul R. Davis, Richfield Employment Service Manager, to Joseph S. Mayer, Director of the Utah Employment Service, 11 June 1942, Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, "Parachute Company of Utah," Utah State Archives; Nita Price Madsen, interview by Don Norton, 25 March 1997, Manti, Utah, 1, copy of transcript of tape recording in author's possession; Carol Ney Beesley, interview by author, 26 November 2005, Mt. Pleasant, Utah, 4, transcript of digital recording in author's possession; Zola Ruesch, interview by author, 26 November 2005, Mt. Pleasant, Utah, 3, transcript of digital recording in author's possession; LuElla Thornton, interview by author, 27 October 2005, American Fork, Utah, 3, copy of digital recording in author's possession; Dora Price Fautin, interview by Don Norton, 27 March 1997, Lindon, Utah, 1, copy of transcript of tape recording in author's possession; Dortha Bagley Braithwaite, interview by Don Norton, 25 March 1997, Manti, Utah, 1, copy of transcript of tape recording in author's possession.

in time, the plant employed several hundred people on different shifts. Reports of the plant's total employment varied anywhere from 150 people at the outset to peak employment numbers around 450, although Fauntleroy had initially hoped for three shifts employing 1000 to 1200 women.⁴⁵

The parachute plant's women workers cut the fabric (which began as silk and later nylon), wound bobbins with thread, sewed the long seams with two- and four-needle machines, sewed piece-work, folded and packed the parachutes, and inspected the parachutes. Several women were also "floor ladies" assigned to supervise production on the floor of operation.⁴⁶

A standard, twenty-four foot parachute began with twenty-four panels of cloth and each panel was made up of four separate pieces of cloth. Diagonal seams, sewn under tension so that the threads would not break when the parachute filled with air, were sewn to adjoin the four sections of each panel. The panels were then sewn together to make a canopy. "These seams . . . [were] wide enough to take two rows of stitching with a three-eighths channel between them. They [we]re made on a power machine driving two needles at once." The larger seams running from the skirt (or bottom) to the vent (or top) were also sewn under tension, but with a four-needle machine. The suspension lines were cut in equal lengths and sewn into channels with a double zigzag stitch. At the top of the canopy of the parachute was fastened a small pilot chute, constructed in a similar manner to the larger canopy of the parachute, thirty-six inches in diameter. "To attach the canopy to the jumper, the suspension lines [we]re divided into groups, each group tied

⁴⁵ C. E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 12 September 1942, Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, "Parachute Company of Utah," Utah State Archives.

⁴⁶ Pictures of the workers can be found in Appendix B.

in zigzag to the free ends of the harness webbing. . . . the principal element of the harness [being] a loop made by stitching thicknesses of webbing together to form a sling or swing in which the wearer sits.” A rip cord and skirt tape (sewn along the bottom of the parachute) were also sewn onto the parachute. In packing the parachute, the main canopy was folded and placed in the pack, the pack flaps laid in place, and the folded pilot chute laid on top. The parachutes were also inspected for errors or breaks in stitching over florescent-lighted tables. Inspection was under the direction of government inspectors and according to government directions and specifications.⁴⁷

The women over forty years of age organized their own “Independent Parachute Company of Utah,” which was located in the LDS Bishop’s Storehouse near the plant.

According to Lila Keller, Fauntleroy called her into his office and said,

I’m upset and don’t know what to do. We have about [twenty five to] fifty women who are older or have some little handicap, and we can’t take them in the main plant. The industrial insurance is high [and] we can’t afford to keep them. We wondered if you would consider being the head of this group, and organize it separate and completely away from our company. We will bring you the unfinished product, you finish it, and then bring it back to the plant.⁴⁸

With the help of an attorney and after several visits with Governor Maw, Keller handled the legalities and set-up of the Independent Parachute Company. The women who worked there “did all the hand work on the packs including the cutting and waxing of the webbing.” Keller described their work duties thus:

We had various sized boxes, about 2-1/2 feet high, built to accommodate the webbing and slots in each box. With a sharp blade we cut through the webbing

⁴⁷ See all women’s interviews and O. J. Mink, *Meet the Parachute* (Chicago: Reliance Manufacturing Company, 1944), 74-76 [quotes 1 and 2], 91-92.

⁴⁸ Lila Bartholomew Keller, interview by Don Norton, Manti, Utah, 1 April 1997, 1, copy of transcript of tape recording in author’s possession.

and stacked it into piles. We had pots of hot wax into which each end of the webbing was dipped to keep it from fraying. The waxed webbing was then machine sewn in the main plant on all the stress points on the packs. . . . We did a variety of jobs, the most exacting operation [of which] was hand-sewing the locking cones to the patch, which in turn was machine sewn onto the pack. Each patch had two cones through which the releasing pin had to slide freely. . . . The cones were sewn with three-ply cotton thread which had to be drawn through a solid piece of bees wax to give it extra strength. Sewing the cones was very difficult because the canvas was heavy and workers had to use pliers or an awl to push the needle through. . . . Another very exacting and difficult operation was hand seizing the giant cuppling to the huge cargo chutes All the shroud lines had to be in perfect position. We'd follow it up to where it was attached to the chute. If they were crossed or placed in the wrong position the chute would not open properly. After the shroud lines were all straight they were looped through the cuppling, folded back onto the lines and hand-seized using three ply cotton waxed thread to form a half-hitch with the knots pulled very tight and close together, forming a six inch spiral on the double shroud lines.⁴⁹

The women were paid by the piece. In order to avoid fighting among the employees over differentials in pay, the pieces were divided up equally each morning. Those who worked faster and more accurately were able to leave as soon as they were finished. Keller herself worked both shifts, sixteen hours a day for the first six months, inspecting every piece of work and supervising the company's operations.⁵⁰

The Parachute Company of Utah seemed beset by some troubles both at its outset and intermittently as the war progressed. As early as June 1942, the plant seemed to have run into barriers. About two weeks before the ground breaking for the plant's new building, the *Ephraim Enterprise* of June 12 stated that Governor Maw was threatening to withdraw the plant unless cooperation was given:

⁴⁹ Lila Bartholomew Keller, "The Independent Parachute Company," typescript, n.d., 2-4, copy in author's possession.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2 [quote 1]; Lila Keller interview, 1-2, 6; Lillian Keller, interview by Don Norton, Manti, Utah, 1 April 1997, 1, copy of transcript of tape recording in author's possession.

In the role of “trouble shooter,” Governor Herbert B. Maw Wednesday evening [10 June 1942] warned a large gathering of citizens from Sanpete and Sevier counties that the Parachute plant at Manti would probably be moved to some other location in the state, if “petty squabbling” and “party politics” did not stop and full hearted cooperation be given. Expressing surprise that such a condition should arise in a section which had been begging for some industry, the Governor disclaimed any knowledge that the plant had been placed in this county as “political football,” and told of numerous anonymous letters he had received claiming that Republicans were not being considered for employment, and that Democrats were unable to get registered at the plant and many other discrepancies.⁵¹

Because the parachute company was private, it was probably very unlikely that Maw could actually take it to another location. Instead, it seems that Fauntleroy himself actually requested removal of the plant if cooperation was not given. Cache Valley leaders put in a bid for the plant, so that area in northern Utah was being considered as an alternate site. Maw assured central Utah residents that every qualified woman, regardless of which party she affiliated with or what county she hailed from, could find employment. Interestingly, the Governor also dispelled rumors that shunning work in this industry would keep husbands from being drafted. Clearly, rumors and misunderstandings had been tossed about, not to mention possible political moves.⁵²

⁵¹ Mass Meeting Airs Chute Plant Troubles,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 12 June 1942.

⁵² Ibid.; “Outlook is Brighter for Parachute Plant,” *Manti Messenger*, 12 June 1942; “Manti Meeting Warned on Losing Plant,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 June 1942; “Cache Leaders Offer Bid for ‘Chute Repair Plant,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 June 1942; “Manti Retains ‘Chute Plant,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 June 1942; “Working Wives Given Maw Counsel: Parachute Plant Applicants Are Reassured,” *Deseret News*, 11 June 1942; “Manti Keeps ‘Chute Plant,” *Deseret News*, 12 June 1942.

W. H. Peterson, quoted in a front page article on 10 April 1942 in the *Manti Messenger* about the plant, claimed, “If it weren’t for the testimony of these good men from Salt Lake City, I think I could still smell a rat.” Vertis Nielson, a mechanic at the plant, remembered, “A bunch of people got together, so many from Ephraim, so many from other towns, and decided to recommend who should get jobs in the factory. Some politicians were involved, I guess. I think I was recommended because of the kind of work I did – electrical.” Vertis Nielson, 1.

As illustrated in the Governor's address, opposition to the plant seems to have been based in community rivalry, politics, and rumors. Whether or not such rumors were true or false, the opposition seems to have hampered the plant's popularity and ability to hire the largest number of women possible, at least at the outset. Fauntleroy referred to opposition to his plant in towns other than Manti in a letter to the Governor dated 9 July 1942:

I have finally run the opposition to the Parachute Plant to earth. By opposition, I mean in towns other than Manti. It seems that the wage scale here at the plant has compelled the business men, beet growers, turkey and pea pickers to raise their rates of pay. It has taken me a long time to dig this out, but I can assure you it is substantially accurate.⁵³

If such was the case, opposition on the part of other county employers to the plant could have been based on their having to increase wages. Animosity on the part of citizens of other communities because the plant had located in Manti could have predisposed them to avoid employment there as well. Paul R. Davis, head of the Richfield Employment Service, called this problem "inter-town jealousy." Similarly, Manti Mayor R. Easton Moffitt claimed in a letter to Governor Maw that a recent telephone conversation "confirm[ed] our first suspicions that a little political jealousy must exist in the Northern end of the County, for which I am unable to account for any personal reasons."⁵⁴

The political controversy seemed to stem from the fact that the Governor was Democrat and that the recent New Deal programs that employed so many in the area

⁵³ C. E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 9 July 1942, Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, "Parachute Company of Utah," Utah State Archives.

⁵⁴ Davis to Mayer [quote 1]; R. Easton Moffitt to Herbert B. Maw, 14 January 1941 [1942] [quote 2], Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, "Parachute Company of Utah," Utah State Archives.

were Democratic as well. Women would have been discouraged from applying if they thought they would not be hired if they were of the Republican Party; according to Paul Davis, such resulted from “rumors of political preference.” The committee that conducted the preliminary survey of workers and worked for the establishment of the plant consisting of Sanpete County men was purportedly ignored by the management of the plant. This committee was changed because “the Republican party figured this first committee . . . was playing politics. For that reason they made up their minds to change the entire set-up and the original committee was released without knowledge,” according to William McFarlane, one of the original committee members. The subsequent committee “is on the right side of the fence to suit the Republican ticket,” McFarlane bemoaned. H. B. Gunderson, State Director of Vocational Training for War Workers, and Fauntleroy exchanged heated remarks and both sent negative letters about their visit with each other to Maw. Fauntleroy claimed that he had reached previous agreements with another representative and that Gunderson was intruding on that which he knew nothing about. Gunderson found Fauntleroy and his company to be dishonest. Other leaders besides Gunderson felt angered and neglected as well, such as Paul R. Davis, who was not invited to the 10 June meeting and wrote letters opposing the plant and its practices. According to Davis, rumors of unpleasant work conditions discouraged many. Specifically, rumors of the plant’s sister company in California being a “sweat-shop operation” and of the plant taking advantage of “free labor” (both referring to unpaid training periods) were concerns.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Joseph S. Mayer to Herbert B. Maw, 16 June 1942; William McFarland to William J. Eustice, 6 July 1942 [quotes 1 and 2]; Davis to Mayer; H. B. Gunderson to Herbert B. Maw, 16 July 1942; C. E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 18 June 1942; all

Questions and disputes over employment and pay also presented some potential problems. The complaints included: the time spent in training was not reimbursed by the Parachute Company of Utah; trainees produced parachutes that were sold for the company's profit; and training did not guarantee work at the factory. One early worker contested that Fauntleroy refused to pay the women for training and for several hours worked. Evidence exists to support the truth of this claim. Apparently women were expected to complete a State Vocational Training program, which was held in various locations and sponsored by Utah's Department of Public Instruction and the South Sanpete School District. It seems that the women were expected to learn skills before employment, so the training period, ranging anywhere from two to six weeks, was not paid initially. One worker claimed:

We worked six weeks without any pay. We were on a training fee, even though we were working on actual parachutes at the time, not on scrap material. Then the Fair Labor Board came in and made Mr. Fauntleroy pay back wages; he paid 20 cents an hour for those six weeks we had worked without anything. He was working on a cost-plus basis, and as soon as that terminated, Mr. Fauntleroy left Manti.⁵⁶

Fauntleroy and his staff defended themselves by claiming that trainees practiced on material that was not suitable for the government specifications for parachutes and as

from Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, "Parachute Company of Utah," Utah State Archives.

Here it is worthy of note that while such letters to Governor Herbert Maw were negative in nature, such are indicative of the type of correspondence usually sent to a politician. He was much more likely to receive in writing criticisms from citizens rather than praise.

⁵⁶ Betty Anderson, 3. The Fair Labor Board that Anderson spoke of was created by the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, also known as the "Wages and Hours Bill," which mandated minimum wage, maximum weekly hours, and child labor standards. Robert S. McElvaine, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression* (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 309.

such, was not sold to the government. Government inspectors were present, they said, and did not allow this to happen. Wages at the plant were always advertised as beginning at 40 cents per hour, which were higher than prevailing wage rates in local agricultural industries and other employment for women. Against initial opposition from Governor Maw, who wanted the starting wage set at 50 cents per hour, Fauntleroy argued that the incentive plans at the Manti plant were better than those at the California plant.

According to the incentive program, women were paid according to productivity—the more a woman produced, the more she was paid, up to \$1.00 an hour—and received bonuses.⁵⁷ After a woman had been on the payroll for ninety days, her minimum wage was increased five cents per hour as well. As of August 1942, sixty-three women were earning above the minimum rate, \$20 to \$35 per week, while the other 250 were earning the minimum rate of \$19 per week. A letter from a Sanpete County woman to Governor Maw illustrates that employment in the plant was desirable. A widow needing to support her family, the woman complained that she was not hired at the plant because of mistakes she made while training and wanted Maw to intervene on her behalf.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The incentive plan was advertised as: “40c per hour for 40 hours, with time and a half for all over time. The following sliding scale, based on production: Under 3 chutes per day, 40c per hour. 3 chutes per day, 42c per hour. 4 chutes, 45c per hour. 5 chutes 47 1/2c. 6 chutes and over, a bonus of 50c a chute will be given, with the maximum hour rate of \$1.00.” “Mass Meeting Airs Chute Plant Troubles,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 12 June 1942. Another advertisement trying to recruit local women addressed women’s concerns. By claiming that wages were higher than rumored and that housing was more inexpensive than in other defense areas, the advertisement claimed that moving to and working in Manti was preferable to working in other defense areas such as Salt Lake City. “Call Made For More Help,” *Manti Messenger*, 29 October 1943.

⁵⁸ Betty Anderson, 3; Gundersen to Maw; Herbert B. Maw to C. E. Fauntleroy, 9 July 1942; Winston M. Crawford, Local Supervisor of Vocation Training for War Production Workers, to Herbert B. Maw, 16 July 1942; Fauntleroy to Maw, 18 June 1942; C. E. Fauntleroy to State board for Vocational Education, 18 August 1942; “Workers At Good Pay Wanted At Plant,” *Manti Messenger*, 8 May 1942; “WLB [War

Plant management also disputed claims that women were not hired after training by saying that the women in training often failed to realize that the employment would be in Manti instead of at the Vocational School. Because they did not want to commute or move, they were not hired. Management claimed that work was open to women regardless of race, national origin, creed, or political affiliation. In addition, the parachute company management defended themselves against accusations of age discrimination by claiming they had tried working with those forty-five and older but “this experiment ha[d] been unsuccessful.” As a result, Fauntleroy encouraged those women over forty to establish their own Independent Parachute Company under Lila Keller, as illustrated earlier in this chapter.⁵⁹

The rise of union activity at the plant seemed to divide communities and workers as well. Some thought that Fauntleroy had located in Utah in order to avoid the labor unions. One office employee remembered that when Fauntleroy first talked with all of his employees, “he told them he would be a ‘Santa Claus’ and do everything possible for them if they would help keep the unions out; but if the unions came in, he would leave.” She claimed that the unions had spoiled it for Fauntleroy. “He had located in Utah to avoid the labor unions; however, individuals who felt they could receive more benefits

Labor Board] Approves Bonus for ‘Chute Workers,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 15 October 1943; Margaret J. Brown, of the Parachute Company of Utah, to Paul Davis, U.S. Employment Service, Richfield, 24 August 1942; Bernitta Sondrup to Herbert B. Maw, August 1942; letters from Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, “Parachute Company of Utah,” Utah State Archives.

⁵⁹ “New Building for Chute Plant Started; Age Limit Raised,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 26 June 1942; Fauntleroy to Maw, 18 June 1942; Fauntleroy to State board for Vocational Education; “Workers At Good Pay Wanted At Plant,” *Manti Messenger*, 8 May 1942; “WLB [War Labor Board] Approves Bonus for ‘Chute Workers,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 15 October 1943; Brown to Davis [quote 1].

banded together and brought the unions to Sanpete County and the Parachute Company of Utah. . . . When the unions came in, he left.” When asked if she joined a union, this employee emphatically stated, “Absolutely not!” Another employee, a mechanic at the plant, claimed that morale was good there and that Fautleroy was preparing the employees to take over operations until the union came in. He said that he and several of the workers refused to join the union. Another employee remembered that some of the women tried to organize but were then laid off by supervisors.⁶⁰

Such remembrances, however, seem strange in the context of a letter from Fautleroy to Governor Maw on 10 July 1942 where Fautleroy claimed that he held a “successful” meeting with elected representatives of the Sanpete Parachute Workers Association and stated that the Association “has been recognized by the management as the collective bargaining agency.” Fautleroy recognized this union and did not leave until two years after doing so. But the Sanpete Parachute Workers Association, if it had no ties to a larger union, could have been an employer-dominated entity and not an independent bargaining agency. A complaint from E. M. Royle of Utah’s Industrial Commission to Governor Maw in December 1942 seems to suggest this. “The labor policy of this company has not been entirely in harmony with the labor policy of the Federal Administration and with current industrial practices regarding the right of employees to self organization free from employer domination.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Longaker, “Memories,” 3, 5 [quotes 1-2]; Luzon Sondrup Longaker, questionnaire, 9 January 1985, 2, copy in author’s possession [quote 3]; Vertis Nielson, 5; Vera Sorensen, questionnaire, 4 August 1984, 2, copy in author’s possession.

⁶¹ C. E. Fautleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 10 July 1942 [quote 4]; E. M. Royle to Herbert B. Maw, 2 December 1942 [quote 5]. Fautleroy referred to possible employee takeover of plant operations as early as June 1942. See C. E. Fautleroy to A. B.

As of 1943-1944, however, there was a United Parachute Workers union which was a C.I.O. affiliate. Local Sanpete women constituted the executive board and the grievance committee, and they served as trustees of this union. The *Ephraim Enterprise* seemed proud of the fact that several Ephraim women were chosen as union officers at the parachute plant. In contrast, a negative view of labor unions was published as a political cartoon on the front page of the *Manti Messenger* on May 21, 1943, claiming that “the road must be kept open” for U.S. war production and that strikes and illegal walkouts were hindering the progress of such production.⁶²

Transportation to work at the plant and housing for the workers was at times a challenge for them. The company operated a bus that picked up women in several locations. The bus operated on a route that went north into Sanpete County, picking up workers in Fountain Green, Moroni, Mt. Pleasant, Fairview, Spring City, and Chester. Bus rides were reportedly long. From Mt. Pleasant, for example, it took about an hour to get to work between all of the stops. Another bus went south down into Salina in Sevier

Paulson, State Architect, 18 June 1942. Letters from Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, “Parachute Company of Utah,” Utah State Archives.

⁶² “Ephraim Women Chosen At Union Election in Manti,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 5 February 1943; Dora Price Fautin, United Parachute Workers union membership card January 1944, copy in author’s possession; “The Road MUST Be Kept Open,” *Manti Messenger*, 21 May 1943 [quote 1].

The C.I.O., or Congress of Industrial Organizations, was spearheaded by John L. Lewis and a committee of other union leaders in the 1930s, and became independent in 1938 when the American Federation of Labor voted to expel the congress and the unions associated with it. The C.I.O. advocated the organization of America's industrial workers in the steel, auto, electrical, rubber, glass, textile, and other mass production industries. The United Parachute Workers was probably similar to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA), another affiliate of the C.I.O. Robert E. Weir and James P. Hanlan, ed., *Historical Encyclopedia of American Labor*, Vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 10-11, 108-10, 251-53; Nash, *World War II and the West*, 56-60.

County as well. Women also carpoled, and if they lived close enough, they walked to work. One group of women even rode together in an old hearse from one of the towns.⁶³ As for housing, some of the single workers from outside of Manti rented any available homes or apartments. The Governor, Fauntleroy, and state officials also worked to arrange movement of the CCC housing to Manti from Sevier County to accommodate more workers.⁶⁴

The plant had sporadic employment patterns. A shortage of nylon material in May 1943, due to a scuffle between the Navy and Army over material, threatened to close down the plant, and did close it for a period of time. As the *Ephraim Enterprise* reported, “Things looked pretty dark last weekend as the some 300 employees of the plant were threatened with the loss of their jobs.” Women workers appealed to Governor Maw to intervene on behalf of the plant so that they could keep their jobs. Additional contracts from the government were needed to keep the plant operating at full capacity. Reports of possible layoffs, as well as frequent, almost weekly, pleas for more workers, made the plant appear somewhat unstable and often made front-page news locally.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ruesch, 3; Beesley, 1; Bernitta Barney, questionnaire, mid-1980s, 1, copy in author’s possession; Zola Ann Jensen, questionnaire, September 1984, 1, copy in author’s possession; Wretha Peterson Nielsen, questionnaire, 2; Vera Sorensen, questionnaire, 1; Doris S. Morley Hansen, questionnaire, January 1985, 1, copy in author’s possession.

⁶⁴ Betty Anderson, 3; Fautin, 1; Braithwaite, 1; Lawrence A. Johnson, State Defense Housing Director, to C. E. Fauntleroy, 25 June 1942; C. E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 6 July 1942; C. E. Fauntleroy to Lawrence A. Johnson, 6 July 1942; letters from Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, “Parachute Company of Utah,” Utah State Archives.

⁶⁵ “Nylon Lack Closes Parachute Plant,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 21 May 1943 [quote 1]; “Plant Support Assured by War Production Board,” *Manti Messenger*, 11 June 1943; “Workers Ask Maw Aid in Plant Closing,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 May 1943; “Manti ‘Chute Plant Closes As Army Checks Goods,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 19 May 1943;

In any case, by mid-1944 the future of the Parachute Company of Utah was unsure. The company announced that on June 30, 1944, the plant would close, so efforts were made by Governor Maw, the mayor of Manti, and others to attract potential buyers. On June 30, it was announced that the plant did indeed have a future. The *Ephraim Enterprise* claimed that employees and civic leaders were now assured that a “permanent industry for southern Utah” had come with the sale of the plant to the Reliance Manufacturing Company of Chicago. The new Reliance plant would continue to make parachutes by finishing out the Parachute Company of Utah’s contracts and would also make textile goods during and well after the war’s conclusion.⁶⁶

“Murdock Plans Aid for ‘Chute Plant,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 May 1943; “Chute Plant in Manti Pledged Help,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 27 May 1943; “Chute Plant Accord Near, Brown Says: Sees Agreement On Fight Over Materials,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 May 1943. A few examples of plant shutdowns and pleas for more employment include: “Parachute Plant Re-Opens Monday,” *Manti Messenger*, 21 May 1943; “Governor and Senator Pledge Full Plant Support,” *Manti Messenger*, 28 May 1943; “Fauntleroy Wants More Workers Like Now Employed,” *Manti Messenger*, 8 October 1943; “Call Made For More Help,” *Manti Messenger*, 29 October 1943; “Parachute Co. Goes Back to Work,” *Manti Messenger*, 7 April 1944.

Regarding the uncertainty and sporadic nature of employment, one man commented: “The management of this enterprise is so indefinite and incomplete in its management and instructions that no one knew where they were at and felt so insecure that they hesitated starting anything when they did not know about the training, the employment, the wage, the time they could expect to continue and other things that may arise to limit their activities. They couldn’t plan anything in relation to employment at the plant so they just planned [elsewhere] where there was more definiteness.” McFarland to Eustice.

⁶⁶ “Local Plant Gets Maw’s Help,” *Manti Messenger*, 5 May 1944; “Governor Will Investigate Manti Plant,” *Manti Messenger*, 12 May 1944; “Plant Workers Return to Their Home,” *Manti Messenger*, 5 May 1944; Manti Gets First Utah Post-War Plant,” *Manti Messenger* and *Ephraim Enterprise*, 30 June 1944; Susie Fields Tatton, interview by Don Norton, 25 March 1997, Manti, Utah, 4-5, copy of transcript of tape recording in author’s possession.

Reliance was a large company, operating mostly east of the Mississippi, and made a variety of apparel. The plant in Manti was its twenty-third plant. Five of its plants produced parachutes during World War II: two in Washington, Indiana, one in Manti, one in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and one in Columbia, Mississippi. The Manti Plant was officially called the “Wasatch Plant.” The company sent managers and those in supervisory positions, such as time-study engineers, out to run the Manti plant. Those sent out included a Mr. Ellis, J. H. Meyers, Gus Wagner, Ruth Bacon, and Sue Fields. It appears that Reliance made few changes and that many of the workers who chose to continue employment kept doing the kind of work that they had done previously. Its shifts, however, ran from 8:00 to 4:00 and from 4:00 until midnight.⁶⁷

Articles on Reliance seem to particularly emphasize its permanence, as did this article on the front page of the *Manti Messenger* on July 7, 1944: “The people of Manti and vicinity are jubilant over the prospects of this new industry, and that the payroll started by Col. C. E. Fauntleroy and his company two years ago will continue through the years to come. It will probably be the largest single factor [*sic*] ever to come to us and will do more for the building up of our valley than we can imagine at this time.” “Rely on Reliance” was the popular slogan as well. One Reliance advertisement for women workers stated: “Get set in a good permanent job now for post war days and at the same time help to make the parachutes so urgently needed for the war effort.” The company also made it explicitly clear that it would “guarantee to each employee the privilege of following the dictates of his own mind, heart and conscience. Race, creed, religion,

⁶⁷ Tatton, 1-3, 5-6; Madsen, 3; “Plant Goes to Producers of First Class Goods,” *Manti Messenger*, 7 July 1944; Longaker, “Memories,” 6.

organizational desires and activities, political views, or social beliefs shall never be made the basis of determining whether or not you will be employed by Reliance Manufacturing Company.”⁶⁸

Unfortunately, Reliance did not stay in Manti as long as was expected. After Reliance finished making parachutes, it started making jackets. In 1947, however, the Wasatch Plant was sold, apparently because the purchasers did not find it profitable any longer. At the time, Reliance was selling its plants off one at a time. In addition, Reliance’s salesmen were all east of the Mississippi River, making this plant in Manti unable to compete because the company had to ship products to the east. Carlisle Manufacturing Company bought the plant in the 1950s. Carlisle also opened plants in Ephraim and Gunnison, both of which operated for twenty years. The Manti plant was bought from Carlisle in 1961 by Pacific Trails Sportswear, which operated until 1981. Pacific Trails also had a plant in nearby Richfield. The Manti plant was subsequently owned by other companies, including Pyke Manufacturing Company and River’s West. Utah Sportswear opened a plant in Mt. Pleasant in 1980 as well.⁶⁹

Despite the fact that the parachute plant was not a paradise for workers, the wartime production of parachutes, along with the work supplied by subsequent sewing plants in later years, provided avenues from some extra cash to a career for many a woman in central Utah. The problems associated with the plant’s founding were

⁶⁸ “Plant Goes to Producers Of First Class Goods,” *Manti Messenger*, 7 July 1944 [quote 1]; Madsen, 3; Reliance Advertisement in *Ephraim Enterprise*, 4 August 1944; “Rely on Reliance,” *Manti Messenger*, 8 September 1944. It is interesting that the advertisement of 4 August 1944, which speaks of non-biased employment, does not mention gender in any way.

⁶⁹ Tatton, 6, 8; Madsen, 4; Antrei and Roberts, 268; Antrei and Scow, 255-256.

clustered most intensely at its outset. After working around painful divisions and jealousies, the surrounding community would come to largely embrace outsiders and outside elements as time went on.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S MOTIVATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR WORK

The memories of central Utah's wartime workers point to some general trends or themes. Motivations for work varied, but prove significant for the women of Manti and their various situations in a rural community during World War II. This sample of twenty-seven women workers illustrates that they chose to work in Manti's parachute factory because it presented opportunities for patriotic contribution, offered alternatives to rural work, and provided desired economic necessities and benefits. Underlying the complex entanglement of such motivations, however, were various economic incentives that appear paramount throughout the women's experiences. Overall, then, these women primarily worked out of patriotic duty and for pay.

LuRae Munk Greenwood remembered well the impact the war had on her central Utah community:

I remember Pearl Harbor. I was ironing a dress, getting ready for church, when we heard about it on the radio. It was terrible for our community, because many of our fellows were in the navy, and many of the young men my age were in the National Guard. The casualties of the young men from Manti were great. Nearly all the young men from the small communities around Manti–Ephraim, Mayfield, Sterling, etc.–went, and a lot of them were lost.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Margaret LuRae Munk Greenwood, interview by Don Norton, 27 March 1997, Orem, Utah, 1, copy of transcript of tape recording in author's possession.

World War II impacted the lives of nearly every resident of Sanpete County in some way. The county had a total of 1,803 residents, representing approximately eleven percent of the population, who served in the armed forces between 1 October 1940 and 30 June 1946; it ranked eighth of the twenty-nine Utah counties in the number of residents serving in the armed forces.⁷¹ Accordingly, a major motivation for women working in the parachute plant stemmed from the plant's contribution to the war effort. Because many of these workers had immediate family members in the service, personal ties spurred desires to contribute to the war effort. Instead of joining some sort of service themselves (such as the WAAC⁷² or the Nursing Corps), these women recognized working at the plant as an opportunity to actively contribute and to escape the relative lack of power they felt on the home front to safeguard their loved ones or affect the course of the war.

Like Greenwood, many of the younger women who worked at the plant had peers in the service: friends, brothers, and husbands. Luzon Sondrup Longaker had two brothers in the service, one a bombardier in the Air Force and the other in the Navy on an aircraft carrier near Bataan. Zola Anderson Ruesch had a brother in the Navy and her

⁷¹ Antrei and Roberts, 268. According to the 1940 census, Sanpete County had a population of 16,063 and Manti a population of 2,268. Those in the armed forces, then, represented about 11 percent of the population in 1940. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Characteristics of the Population*, Volume II, Part VII (Washington: United States Government, 1943), 39, 61.

⁷²The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, or WAAC, was established on 15 May 1942, after a bill authorizing it passed Congress and was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The idea of establishing a women's branch of the army was proposed by U.S. representative Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts in early 1941 but was met initially with so much controversy and opposition in both Congress and the Army that it was not considered. The women of the WAAC were considered civilians serving with the Army. Four other women's military branches followed in 1942 and 1943 for the Navy, Coast Guard, Marines and Air Force. Yellin, 113-116.

boyfriend was a paratrooper. Wretha Peterson Nielsen had a nephew and six other school classmates killed in action. Doris S. Morley Hansen had two brothers in the service. Dora Price Fautin, who had brothers overseas as well, remembered that “we were also proud of working there. . . . We all had to do our part to win the war and get the men home to their families.” Seventeen-year-old Marjorie Jenson Anderson had two older brothers in the service and felt that she “had to do something to help.” Because her mother would not allow her to join the WAAC, Marjorie helped “fight” through her efforts at the parachute plant instead. Alice Fredricksen Clark’s younger brother was in the Air Force, so she was “extra strict. . . . I went the extra mile on account of him. I didn’t want him out in a parachute and have anything go wrong with it.” On the day he left, however, she was so emotional that she couldn’t come in to work. The war was a very difficult time for her personally because her brother was shot down over Germany and placed in a prison camp. He almost died of starvation and recovered in a hospital in France for quite some time before he was allowed to come back to the United States. She remembered that “the war was just hard, especially when you had relatives [in the service].”⁷³

Several of these young women also married soldiers. On furloughs, Utah soldiers were allowed to tour the parachute plant on several occasions. Through such meetings, Fautin and Georgia Torgerson Jolley met their future husbands. “The fellows were good lookin’ in their uniforms,” Jolley remembered. Greenwood married a soldier, a young man she met at Snow College, in August of 1943 and left the plant for a time while he

⁷³ Longaker, questionnaire, 1; Ruesch, 1-2; Wretha Nielsen, 1; Hansen, 3; Fautin, 4 [quote 1]; Marjorie Jenson Anderson, interview by author, 17 September 2005, Richfield, Utah, 4, transcript of digital recording in author’s possession [quote 2]; Clark, 3, 5 [quotes 3, 4].

was stationed in Chicago. She came back in November and worked as long as she could before pregnancy made work too difficult. In late 1944, Longaker also married a pilot in the Air Force. LuElla Peterson Thornton's husband was one of the first to be drafted from her hometown in Sevier County. They had been married two years and had a small daughter when he left to fight overseas for three years, seeing action in Africa and Italy and receiving two wounds. His small pay of twenty dollars a month was not enough to live on, so Thornton took a job at the parachute plant. She located in a house in Manti that she shared with her sisters, where they took turns on shifts and tending the child. She remembered that the job helped her both financially and emotionally to get through such a trying period in her life.⁷⁴

The middle-aged women often had sons in the service. Odessa Young Mower's oldest son was in the Navy. Lillian Keller had a boy in the National Guard, and another was a gunner on an airplane that dropped bombs over Germany. Lila Bartholomew Keller remembered that one woman worker, Mary Peterson, had six sons and a son-in-law in the military at the same time. According to Keller, Peterson declared, "This is my contribution to the war. That job saved my sanity." Keller remembered that the women she knew "desired to be involved in the war effort." She claimed that the women working at the Independent Parachute Company were willing to make repairs in their work because a soldier's life depended on the safety of the parachute—a soldier that could be one of the women's own sons. Keller also recalled that the piece work that the women

⁷⁴ Fautin, 4; Georgia Torgerson Jolley, interview by Don Norton, 27 March 1997, Lindon, Utah, 4, copy of transcript of tape recording in author's possession [quote 1]; Greenwood, 2, 5; Longaker, questionnaire, 1; Thornton, 1. Zola Ruesch and Carol Beesley also married soldiers, though after the war's conclusion. Ruesch, 1; Beesley, 1.

did was “murder on the hands,” yet the women were willing to go through the pain because their boys were going through more difficult trials overseas.⁷⁵

In general, many women at the plant cited patriotic motivations and sentiment for working there. Hansen “felt good, doing something for the war effort.” Greenwood remembered that “there were great patriotic feelings among the women workers” and that “they were thrilled to be working in the plant.” Zola Ann Jensen recalled that the women at the plant were “in high regard” because of the plant’s patriotic contributions. Wretha Nielsen thought that the war brought people closer together. Vera Sorensen felt that she was doing her duty by helping in the war effort.⁷⁶

Patriotism was often funneled by both supervisors and employees into precision and attention to detail. Fautin stated that “we took our responsibilities serious[ly]. We knew that it was a government project, and we respected that.” Jolley, who inspected the seams over a lighted table, remembered “watching real close for bad stitches, because if one didn’t get picked up, it could ruin the chute. The soldier could get killed.” Clark was “really strict with inspection” and recalled a “government inspector that would go over a lot of it, and check it to see if we’d done it right.” She recalled that “the parachutes were safe. We inspected them until we about wore them out!”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Odessa Young Mower, questionnaire, 4 August 1984, 1, copy in author’s possession; Lillian Keller, 1; Lila B. Keller, interview, 1, 3-4, [quotes 1, 2]; Lila B. Keller, “The Independent Parachute Company,” 3-4 [quote 3].

⁷⁶ Hansen, 3 [quote 1]; Greenwood, 2 [quote 2]; Mower, 2; Jensen, 3 [quote 3]; Nielsen, 2; Vera Sorensen, questionnaire, 3.

⁷⁷ Fautin, 3 [quote 1]; Jolley, 3 [quote 2]; Clark, 3, 5 [quotes 3, 4].

The women would put notes to the soldiers in the parachutes, and sometimes they got replies of one kind or another. Greenwood remembered the women's notes saying: "I'm so and so. I live in Manti, Utah. I'm making this parachute so that you can arrive safely on earth." Sorensen has letters from servicemen thanking the workers because the parachutes saved their lives. Maurine Braithwaite Draper also recalled receiving such letters. Management used letters from soldiers whose lives had been saved by Manti's parachutes to build morale. One letter to Mrs. Betty K. Lowry, dated 17 April 1943, from Colonel Fauntleroy stated:

The Company has been advised that Sgt. W. R. Shaman of Hobbs Flying Field recently made a successful emergency jump in Standard parachute No. 42-193179 which was made here in the Manti plant. You will be especially glad to hear of his safe landing because you worked on this particular parachute. We are proud, as I am sure you will be, that your work has saved a man who is prepared to give his life in defending you and the rest of us on the home front.⁷⁸

Another letter detailing the plant's duty to preserve soldiers' lives, (and reinforcing work standards), was sent to Greenwood herself and was written on 30 May 1942 by John D. Mumma, Fauntleroy's right-hand man. In a patriotic, yet slightly condescending tone, it read, "It is our sincere hope that you will always work so carefully that you would not hesitate to ask your own brother to entrust his safety to your parachute, should he happen to be the American soldier, sailor or marine who will wear it."⁷⁹

⁷⁸ C. E. Fauntleroy to Mrs. Betty K. Lowry, 17 April 1943, copy in author's possession.

⁷⁹ Greenwood, 3 [quote 1]; Maurine Braithwaite Draper, interview by author, 17 September 2005, Manti, Utah, 2, transcript of digital recording in author's possession; Sorensen, 3; John D. Mumma to Miss LuRae Munk, 30 May 1942, copy in author's possession [quote 2].

In addition, Reliance Manufacturing published a letter in the *Manti Messenger* from a soldier thanking the company for the “chute” that saved his life. The accompanying article claimed “that letters arrive daily” of this sort, and that the soldiers request membership “in the famed Reliance Club, an exclusive organization for G. I.’s who have made successful emergency jumps.”⁸⁰

The tight security and inspection processes at the plant also served as reminders of the plant’s patriotic duty to the country’s servicemen. Lois Tooth Kribs recalled, “The United States was at war, and we were building parachutes in Manti. We didn’t want any aliens in the plant. There was a security guard at the door till the war ended, and the workers all wore a badge.” Accordingly, the women were checked when entering and exiting the plant. Fautin claimed that “we would have been arrested had we taken any of the nylon scraps [from the parachutes] home. Everybody was checked at the door on the way. Security was tight.” Clark remembered that “we couldn’t carry things in there [the plant building]; we had inspectors check us when we went in. They were very strict.”⁸¹

Thus, the personal dimensions and implications of the war linked work for these women to patriotism making work a patriotic duty. They had brothers, friends, husbands, sons, and other relatives in the service. Contacts with soldiers on leave and letters and notes also made the war situation even more of a reality for the women workers. The emotional trauma associated with wondering and waiting on the home front could be at least partially alleviated through a conscientious effort in a war industry and could

⁸⁰ “Reliance Chutes Save Lives,” *Manti Messenger*, 16 March 1945.

⁸¹ Lois Tooth Kribs, interview by Don Norton, 1 April 1997, Manti, Utah, 2, copy of transcript of tape recording in author’s possession [quote 1]; Fautin, 3 [quote 2]; Clark, 3, 5 [quote 3].

accordingly “save one’s sanity.” Longaker summed up well the feelings of many women. Working at the plant “increased my patriotism and gave me greater love for my country and fellow men. Since then, I have had a greater desire to serve others. It gave me more appreciation for those who were serving their country and giving their lives that we might have peace.”⁸²

Since Manti was a rural community, many, if not most, of the women who came to work at the parachute plant had grown up in households whose focus was agricultural. Traditionally, in addition to housework (which included the time-consuming tasks of food preparation and preservation, providing and maintaining clothing, and housecleaning) and childbearing, the farm wife often tended flocks, worked in a garden, and milked cows. She could produce commodities such as eggs, vegetables and butter on the farm for sale in the marketplace, thereby earning a small, independent income.⁸³ If women desired wage-work, however, options were limited due to lack of industry in this rural area of the state. The advertisement of work in the parachute plant, with its relatively good wages and working conditions, enticed women as a favorable alternative to the work previously available in the rural setting.

Growing up for the most part on farms, women who worked at the plant were well acquainted with labor. The duties of the farm woman, which were in addition to work

⁸² Longaker, questionnaire, 3.

⁸³ See Neth, 250. Dean May also attests to such work in his analysis of women in Alpine, Utah. He claims that “the fact that their husbands in a sense commuted to work in the fields outside the town made the domestic hearth, including garden and barnyard animals, more exclusively their [the women’s] domain. The women’s production of vegetables, butter, and eggs from backyard gardens and pens accounted for much of the tiny marketable surplus their hardscrabble farmlands produced.” May, 139. See also Rugh, *Our Common County*, 65-67.

inside the home, likely prepared the women to take this next step of wage-work. Mower's mother helped on the farm a lot, as did a large number of women, young and old. Greenwood remembered that everyone had big gardens and that her family had cows, pigs, and chickens. Dortha Bagley Braithwaite grew up milking cows and tromping⁸⁴ wool along with tending pigs and chickens. She also picked potatoes, herded cows, and worked with turkeys. Clark claimed that she was doing the work of a man from the time she was a young girl, tromping hay and milking cows. Anderson also recalled tromping hay and having to get "her duds"⁸⁵ on to go work on the farm.⁸⁶

The income derived from farms was often not enough to sustain many families especially because of the devastating effects of the Depression. Most of the fathers and husbands of the women who worked at the plant were small businessmen or farmers, like many in the area. Kribs remembered that "it was hard making a living in this area, and everybody wanted to work hard." Greenwood recalled how "the area was depressed at that time; we had nothing but our farms." Longaker's father was a cattleman, but her mother sold Avon products for fourteen years to supplement the family's income. Others sought alternative employment. Anderson's mother sold a variety of goods door-to-door to help provide for the family. Anderson and her mother also went to work in the pea cannery in Ephraim (located north of Manti). A few turkey processing plants in Sanpete

⁸⁴ "Tromping" is a loosely used rural term that refers to the process of shearing wool or cutting and baling hay.

⁸⁵ "Duds" is a colloquial term for clothing.

⁸⁶ Greenwood, 1-2; Braithwaite, 1; Longaker, questionnaire, 1; Clark, 2; Marjorie Anderson, 7.

and Sevier counties employed some women as well. Women also did cleaning and housework for others and worked in cafes, stores, and post offices.⁸⁷

Because such opportunities for wage-earning were scarce for women and because women often preferred work outside the farm, the parachute plant's war work was welcomed as a preferable alternative in a rural area to make money. Kribs remembered that jobs were hard to come by, especially if one did not want to work on a farm. She also recalled that the women of central Utah "had a reputation for hard work. That was a plus, we were told, and that was the reason the plant was brought to Manti." Fautin recalled that the plant "sounded like a better deal, and I was probably tired of café work." Ruesch was working for a family in Ephraim and decided that she "wanted better work." Longaker claimed that she took the job at the plant because "very few jobs were available – farming was the main source of livelihood." In the winter especially, work was scarce, and Clark was glad to be free of farm work in the summer because it was "so darn hard." Anderson was also relieved to escape unfeminine work clothes, "duds," the heat, and the unpleasant insects associated with her work on the farm. Draper thought that the plant was "a really good thing" because people did not have many opportunities for jobs. The mayor of Manti, R. Easton Moffitt, declared, "We are thrilled with the possibilities the establishment of this plant afford our people." Another observer claimed that the plant "looks like a golden opportunity. Our women have been holding on. . . . Now they [will]

⁸⁷ Kribs, 6-7 [quote 1]; Greenwood, 1-2 [quote 2]; Longaker, 1; Marjorie Anderson, 2. See also Hansen, 3; Nielson, 3; Mower, 3; Draper, 6; Fautin, 1; Ruesch, 3; Jolley, 2; Kribs, 3; Draper, 4; and Jensen, 3. According to the 1940 census, seventy-five men and two women in Sanpete County were employed in the manufacturing of food and kindred products. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Characteristics of the Population*, 48.

be OK with a good job.” One man even declared that “I am happy with the proposition. If it puts the men in the kitchen, we’ll carry on.”⁸⁸

Working conditions, described as “pleasant and profitable,” also enticed women away from the farm or the café. Advertisements for workers published in the *Manti Messenger* boasted that the plant “is Utah’s cleanest, most pleasant war production plant. There are no heavy machines, no dirt or dust, no heavy labor.” Purportedly, the work was “as clean as sewing in your own home.” Transportation from neighboring cities was provided by company bus, and a cafeteria was located within the plant. In regard to breaks, plant propaganda heralded, “The plant provides rest periods twice daily in addition to mealtime. You never work more than two hours without a rest period.” Indeed, workers recall having ten-minute breaks after two hours in addition to a lunch break. There was also a cafeteria of sorts where women could eat and if desired, buy lunches. A woman in town with a handicapped child made raisin pies to sell there to supplement her income. The main complaints of women stemmed mostly from the noise of the factory and from the uncomfortable temperatures there in the summer. As one woman said, “I liked working there, but it was kind of a noisy place. But I didn’t mind it – I liked the work.” Another worker claimed, “We had to be there about 6 a.m. because there was no air conditioning in the building. It was very hot! They gave us salt pills which were supposed to keep us cooler, but it was still plenty hot.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Kribs, 6-7 [quote 1]; Fautin, 1 [quote 2]; Ruesch, 3 [quote 3]; Longaker, 3 [quote 4]; Clark, 3 [quote 5]; Marjorie Anderson, 7; Draper, 7 [quote 6]; Mayor R. Easton Moffitt, Adolph Hope, and Judge J. A. Hougaard quoted in “Parachute Plant to Employ Hundreds,” *Manti Messenger*, 10 April 1942 [quotes 7-9].

⁸⁹ “To the Women of Manti: You Are Needed For Vital War Production,” *Manti Messenger*, 8 October 1943, and “Women of Southern Utah – Our Army Must Have

The social aspect of the work atmosphere was something that the women especially enjoyed. If lonely at home or on the farm, or if bored in other pursuits, such sociability provided a real attraction to wage work in the parachute plant. In regard to the sociability at the plant, Greenwood recalled, “The hum of the machines was a happy sound. . . . People would be talking. It was a happy time. When women arrived and parked their cars, they would all get out and start talking, happily, ready to go to work.” The Independent Parachute Workers would also tell stories, enjoy refreshments, have a thought for the day, and tell jokes. Sue Fields Tatton, who came to Manti from Indiana when Reliance bought the plant, remarked, “The workers at Manti were basically all good workers. . . . They liked to talk a lot, but who doesn’t?” In comparison to some of her later jobs where people argued frequently and the boss “was cranky,” Clark claimed that she “never worked at a place where people got along as well. It was just kind of a happy family, all of us.” Fautin also remembered that “all the women got along really well.” Jensen claimed that the women worked harmoniously together because they had similar backgrounds.⁹⁰

Friendships extended beyond the workplace as well. Several women recalled social activity after work with friends from the plant. Many went roller skating after the night shift. Fautin recalled that her supervisor from Chester invited her and others over to her home for dinner on a Sunday night. Another woman from Fairview invited Fautin

Parachutes! You Are Needed to Build Them!” *Manti Messenger*, 12 November 1943 [quotes 1-4]; Greenwood, 4; Alice Johnson Anderson, phone interview by author, 18 March 2006, 2, notes from conversation in author’s possession; Kribs, 6; Ruesch, 3 [quote 5]; Marjorie Anderson, 1 [quote 6].

⁹⁰ Greenwood, 6 [quote 1]; Lila B. Keller, interview, 4; Tatton, 6 [quote 2]; Clark, 7 [quote 3]; Fautin, 3 [quote 4]; Jensen, 2; Betty Anderson, 4.

and her friend over for ice cream. Several women commented that they were still good friends with some of their fellow workers. Many were also friends before their work, and many had extended family networks at the plant as well – mothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, in-laws, etc.⁹¹

Overall, the sentiment of many in Manti and surrounding areas was positive toward the plant as it brought wage-earning possibilities to an economically depressed rural area. The women themselves were also happy to be able to earn wages in an industry in a relatively pleasant and social atmosphere. Draper summarized such sentiments well when she claimed that her parents “were happy with [my working] because we needed something here in town to help support because there just wasn’t [sic] jobs here at the time,” and that she loved sewing and needed “something to do” away from the farm.⁹²

Of all the motivations for work in the parachute plant, economic necessity stands out as the primary reason that most women cited for taking work there.⁹³ The

⁹¹ Fautin, 3, 4; Madsen, 3; Clark, 8; Ruesch, 1.

⁹² Draper, 6, 4-5.

⁹³ Of the twenty-seven women workers for whom information is available, seventeen strongly claimed patriotic motivations for war work, (more than a simple “yes” to a question about the job being patriotic) representing approximately 63% of the sample. Lack of rural alternatives were strongly stated by nineteen of the women, or roughly 70% of the sample. Economic factors (working for reasons of economic survival) were cited strongly by twenty-one out of the twenty-seven, or about 78%, but one can suspect that economic factors played a part for most, if not all, of the women even if they did not want to admit it. It is worthy of note that patriotic factors, due to the passage of time and the popularity of WWII, might be overstated in these numbers as well.

It must be noted that some women cited a combination of all three motivations, and others a combination of two factors, and some only one. The various combinations

comparative value of the women's wages, individual circumstances, and the economic realities of the recent and ongoing Depression made the situation in Manti for many people one of real need. For the women who worked there, as one worker put it, the plant "was a blessing to our area as most families had low incomes."⁹⁴

Wages at the plant were generally considered good for the time and place.

Accounts of the parachute plant's payroll boasted that it would have a monthly payroll of \$80,000 to a payroll of \$1,000,000. Fauntleroy told Governor Maw that the plant had a payroll of about \$16,000 per week in 1943. Advertisements for the plant claimed that women were to be paid during training and would receive 40 cents per hour for the first two weeks, followed by an immediate pay increase along with regular pay increases and production bonuses.⁹⁵ Jensen remembered earning 60 cents an hour, eight hours a day. She claimed that such a salary was "considered *big wages*" as men were getting about \$1.00 or \$2.00 a day for work then. Ruth Davenport Scow remembered that her husband

in varying degrees are complex, but an effort has been made to preserve as accurately as possible the women's own sentiments in their authentic complexity.

⁹⁴ Longaker, "Memories," 4.

⁹⁵ "Sanpete Gets First Defense Industry," *Ephraim Enterprise*, 10 April 1942; "Parachute Plant to Employ Hundreds," *Manti Messenger*, 10 April 1942; C.E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 13 April 1943, Governor Maw Correspondence 1943, "Parachute Company of Utah," Utah State Archives; "To the Women of Manti: You Are Needed For Vital War Production," *Manti Messenger*, 8 October 1943; and "Women of Southern Utah – Our Army Must Have Parachutes! You Are Needed to Build Them!" *Manti Messenger*, 12 November 1943.

Plant secretary Margaret J. Brown recorded that the women were paid a minimum wage of 40 cents per hour, 7 ½ hours a day, six days per week. After a worker had been on the payroll ninety days, her wage was raised to 45 cents per hour. Two hundred and fifty women on the payroll were earning the minimum rate of \$19 per week; 46 were earning between \$20 and \$25 per week; and 17 were earning between \$25 and \$25 per week. Brown to Davis, 24 August 1942.

only earned \$1.00 a day at the time and exclaimed that “life was hard in the Depression!” Fautin remembered getting a bonus at Thanksgiving and Christmas. At Christmas, her check stub records a \$100 bonus, of which she received \$79.00 after taxes. “It was a good bonus, a lot of money,” she stated. In the pea cannery, Scow only earned 17 cents an hour, and in the 1930s she cooked and only earned \$40 a month, what she could earn in only two weeks at the plant. A paycheck of Nielson’s was probably typical of what women earned at the plant. For the period between 8 May and 14 May 1943, she worked forty-eight hours, and with an hourly rate of 50 cents plus overtime pay, she made a total of \$28.29 after taxes. Fautin was paid a total of 1,026.88 in 1943. In late 1943, she made 55 cents an hour, and in 1944, she made 60 cents an hour. Some women were obviously paid more than others due to experience, rate of work, and job specificity, and Clark recalled making about a dollar an hour.⁹⁶

In comparison to other industries or occupations, twenty-five to thirty dollars per week was likely considered decent pay for a woman in rural Utah. Though the wages were not as high as those in large cities, the wages were better than the other local options. In the Salt Lake City Remington Arms Plant, workers earned about \$22 a week and a final inspector of small cartridges made about \$30 a week. Women workers in

⁹⁶ Jensen, 3 [quote 1]; Ruth Davenport Scow, questionnaire, 29 July 1984, 3, copy in author’s possession [quote 2]; Fautin, 3 [quote 3]; Wretha Nielsen, copy of pay stub, 4; Dora Price Fautin check stubs, copy in author’s possession; Clark, 3. Dortha Braithwaite remembered getting a hundred-dollar bonus on one occasion. Braithwaite, 2. Bernitta Barney also remembered a 50 cent per hour wage and that she earned \$4.00 a day for four years. She thought that such a wage was “very good – [the] first work women had ever had.” Barney, 3. As mentioned, there were some personal incentive plans for the four-needle operators, four-needle tape operators, zigging operators, and two-needle operators as well. C. E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw 10 July 1942, Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, “Parachute Company of Utah,” Utah State Archives.

Utah's department stores earned around \$10.50 per week. In the United States at large, a waitress averaged \$14 a week whereas a woman shipyard worker averaged \$37 a week. In comparison, a cleaning woman could earn as little as \$2 a week. The memories in this section about the differential between men's and women's wages are significant for what they do not say. These women simply accept without question that such a gap should exist between men's and women's wages. The unquestioning acceptance of this differential portrays a sense that women were not expected to earn as much as a man did in a day's work at the time. With this newfound war work, however, women were able to make as much or more as men did in some cases. In manufacturing in 1944, however, women in the United States at large averaged \$31.21 per week whereas the men earned \$54.65 on average.⁹⁷

Individual circumstances dictated the value of economic contributions of such wage work for the women. Edith Buchanan Bown's statement speaks well for the experience of these women: "We had to make our own way through life; I know what a dollar means. To this day, a dollar means a lot to me." Hansen was widowed at a young age and took the job to feed herself and her children. Longaker and Draper were young divorcees in need of work to be able to successfully strike out on their own; they greatly appreciated the parachute plant and its wages for their family survival. Longaker's parents, with whom she moved in, were very much in favor of her working because she had very little to live on. Draper moved into an apartment with a friend and successfully made her own way while relatives watched her children. Bernitta Barney was a 26-year-old widow at the time. She was very grateful to find work to support her family, as she

⁹⁷ Murphy, 209; Chambers [Noble], thesis, 102; Yellin, 41; Campbell, 136.

claimed that “priar [*sic*] to the war it was a disgrace for women to work. If they were fortunate enough to find work—25 cents per hour was the wage.” She called war work “a gold mine” in those “Depression days.” Barney’s attitudes about women’s wage work being a disgrace likely reflect on men’s inability to provide. It was a “disgrace” if a man could not provide for his family and the woman had to work outside the home to do so.⁹⁸

A dollar meant a lot to married women as well. Nielsen’s husband did not want her to work, and neither did her parents, but she did work because of the economic necessity of paying for their dry farm and a new home “in the midst of the serious depression.” Mower and her husband were buying a store in their hometown of Fairview and needed the money for survival in that transitional period. Others would either save the money or use it for family necessities. Marjorie Anderson’s mother had a separate checking account in which she kept her money. This woman’s husband said of her, “I really have to hand it to Mildred. If we ever needed anything that I couldn’t provide, she got out and she got a job and we got the money.”⁹⁹

Women did a variety of things with the money they earned, as new resources were now at their disposal. According to Lila Keller, “When women make their own money, they’re going to use it where they want and where they feel like they need it most.” She remembered that many women used their money for indoor bathroom facilities and improved kitchens. In Keller’s own case, she bought an overstuffed chair and a bull for \$250 because her stock was “badly in need of upgrading.” “With money

⁹⁸ Edith Buchanan Bown, interview by Don Norton, 2 July 1994, Manti, Utah, 1, copy of transcript of tape recording in author’s possession [quote 1]; Hansen, 3; Sondrup, questionnaire, 3; Draper, 6; Barney, 2, 3 [quotes 2-3].

⁹⁹ Nielsen, 2 [quote 1]; Mower, 3; Marjorie Anderson, 5 [quote 2].

from work at the plant,” Greenwood remembered, “families in the community got things in their home that they’d never had before—bathrooms, new kitchens. At that time, a lot of people didn’t have refrigerators or bathrooms, and their kitchens were outmoded. We had been through a depression era.” Sorensen mostly worked for family necessities but was also able to buy living room furniture, including an overstuffed chair. She was also able to afford indoor plumbing for the first time and pay for her children to have music lessons. Clark was anxious to install lights, water, and a bathroom in her home in Centerfield. Draper paid rent and bought badly needed groceries and furniture. The young, single women finally had “money to spend” and mostly bought clothes and furniture; one even bought a 1941 Hudson coupe.¹⁰⁰

Overall, the motivations for work varied from woman to woman but were significant in their individual lives, especially as they tell us about the women’s personal lives during this period and about what this opportunity for wage-work meant for them in the scope of their lifetimes. Patriotic motives and rural alternatives appear to have shaped many women’s decisions to take a job at the parachute plant. For many of the women, especially those for whom the Depression was hurting them agriculturally and thus financially, as well as for the women on their own, the money made at the plant was significant because it paid for necessities. A weekly paycheck provided a more stable income as opposed to farming. Of the twenty-seven women, at least eight (or about 30 percent) were working to put food on the table, though this number may be smaller than the actual because this sample is biased toward those women who were younger. The

¹⁰⁰ Lila B. Keller, interview, 7-8 [quotes 1, 2]; Greenwood, 1-2 [quote 3]; Sorensen, questionnaire, 3; Draper, 5; Kribs, 6-7; Clark, 2; Fautin, 3 [quote 4]; Marjorie Anderson, 4; Braithwaite, 2.

other eighteen used their income to buy other items, for improvement of living standards, for extra commodities and education, or for a combination of all of the above. Thus, several also used the money to improve their standard of living, while other women, especially the young, unmarried ones, were able to enhance their purchasing capabilities and break out from more traditional avenues of rural work.¹⁰¹ The work done by women at Manti's parachute plant and the wages they earned there would have much to do with personal opportunity and would have ramifications in the community and for women's financial and personal independence as well.

¹⁰¹ It is difficult to quantify definitely the number of women who used their money for necessities (a necessity defined as shelter, food, clothing) versus extra income, as none of them could be considered wealthy by any means. Many of these women were not used to many luxuries and came from humble backgrounds, especially compared to present-day standards. Of the twenty-seven women, at least eight (or about 30 percent) were working to put food on the table, though this number may be smaller than the actual because this sample is biased toward those women who were younger. The other eighteen used their income to buy other items, for improvement of living standards, for extra commodities and education, or for a combination of all of the above.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNITY, FAMILY, AND PERSONAL DYNAMICS RELATING TO WOMEN'S WORK EXPERIENCES

Community, family, and personal dynamics shaped women's experiences during World War II. As people associated with the parachute company came into Manti, they influenced the small, largely cohesive community because they were often different than what locals were accustomed to. These outsiders' experiences shed light on the community at the time and the world in which Manti's working women lived. In turn, community reaction and support was important to the success of a relatively large industry, the parachute plant, coming into a small, rural community such as Manti, and community support in the aftermath of the plant's original opening was largely favorable. Similarly, family and community support of working women, also largely of an approving nature, aided women in taking work outside the home, though such had its limits. Women's choices in the face of religious admonitions against work and available child care options are also vital in understanding these women's experiences with war-time work. In all, these topics encompass issues of a rural, religious, and largely homogeneous society coming into a broader worldview and beginning to reckon with the realities of postwar America. As such, information about outsiders associated with the parachute plant, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' official statements about and admonitions to working women, to the increased economic opportunities for women

and ramifications of women working such as childcare will be explored in this chapter for their resulting impact.

Colonel Fauntleroy, owner and operator of the Parachute Company of Utah, seemed to be somewhat of an anomaly for Sanpete County residents, who appeared mystified by such a man. Though he was an outsider with different habits, however, they overwhelmingly remembered and revered the parachute plant's owner as a man of generosity. A plaque given to him by his employees praised Colonel Fauntleroy as a "brave soldier," "a noble citizen," and an "unfailing friend." One employee recalled, "He was a very gregarious man. To the town of Manti, he was a whirlwind of activity, something we weren't used to. He threw a party that was the wildest party this town has ever seen."¹⁰²

Fauntleroy's dress was one noticeable distinction that many commented upon. Even though he was the manager of a large industry for the area, his dress did not seem to communicate that fact through its lack of professionalism. One worker remembered that he "dressed like a hermit. If you had met him on the street, you'd have thought he was a tramp. He wore old, ragged clothes. He didn't fuss about what he looked like." Another employee remembered that the Colonel was "a large powerful man, usually dressed in rugged, casual clothes. . . . [who] could be gruff when the occasion warranted it but had a heart of gold." When a woman from Reliance first met Fauntleroy, she claimed she had "assumed he would dress pretty nicely, but he came in Levis and old muddy shoes, and at that time, not many people wore Levis." Even though his appearance might have spurred

¹⁰² Jacquie [Fauntleroy] Howard to Albert Antrei, Fremont, California, 1 February 1987, Manti Public Library, copy in author's possession [quote 1]; Kribs, 1, 2, [quote 2].

talk around town, Fauntleroy and his two daughters chose to live in an upstairs apartment over the plant and appeared to make friends in the community.¹⁰³

Social events surrounding the parachute plant served to amplify popular support for and introduce the new company and its transplants' customs. The parachute plant's party on October 24, 1942, perhaps "the wildest party" Manti had seen, celebrated the opening of the new plant building. The party was a popular event, with a reported 2,365 to 3,000 people in attendance (a number larger than the population of Manti), and made front-page news in two editions of the *Manti Messenger*. Workers and apparently some community members were invited, and the party was held in the new building that was spacious inside because the sewing machines had not been installed yet. Guests were treated to food on a buffet served by the American Legion and Legion Auxiliary and danced to music provided by an orchestra. Additional entertainment included singing and dancing routines by community members. One guest also remembered that prizes were given out at the party. Governor Maw, the guest of honor, was unable to attend and sent his secretary of state, E. E. Monson, instead. Another prominent figure from Salt Lake City, Hamm Parks who wrote for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, was also in attendance. The

¹⁰³ Madsen, 3 [quote 1]; Longaker, "Memories," 1 [quote 2]; Tatton, 4, [quote 3].

It was generally remembered that Col. Fauntleroy did not have a wife with him when he came to Manti. The 1930 census claims that C.E. Fauntleroy, age 39, lived in Manhattan with wife Dorothy B. Fauntleroy, 36, and two daughters: Joan, 6, and Jaqueline, 4. Fauntleroy was born in Mississippi and his wife and daughters were born in Illinois. *1930 United States Census, Manhattan, New York, New York*; Enumeration District: 561; Page: 17A; Roll: 1567; Image: 381.0; [online database] available from ancestry.com; accessed 27 February 2006.

Only one employee remembered any specifics about Fauntleroy's wife. She remembered that "his dear wife had been killed in a plane crash and he wanted to do everything possible to preserve the lives of our pilots and others manning the planes." According to her recollection, "Colonel Fauntleroy [also] liked the idea of living in a small country community with his two daughters, one being a teenager." Longaker, "Memories," 2-3.

Manti Messenger claimed that the party “was a brilliant success in every detail” and that “Colonel Fauntleroy is to be congratulated on the grand success of the whole affair.”¹⁰⁴

Apparently Fauntleroy often sponsored barbecues and get-togethers for his employees. One worker, reflecting on the effects of such parties, commented that “the outside people brought partying to the town, something we weren’t used to.” The Mormons were advised by their leaders at this time to obey the Church’s Word of Wisdom to abstain from alcoholic beverages, though some did not do so. Yet for those who had only gone to church functions and dances, a party thrown by the parachute plant was different, particularly in regard to the alcohol consumption. One worker remembered going into the ladies’ restroom to find a lot of girls sick, and she guessed that they had never had drinks before, or perhaps not in that quantity.¹⁰⁵

Everyday customs were different from what plant workers from outside Utah were accustomed to. For example, workers worked for a few hours at a time and were then given ten-minute breaks, which the plant operators called “coffee breaks.” Outsiders were surprised that not very many of the workers would drink coffee because of the LDS Church’s admonitions to abstain from it. As one worker remembered, “the people

¹⁰⁴ “Celebration To Mark Grand Opening of Plant,” *Manti Messenger*, 16 October 1942; “Many Attend Parachute Party,” *Manti Messenger*, 30 October 1942 [quote 1]; Kribs, 2; Herbert B. Maw to C. E. Fauntleroy, 29 September 1942; C. E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 27 October 1942; letters from Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, “Parachute Company of Utah,” Utah State Archives.

¹⁰⁵ Kribs, 2 [quote 1]; Sorensen and Sorensen, “Colonel C. E. Fauntleroy,” 2. The “Word of Wisdom is the common title for a revelation that counsels Latter-day Saints on maintaining good health and is published as Doctrine and Covenants: Section 89. The practice of abstaining from all forms of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea, which may outwardly distinguish Latter-day Saints more than any other practice, derives from this revelation.” Joseph Lynn Lyon, “Word of Wisdom,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. IV, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1584.

brought in to work in Manti couldn't believe we didn't drink coffee." Instead, the workers would sit in the lunchroom and eat apples that the factory shipped in from Utah Valley.¹⁰⁶

The parachute plant under Fauntleroy also gained a favorable reputation by contributing a large sum of money to build the hospital in Mt. Pleasant, a community north of Manti. Front-page news heralded that "Sanpete seems in line to get a hospital sponsored and operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. . . . The move to get such a hospital has been underway for sometime and was spurred on by a contribution of some \$7,500 by the Parachute plant at Manti to the Relief Societies of the four stakes in Sanpete." The funds, given in both 1942 and 1943, were to be used at the discretion of the Relief Society, whose officials decided to use the money for the hospital. In such a move, Fauntleroy and his staff at the parachute plant seem to have been courting the favor of the Relief Society in the area, a wise move considering the hundreds of LDS women employed at the plant and their membership in the Relief Society. A couple who knew Fauntleroy and worked for him at the time remarked in retrospect that such a donation illustrated that Fauntleroy "was community-minded." Another employee thought that Colonel Fauntleroy "did a lot of good in the town," including anonymous things as well.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Greenwood, 5.

¹⁰⁷ "Sanpete May Get Church Hospital," *Ephraim Enterprise*, 25 February 1944 [quote 1]; "No Strings Attached To Parachute Co.'s Contributions to Relief Societies," *Ephraim Enterprise*, 3 March 1944; "Church Hospital To Be Built At Mount Pleasant," *Ephraim Enterprise*, 27 April 1945; Sorensen and Sorensen, 2 [quote 2]; Kribs, 3 [quote 3]. Maurine Draper also commented that Fauntleroy "was a nice fellow. He done [*sic*] a lot of good for people that was poor and needed some help; he helped a lot of them." Draper, 7. In regard to the hospital, the LDS Church agreed to pay 50 percent of the

Colonel Fauntleroy brought several staff members with him to Manti who, like himself, were not especially familiar with the vicinity and were different from the people locals usually associated with. The head of the office personnel and Fauntleroy's personal secretary was Margaret J. Brown from the Washington, D.C. area. One woman who worked in the office under Brown remembered Brown's tailored apparel and found her manner "very businesslike but she had the respect and admiration of all who knew her." Another office worker, Lois Tooth Kribs, thought that Brown was unmarried and old but remarked that "she probably wasn't, we were just all very naïve." Kribs reflected that Brown was strict but still "fun to work with, though different from what we were used to – the outside world coming to a small Mormon community in 1942. She was from someplace back East, so it was a new and exciting thing to meet these people." According to Kribs, Brown did not adjust well to life in Manti and left as soon as Reliance came in, unlike many other local workers who continued employment. Kribs also commented that the non-Mormons "mainly stuck together."¹⁰⁸

Similarly, a Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly also came out to Manti to help with the plant, yet seemed to integrate better within the community than had Brown. Mr. Donnelly worked at the plant and Mrs. Donnelly managed one of the shifts at the plant. When the

costs of construction and equipment and would operate the facility if the community raised the other half of the cost. There was some controversy and squabbling about where to place the hospital because several cities in Sanpete wanted it. Eventually, the general authorities of the LDS Church stepped in and chose Mt. Pleasant. The four stake presidents in the area and local officials seemed to cooperate better after that intervention.

¹⁰⁸ Longaker, "Memories," 1 [quote 1]; Kribs, 1, 5 [additional quotes]; "Chute Plant Brought Fine People to Town," *Manti Messenger*, 26 June 1942. Kribs also remembered that the man next in line to Fauntleroy, "one of the main men," had an affair with a girl in the office and left his wife. Kribs, 1-2.

two of them left in May of 1944 to return to Derry Village, New Hampshire, parties were given in their honor by the plant's floor ladies and employees. The *Manti Messenger* noted that the Donnellys "have been an addition to our community" and that "they will be greatly missed and we are sorry to see them go."¹⁰⁹

Outsiders associated with the plant also had distinct and interesting impressions about Manti and the people they encountered while there. Sue Fields and Gus Wagner came to the community in 1944 with Reliance Manufacturing Company to prepare for the company's opening. Before Fields left Indiana, her sister procured a copy of *Life* magazine featuring a story on Utah polygamists and teased her about going to Utah and becoming a man's second wife. Traveling from Salt Lake City to Manti by car, Fields and Wagner, who thought Manti was pronounced "Mon-tee" instead of "Man-ti," hoped that Manti would be better than the little towns they saw on the way and were subsequently disappointed by its small size. They thought that the Mormon temple was a nice, big hotel and were frustrated when it wasn't. Instead, they had to live in a Manti's only motel, a tiny place on Main Street. Fields found the town small and "a little backward in some ways," including its muddy streets.¹¹⁰

Outsiders' impressions of Manti's people and culture also illuminate what the area was like in the 1940s and allude to the adjustments that had to be made on both sides. Sue Fields Tatton claimed that "people were nice, but they just weren't like the people in Indiana that I was used to" and that it was "hard to put your finger on exactly

¹⁰⁹ Betty Anderson, 7; "Plant Workers Return To Their Home," *Manti Messenger*, 5 May 1944 [quote 1]; "Chute Plant Brought Fine People to Town," *Manti Messenger*, 26 June 1942.

¹¹⁰ Tatton, 2-3, 5.

how the people [in Manti] were different.” She reflected that “it wasn’t easy moving into an all-Mormon community” and that she “had a hard time adjusting” as a Methodist. She recalled that the people in the area “were very proud people” and cited as an example a woman who applied for work at the plant. The woman informed Tatton “that she didn’t have to work. She wanted me to know that she didn’t need the money; this was her war effort.” Sue “always remembered how proud she was – too proud to let me think she needed money, though I imagine she did.” A couple from Reliance’s Columbia, Mississippi plant, Wilke and Bertha Byrd, also found the culture of central Utah different from what they were used to. They had a Southern drawl that the Manti people found strange, and the Byrds found the Manti accent unfamiliar and were particularly thrown off by the sprinkling of Danish words used in everyday conversation. These Southerners also likely found themselves without their familiar church in the area, as Tatton had experienced.¹¹¹

Work at the plant brought unfamiliar people from other areas of the state into Manti as well, influencing both workers and Manti residents as different life experiences came into contact. Workers came to live in the area from the surrounding counties,

¹¹¹ Tatton, 5, 7. Sue was only supposed to stay in Manti six months but at the appointed time to leave was dating the man she would later marry, so she decided to stay. She met Lynn Tatton at the outside dance pavilion in Manti. He was working in Salt Lake City but was in Manti for the weekend. He had previously been in the National Guard but was discharged due to a genetic disorder. The couple was married in November of 1945. Sue stated that Lynn “was a Latter-day Saint, but what was called a ‘jack Mormon.’ Except his mother always said, ‘I had hoped my only son would have married a Mormon.’ I did not join the Mormon Church till I had been married eleven years. Lynn would go to church with me, but that was all he wanted to do.” Tatton, 7-8.

particularly Sevier and Emery counties.¹¹² There were also women from a reform school in northern Utah who came to work at the plant. In addition, a few women from the polygamist colony at Colorado City, Arizona, approximately 226 miles away, came up to Manti to work after a raid on their town. Betty Keller Anderson remembered that some workers “were mean in a lot of ways” toward such outsiders. One polygamist girl named Misha was pushed around as her fellow workers taunted her about her husband missing her. Anderson recalled that one day the polygamous girls went missing and were not heard of again.¹¹³

Work at the plant for so many away from home, many of them young and single, meant living away from home without the supervision of family. Dora Price Fautin and Georgia Torgerson Jolley, who were teenagers at the time renting a house along with a two other single women, had a party every Friday night. One time they had a “wine party” where they bought a gallon of wine and “proceeded to kill it.” One remarked, “I didn’t even know what wine was,” and “you go out fast, when you’ve never drank before

¹¹² Madsen, 1; Beesley, 4; Ruesch, 3; Thornton, 3; Fautin, 1; Braithwaite, 1; Betty Anderson, 4.

¹¹³ Betty Anderson, 2 [quote 1]. The “Boyden Raid,” named for U.S. Attorney John S. Boyden, on Fundamentalist Mormons still practicing polygamy took place on 7 March 1944. Fundamentalist families in Salt Lake City, Short Creek (now Colorado City, Arizona), and other locations were awakened in the morning by groups of policemen with arrest warrants for polygamists. At least sixteen men and twelve women were arrested. Perhaps this is the raid from which Misha, a worker at the parachute plant, and others fled. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints endorsed the police action with a statement by the First Presidency claiming that polygamists had been excommunicated and that the practice of plural marriage was considered “rebellion against the church.” The Church wished to “create a distinction between itself and the fundamentalists” and thus make its position on legal prosecution very clear. This approach perhaps contributed to the hostile attitudes toward polygamists in Manti. Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Kidnapped From That Land: The Government Raids On the Short Creek Polygamists* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 68-70, 14.

or even tasted wine.” The other remembered “we about killed the gallon and ourselves. We were so sick for two days[;] I don’t think we ever woke up until we had to go to work on Monday morning.” This house of single women also had other adventures, including a night when some high school boys from Manti broke in while the girls were at work. The boys “smeared little jars of different flavors of cheese all over the walls, all over everything” and “put a bottle of Thoro dry-cleaning liquid in the bathtub and made a fire.” The girls stayed up all night cleaning up the mess.¹¹⁴

Overall, outsiders and long-time residents of the Manti community had new experiences as they interacted with one another because the parachute plant brought them to the area. On all sides, differences in custom and religion could make for new experiences and some new observances. Yet such differences did not seem to produce long-lasting negative feelings amongst most individuals at the plant and or in the community. Community support for the parachute plant was not denied because of conflict with outsiders.

In contrast, new work experiences for women in 1940s Manti would come more directly into conflict with religious views on the family. In regard to the dominant religion of the area, some of the Mormon women workers at the parachute plant came up against some admonitions of their Church leaders. Statements cautioning women, particularly mothers, about entering the workplace and about the social and religious obligations of women reached LDS women in several ways, including the *Relief Society*

¹¹⁴ Dora Price Fautin and Georgia Torgerson Jolley, “The Wine Party,” typescript, 1997, 1-2, copy of transcript of tape recording in author’s possession.

Magazine.¹¹⁵ Interestingly, scholars have found that female labor force participation in Utah was high and did not differ in large measure from national trends, yet they do not explain why women worked in spite of Church pressure nor do they examine many individual women's experiences in depth.¹¹⁶

The *Relief Society Magazine*, published organ of the Relief Society, was largely clear in its message against working for women in the 1940s. In a May 1942 editorial, General Relief Society counselor Donna D. Sorensen claimed that "this Mother's Day should find the mothers of the Church with young children, at home, devoting their energies to the proper upbringing of those children as their most patriotic gesture in the war" rather than working in a war industry. Utah psychologist Mark K. Allen warned that "children may be overlooked in the great task of winning the war" and that "the regimenting of women into arms plants and civilian defense" could "threaten the status quo of the family." New war jobs would attract mothers who did not need the work financially. High pay would cause "a new independence of women" where "women will

¹¹⁵It will be remembered that in Chapter 2, Lowry Nelson found that this magazine was the second most popular magazine next to *Reader's Digest* in the Sanpete community of Ephraim in 1950. Nelson, 172. Circulation of *The Relief Society Magazine* Church-wide also went up during the war on an annual basis, from 55,404 in 1941 to 74,032 in 1945. Patricia Ann Mann, "A History of the Relief Society Magazine, 1914-1970," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971), 141.

¹¹⁶Eunice Louise Wheeler, in examining the LDS periodical *The Improvement Era*, found that religious views regarding working women remained negative from 1940 to 1970, even as actual labor force participation of Utah's married women and women of childbearing age increased. Eunice Louise Wheeler, "Female Labor Force Participation: Economic and Religious Trends in Utah, 1940-1970," (M.A. Thesis, University of Utah, 1974), 130-132. Antonette Chambers Noble makes the case that many Utah women were also pressured by the LDS Church not to work, as exhibited in articles in the *Relief Society Magazine*. In this light, Noble asserts that "what is most noteworthy about the Utah experience is how similar it was to the national experience." Noble, "Utah's Rosies: Women in the Utah War Industries during World War II," 123-145. See also Antonette Chambers [Noble], thesis.

be paid more than their husbands have been paid, and as a consequence there may be a shifting to or sharing by fathers of motherly functions.” Societal ills from such working mothers would “create many problems of domestic adjustment and child management. Divorce may increase, and also juvenile delinquency.” General Relief Society President Amy Brown Lyman’s remarks represented a similar strain in a talk given over Utah radio station KSL on March 14, 1943. President Lyman counseled that “Relief Society women are first of all homemakers and mothers” and that “from among the multiplicity of tasks which come to women today, we should choose wisely.”¹¹⁷

Leading men in the Church reasserted the value of womanhood and motherhood as well. The First Presidency’s message of the October 1942 General Conference counseled parents that motherhood was “a holy calling,” a task “near to Divinity,” and “the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind.” It continued:

This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; hired help cannot do it—only mother, aided as much as may be by the loving hands of father, brothers, and sisters, can give the full needed measure of watchful care. The mother who entrusts her child to the care of others, that she may do non-motherly work, whether for gold, for fame, or for civic service, should remember that “a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”¹¹⁸

In 1943, Elder Milton Bennion and Elder John A. Widtsoe also tackled questions about women’s equality and rights, again emphasizing woman’s role in motherhood and asking women to uphold “standards of moral and spiritual welfare.” In 1944, Elder Richard L.

¹¹⁷ Donna D. Sorensen, “Editorial,” *Relief Society Magazine*, May 1942, 336-337; Mark K. Allen, “Preserving Our Homes In Wartime,” *Relief Society Magazine*, July 1942, 453-456; Amy Brown Lyman, “Women and the Home Today,” *Relief Society Magazine*, April 1943, 236-239, 297.

¹¹⁸ Message of the First Presidency, October 1942, *130th Semi-annual General Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1942), 12-13.

Evans claimed that “war does not change our obligations and responsibilities concerning our children,” and in subsequent years, President David O. McKay and Elder Joseph F. Merrill issued statements of concern about working women contributing to choices not to raise families, to juvenile delinquency, and to divorce.¹¹⁹

In summary, the LDS Church, through the *Relief Society Magazine* and through the addresses of prominent Church leaders, claimed that the social and religious obligations of women centered on home and family. Women were to stay home with their children and raise them, thereby resisting pleas to work in the war-time factories and temptations of monetary income. With women and children in their proper place, the home, calamities in the moral and social spheres of society would be avoided.

In an environment of such discourse about working women, it is revealing to examine the women workers at the Manti parachute plant to try to determine how or if the discourse affected them and their choices and feelings about work. Some women were working because of economic necessity, particularly those who were widowed or divorced, even though they had children. Some women were single and did not have children to attend to. Others were inactive members of the Church, and others had grown children. Still others quit working when they married, while a number worked despite all

¹¹⁹ Milton Bennion, “L.D.S. Girls and Women in Wartime,” *Relief Society Magazine*, October 1943, 606, 650; John A. Widtsoe, “The ‘Mormon’ Woman,” *Relief Society Magazine*, June-July 1943, 372-375; Richard L. Evans, April 1944, *114th Annual General Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1944), 47; David O. McKay, April 1945, *115th Annual General Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1945), 141; Joseph F. Merrill, April 1946, *116th Annual General Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946), 28.

these factors. In light of the Church's statements, those whom one might expect to feel the most conflict about working would be those active LDS mothers with young children at home. It is difficult to ascertain who felt such conflict, as there were varying degrees of Church activity. Also, perhaps those who felt conflict did not want to be interviewed or talk about it, and the women could have forgotten the conflict as well.

Whether working created a conflict or not, many remained at least outwardly active in the Church. Thus, in regard to general Church activity for these women, a few remembrances are enlightening. Most of the women at the plant were, like LuElla Thornton, "born and raised Mormon." In fact, Thornton claimed that the LDS Church was the only thing she ever knew and that she grew up "never knowing there were other churches." Apparently the plant was not open on Sundays, or at least the Parachute Company of Utah operated by Fauntleroy appears not to have been. As a result, the women were able to remain active in the Sunday services if they chose to do so. Maurine Draper, for example, was married in the Manti temple and attended the LDS Church in Manti weekly, after which she enjoyed dinner at her mother's house on Sunday afternoons. She was unable to go to Relief Society during the week because of her work schedule but remembered that her mother went and was a Relief Society president. Alice Clark also attended Church and remembered attending Relief Society. Marjorie Anderson, a teenager who worked at the plant, attended Church regularly as well and even became the secretary of the Mutual and an attendant to the queen of the gold and green ball, a feat which required perfect attendance.¹²⁰ One of the independent workers,

¹²⁰ "Mutual" is short for the Young Women's and Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations, organizations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints dedicated to the spiritual, social, and recreational development of youth. Gold and

(an association comprised of women over forty who were not able to be insured by the plant), Louise Hulme, was the organist for the Manti North Ward Relief Society and really had to balance her time carefully to fit in both her musical and work responsibilities. Her supervisor remembered that Louise “came to work early and when it was time for Relief Society she ran over to the chapel, played for the opening exercises, ran back and sewed on a few cones, and returned to the chapel for the closing song, then back to work.” Another independent parachute factory worker, Susan Shaffer, was a niece of then Church President Heber J. Grant. When the work became difficult for the women, Susan would encourage them by having them say her Uncle Heber’s favorite quote along with her: “That which you persist in doing becomes easier to do, not because the nature of the task has changed but your ability to do it has increased.” A fellow worker recalled that this recital was inspiring and gave them “the desire to reach greater heights.”¹²¹

Though possibilities for conflict undoubtedly existed for women workers at the plant in regard to religion and motherhood, it is clear that they had multiple responsibilities in their lives and were striving to accomplish a great deal. LDS leader and future Apostle Adam S. Bennion visited the plant in November 1943 and commented on the many duties balanced by these women and the many hats they had to wear on a daily basis. He lauded the efforts of women who “work a full shift at the plant and then

Green Balls, featuring the Mutual’s colors, were annual dances held at ward and stake levels. They were popular events in the mid-twentieth century. Ludlow, Vol. I, 355; Vol. IV., 1617-19.

¹²¹ Thornton, 4-5 [quotes 1, 2]; Draper, 8; Clark, 5; Marjorie Anderson, 5 ; Lila B. Keller, “The Independent Parachute Company,” 4-5 [quotes 3, 4].

hurry home to take care of their own household duties and some of them are good enough to look after the children of other mothers who then replace them on a second shift.” He continued that, from his perspective, “no mere man can understand fully what a mother goes through who takes care of a family and who works at a factory as well. I think I could detect that some of these women were a bit tired and under somewhat of a strain. I marvel that they did not show it more.” Even if they did not show it, the women who had to carry all housekeeping burdens in addition to a full-time job were probably exhausted. One woman claimed, “We started work at eight o’clock in the morning, and I was glad to get home after work,” because after work, she “had to stay up till midnight to get things done at home.” Another worker remembered, “We were always busy working at the plant. Then we’d come home and fix dinner, scrub on the board, [and] iron.”¹²²

In a manner similar to Bennion’s praises, on the whole Manti’s working women were accepted and even revered by those around them. Rather than being ostracized for their work efforts, these women appeared to be comfortable in their surroundings. Support for working women came from parents, spouses, and community members. Reasons for such support likely stem from the patriotic fervor of the era, the economic strains from the recent depression, and the gendered nature of the work—sewing—at the parachute plant.

Apparently the wartime fervor of the time, with the parachute plant being a war industry, helped assuage some consciences about women working outside the home, as

¹²² Adam S. Bennion, “When Two Generations Meet,” address delivered over radio station KSL, Salt Lake City, Utah, 11 November 1943, transcript printed in the *Manti Messenger*, 19 November 1943 [quotes 1, 2]; Lillian Keller, 1, [quote 3]; Braithwaite, 3 [quote 4]. Bennion’s address was also printed on the same date in the *Ephraim Enterprise*, *Parowan Times*, and *Piute County News*. Bennion was influential in the LDS Church and became an apostle in April 1953.

did the related belief that the war and its industries were temporary rather than permanent. One Mt. Pleasant man's opinion about women working in the parachute plant is telling. A young man during the war, he was asked in 2005 about potential conflict with prevailing opinions about women working in the 1940s, especially Church ones. He claimed that the war era "was a different time." Previous to the war's outbreak, "women generally stayed in the home." At the time, however, "the war was on." That was what made the difference.¹²³ Wartime conditions affected the homes and communities of Americans everywhere, as evidenced in the local papers of central Utah that printed the names of drafted soldiers, new rations, bond requirements, war drives, war work, and the need for the increased production of food, week after week.¹²⁴

The parachute plant played on those emotions to the fullest. Plant advertisements claimed that "women working at the parachute plant in Manti are performing one of the most important tasks in the winning of the war," and that "we have a job to do and we must do it now. . . . There is not a home in the central Utah section that has not been affec[t]ed in some way by this war. Many homes have been saddened by the news that a son or relative has been killed. The longer this conflict goes on the more home[s] are going to be stricken." Other articles and advertisements claimed, "Women of southern Utah can now help win the war in their own home territory," and "the quicker you join

¹²³ Bert Ruesch, included in Zola Anderson Ruesch interview, 4.

¹²⁴ Examples include: "How the War Will Affect Civilians," *Ephraim Enterprise*, 19 December 1941; "Manti Has Done Well, But More Can and Should Be Done," *Manti Messenger*, 3 July 1942; "Draft Board Calls More Men," *Manti Messenger* 17 July 1942; "Modern Mormon Battalion Started," *Manti Messenger* 17 July 1942; "One Hundred Nine Manti Men in Military Forces," and "Utah Boys Making Good," *Manti Messenger* 19 July 1942; "Sanpete Lags In Buying Bonds," *Manti Messenger*, 25 September 1942; "War Column Was a Great Job," *Manti Messenger* 1 February 1946.

your neighbors and friends in this vital war work the sooner we can win this war and get out boys back home!”¹²⁵

The possibility of economic opportunities also played a part in the support of women working. Making a living in Sanpete County could be difficult. As one editorial in the *Ephraim Enterprise* remarked, “If the making of money and the accumulation of wealth is to be considered the ultimate goal in life, probably a great majority of us here in Ephraim would be justified in pulling our stakes and moving to some other place. Most certainly there are many adverse conditions here so that gains for most of us come hard, if they come at all.” In that context, one early parachute plant advertisement claiming that women could “work for national defense and *keep your earnings in your own home*” takes on greater significance. Likewise, one man’s 1942 opinion about the parachute plant coming to Manti revealed economic relief through his statement, “Now we can live here until we die.” In 1942 another man thought that the parachute plant “looks like a golden opportunity. Our women have been holding on, now they [are going] to be OK with a good job.” Retrospective comments also speak of economic opportunity. Vertis Nielson, one of the men who worked at the plant, remembered that “community reaction to the factory was good,” seemingly because of the opportunity for jobs. Similarly, when

¹²⁵ “More Women Are Needed at Manti Parachute Factory,” *Piute County News Junction*, 29 October 1943 [quote 1]; “Southern Utah Women Offered Opportunity for War Work,” *Garfield County News*, 31 December 1942 [quote 2]; Parachute Company of Utah Advertisement, *Parowan Times*, 12 November 1943 [quote 3]. Other similar examples include advertisements in *Mt Pleasant Pyramid*, 25 December 1942; *Manti Messenger*, 25 December 1942; *Ephraim Enterprise*, 25 December 1942; *Manti Messenger*, 8 October 1943; *Ephraim Enterprise*, 8 October 1943; *Manti Messenger*, 12 November 1943; *Ephraim Enterprise*, 12 November 1943. Another slogan, “Back the Attack” was featured in the parachute company’s advertisements in *Manti Messenger*, 3 September 1943; *Manti Messenger*, 21 January 1944; and *Ephraim Enterprise*, 9 June 1944.

asked recently about the potential conflict between Church opinions about women working, another former worker, Zola Ruesch, claimed that “women were just happy to have a job.” Her answers point toward economic necessity and supporting family income. “I think it was a help” she said, “that was the way I looked at it. Every woman helped.” Coming from a family where her mother contributed significantly on the farm, specifically by doing such chores as milking twenty-two head of cows, in Ruesch’s experience the reality was that every woman helped. Even in a wage-economy situation, that rural tradition still held true. On the farm, however, a mother could work with her children near her to a much greater degree than in a factory.¹²⁶

Thus, childcare is another avenue to gauge support for these working women. If childcare was easily accessible, whether provided by a government-sponsored facility or by willing family or community members, women with children would be more likely to take wage work. The availability of childcare in various forms also illustrates the disposition of the community toward it. One W.P.A.-sponsored “nursery school” was held in the basement of the Manti library and another was located somewhere in Ephraim. According to one woman’s remembrances, three local women worked at the one in Manti and had some help from high school girls as well. Approximately twenty children were taken care of each day, were served lunch, and enjoyed inside toys and a play area outside. The cost was forty to fifty cents per day, as compared to seventy-five cents in other areas of the state. Only children of pre-school age and of wage-earning

¹²⁶ “Faith in Ephraim and Sanpete,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 18 June 1942 [quote 1]; advertisement in *Mt Pleasant Pyramid*, 25 December 1942, italics added [quote 2]; Ralph Houggaard and Adolph Hope, *Manti Messenger*, 10 April 1942 [quotes 3, 4]; Vertis Nielson, 1, [quote 5]; Ruesch, 2, 4 [quote 6].

mothers could enroll. Nursery schools were federally financed initially by the W.P.A. Even after the W.P.A. withdrew its support in April 1943, the school board, who supervised the nursery school, applied for more government funding through the Lanham Act.¹²⁷ The application for funds was granted with the proposition that the Manti city council, school district, and individual mothers continued to fund the childcare facility's heat, electricity, water, and playground rental.¹²⁸

These nursery schools were the subject of a front-page article in the *Manti Messenger* which lauded the "great effort" made to continue them and the positive qualities of such a service, inviting all the working women in the area to take advantage of childcare opportunities. The article stated:

The Nursery Schools have been given a very high rating in efficiency. Their program offers young children essential physical care and affection during the hours when mothers are employed. The benefits to children include: an environment conducive to the individual growth of his own rate of development [sic] by health inspection, balanced diet, a noon meal and two supplemental feedings, Rest and Sleep [sic] periods, Outdoor [sic] and indoor play, experience with music, art and conductive materials, stories, pictures, and pets, opportunities for sharing responsibilities, taking turns, recognizing rights of self and others, giving and receiving warm affection.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ The W.P.A., or Works Progress Administration, was established during the Great Depression and put many unemployed to work on government projects. One of the projects of the W.P.A. involved the establishment of nursery schools. The Lanham Act, which was passed by Congress in 1942, "provided government funds for the establishment of child care centers in communities most affected by increased war production. It provided for day care and after-school-care funding for children two to fourteen." The ability to receive such funds was difficult because of bureaucracy, and local governments that did receive funding were required to pay part of the bill. It was common that local school boards took charge of the centers' daily operation. Yellin, 60.

¹²⁸ "Great Effort Made to Hold Nursery Schools," *Manti Messenger*, 7 May 1943; Blanch Garbe [probable author], reminiscences about Manti's nursery school, typescript, n. d., 1, copy in author's possession; Betty Anderson, 4.

¹²⁹ "Great Effort Made to Hold Nursery Schools."

The article continued by claiming that “there has been some question as to the need of a child-care center in Manti” and answered by asserting that “there is an apparent need” but “there is also evidence that people do not take advantage of the service offered.” The article concluded by inviting female wage-earners who worked in the pea factory, in the parachute plant, in stores, in schoolrooms or in beauty shops to make applications for their children’s enrollment. In all, as gauged by the enthusiastic acceptance of the *Messenger*, child care was a positive good. The sponsorship and promotion of these nursery schools illustrates community support for childcare if two major public institutions, Manti city and school district, along with the *Messenger* were willing to back the nursery school, especially in the face of Church criticism of childcare outside the immediate family.¹³⁰

These nursery schools were a viable option for several parachute plant workers. Of the twenty-seven women for whom data has been collected, eleven had children and four used the nursery school, or about 36 percent, seemingly all of whom had at least one child of pre-school age. When asked why she took a war job, Ruth claimed that her family was getting older and that a nursery school was available to tend her children, as she had a three-year old son. Her other children, two boys aged eleven and six, would have been in school during the day. Vera Sorensen had six children, ranging from the oldest who was of high school age to the youngest who was an infant, and she used the nursery school as well to help with her childcare needs. Luzon Longaker, a young divorcee, had a toddler who was taken care of by a combination of the nursery school and

¹³⁰ “Great Effort Made to Hold Nursery Schools.”

Luzon's parents who lived in the area. Betty Anderson also utilized the availability of childcare for her young son, Evan, at some points.¹³¹ In these cases, these women wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to have their children cared for in order to work outside the home for wages.

The other women workers with children relied heavily upon those nearest them in their small, rural communities—family and friends. This stands out as the way that the women satisfied motherly obligations and thus alleviated or absolved conflict about working, especially as they saw close family and friends as excellent substitutes for themselves. Wretha Nielsen had two children aged eight and thirteen during her work at the plant. While at work, her mother and a neighbor took care of them when they were not in school. Doris Hansen was a widow whose mother tended her two children, who were four and eight years of age. LuElla Thornton lived with her sisters and worked the morning shift while her sisters tended her baby girl, and they went to work when she came home. Maurine Draper's son was watched by her mother and her daughter was tended by her aunt. Edith Bown had her mother, who, similar to Thornton's situation, worked the opposite shift and watched her daughter. When asked if she felt she was still being a good mother, Bown claimed that her mother was an ideal replacement for herself. She did not feel like her daughter was at a disadvantage in the least while with her grandmother. In Lila Keller's case, her husband's agricultural occupation allowed for some family flexibility. He was the one to care for their two children, aged twelve and ten in 1942, while she was at work and when they were home from school. Bernitta

¹³¹ Scow, questionnaire, 1, 3; Vera Sorensen, questionnaire, 1; Longaker, questionnaire, 1; Betty Anderson, 4; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church Census*, 1940.

Barney's two children, aged four and seven years, were watched by neighbors when not at school. She claimed that finding childcare was difficult for her, perhaps because she did not have a local, supportive family network like many others did. And finally, those like the women who worked in the Independent Factory Workers Association had older children, many in their teens, who were at school part of the day and took care of themselves while their mothers were at work.¹³²

In contrast, family concerns could also prompt women to quit work at the plant, illustrating that women had their limits. The pressure to stay home with their children and the weight of multiple burdens could be heavy. As early as the fall of 1942, Fauntleroy complained to Governor Maw that "a number of women were forced to leave work to care for their children. The older children who had been caring for the young ones during the summer months returned to school at this time." Doris Hansen eventually quit her job to "take care of children." Wretha Nielson quit because she was pregnant. Similarly, LuRae Munk Greenwood left her work at seven months pregnant when it became quite difficult to sew all day. Other women quit once they married, had children, and in some cases, even moved away. Yet on the other hand, one woman from Manti, the mother of fifteen, worked her motherly situation into her work schedule. One night after working all day long, she went into labor and had her baby. Even more amazingly, perhaps, this woman was back to work in three days.¹³³

¹³² Wretha Nielsen, questionnaire, 1; Hansen, 1; Thornton, 1; Draper, 6; Edith Buchanan Bown, phone interview by Sarah Fowers Lewis, quoted in "Temporary Tents of the Sky," typewritten, 20, copy in author's possession; Lila Bartholomew Keller, phone interview by Sarah Fowers Lewis, quoted in "Temporary Tents of the Sky," 20; Barney, 1; Lila B. Keller, interview 4; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Church Census*, 1940.

In regard to family approval of women working outside the home, younger women as a group had much support from their parents. In fact, it seems that many of these young, single women were expected to find work if they could. Georgia Torgerson Jolley, who moved away from home as a teenager to work at the plant, remarked that her parents trusted her as the oldest of eight children. Nita Price Madsen said that her war work “was fine with my parents. Two of my brothers had to go into the service, and my father said that seeing as how the boys had to go, why he thought us two girls should do the same thing.” It appears that in this instance, the father looked upon his boys and girls equally in the sense that both could and should contribute to the war effort. Ellis Johnson Anderson also felt supported by her parents in her work because her two brothers were in the service. Maurine Draper’s parents were happy for her to have a job because not many jobs were available previous to the plant’s opening. LuElla Thornton remembered that her parents knew that she and her sisters “needed something to do,” and that after high school they were expected to work to support themselves. Thornton also claimed that her husband, who had been drafted and fought overseas, was happy about her opportunities. Carol Beesley’s parents wanted her to learn to be on her own. Some plant workers also had other family members working with them at the plant—mothers, sisters, husbands. A few also had fathers who were veterans of World War I and who supported their

¹³³ Hansen, 3 [quote 1]; C.E. Fauntleroy to Herbert B. Maw, 9 November 1942 [quote 1], Governor Maw Correspondence 1942, “Parachute Company of Utah,” Utah State Archives; Nielsen, 3; Ruesch, 3; Betty Anderson, 6-7; Greenwood, 4-5.

daughters in their work at a war industry because of its connection to the war and patriotic duty.¹³⁴

Husbands, especially of the younger women, also seemed to support women working at the parachute plant in many cases. For example, Lila Keller, who was in her thirties when head of the Independent Parachute Workers, worked sixteen hours a day for the first six months of the plant's operation. Her husband lightened her load by not only watching their children, but also by helping in other ways. She said, "Bless my husband's heart. He'd bring me my lunch, he'd bank the fires, he'd clean the walks." Plant worker Vera Sorensen remembered that her husband was glad that she had a job, and he helped watch the children when they were not in school.¹³⁵

Out of the twenty-seven women, only one, Wretha Peterson Nielsen, seemed to face direct opposition from her family for working at the parachute plant. Unlike some of the other women, Nielsen's mother never worked outside the home. Of her parents' reaction to her work, she said, "they did not like it. I had never worked during my marriage." She had, however, worked before her marriage at the post office in Fairview. Her husband was also unhappy about the work situation. "My husband did not want me to work, but we were paying for a new home and large dry farm and in the midst of the serious depression." Later on in the war, Nielsen also worked at the Ogden Air Service Command at Hill Field. She claimed that her income helped "pay for our home and keep our dry farm, which we were losing [*sic*]." When asked if working during World War II

¹³⁴ Jolley, interview, 4; Madsen, 1 [quote 1]; Alice Anderson, 1; Draper, 6; Thornton, 5, 4 [quote 2]; Beesley, 5.

¹³⁵ Lila B. Keller, interview, 7; Vera Sorensen, questionnaire, 2.

had an impact on her, she responded, “only that I heled [*sic*] out with our finances.” It appears that in Nielsen’s case, economic necessity was the only factor that made her work experience acceptable.¹³⁶

The women at the parachute plant also thought that the men they worked with supported them in their work efforts. Zola Ann Jensen felt that the women worked well with other women because they shared similar backgrounds and claimed that the men were both friendly and helpful. She also asserted that men accepted the work the women were doing “a lot better than women are accepted now [in the 1980s] in the work field.” Bernitta Barney commented that each man had his own job, thereby likely eliminating tension from competition for the same position by men and women. In addition to separate jobs and similar backgrounds, the lack of conflict could be partly a result of the gendered nature of work at the parachute plant. In the parachute factory where sewing was paramount, women were not taking men’s jobs, such as in other manufacturing jobs during the war around the country.¹³⁷

Even though women were taking on the male task of wage-earning, the femininity of women working at the plant was promoted through a common practice at the time—beauty contests. In 1942, Carol Larsen of Manti, who was “chosen by her fellow workers as the most beautiful girl working in the Parachute Company’s plant in Manti,” had the honor of having her picture in the local newspapers. In 1943, another woman, 20-year-old Rainey Larsen of Glenwood, was chosen by her fellow workers to represent them at the

¹³⁶ Nielsen, 2-4.

¹³⁷ Jensen, 2 [quote 1]. Other women who specifically claimed that the men accepted their work efforts include: Longaker, questionnaire, 2; Sorensen, questionnaire, 2; Barney, 2; Hansen, 2.

Utah War Queen Contest in Salt Lake City. One worker at the plant remembered that Larsen “was very pretty,” “had a cute shape, and dressed really classy.” In Salt Lake City, Larsen was voted attendant to the War-Work Queen, rode in a parade, spoke for the parachute plant at a rally, and had a meeting with Technical Sergeant Douglas Glover whose life was saved by a parachute. Larsen, who inspected parachutes at the plant, claimed that “it’s a shame that all our workers couldn’t have gone—which, of course, was impossible. Because I feel that every girl and woman working in our plant is entitled to the same recognition.” Recognition it was, but primarily recognition of feminine physical beauty rather than the ability to work competently in a war industry or other qualities not related to physical characteristics. Yet the articles in local papers honored and praised such women as Larsen “who ably represented all women workers at the important war plant in Manti.” It was important to prove to members of the community that women were still able to be beautiful and feminine even if they worked full-time jobs, and as such beauty pageants and contests courted community support of working women. As Maureen Honey observed, images of women during the war assured the public that femininity could be compatible with demanding work and that women taking on male roles did not destroy their sexuality.¹³⁸

Articles in local newspapers about the parachute plant and its women workers were even more direct in their praise of women’s work. The articles, ever laudatory rather than derogatory, showed support for the workers and wartime production of parachutes. Women workers were hailed as heroes on the home front, receiving

¹³⁸ *Manti Messenger*, 25 December 1942 [quote 1]; *Mt. Pleasant Pyramid*, 25 December 1942; Dora Fautin, 5 [quote 2]; *Parowan Times*, 22 October 1942; *Piute County News Junction*, 29 October 1943 [quote 3 and 4]; Honey, 113.

comparably more attention in the local papers than women who organized in volunteer associations for the war effort.¹³⁹ In 1944, pictures of women who worked in the parachute plant along with their names and shifts graced the front pages of local newspapers. In the *Ephraim Enterprise*, these “scores” of women worked in a “vital” war industry. In the *Manti Messenger*, over one hundred Manti women were doing “their share” of the work to be done for the war effort. Even the three women from Parowan received the spotlight in their hometown paper the *Parowan Times*. Women workers also recalled favorable community reaction similar to these expressions of community support found in local newspapers, support which flowed mainly from economic opportunity and patriotic fervor.¹⁴⁰

Even today, residents of Sanpete County reflect approvingly on the plant’s coming to the area, including its long history into peacetime manufacture of clothing through several different companies. The *Messenger-Enterprise* in 2003 ran an article

¹³⁹ In comparison with the many articles on women and war work, local papers gave less attention to volunteer groups in war efforts. A few instances appear, however, such as: “Co. Women Organize Groups To Help Scrap Drive,” *Manti Messenger*, 25 September 1942; “Women of Sanpete Organize for Scrap Drive,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 18 September 1942; and “Women’s War Service Caravan At Manti, May 22,” *Manti Messenger*, 12 May 1944. Katie Clark Blakesley argues that the World War II experiences most remembered and recorded are those of soldiers, and on the home front, those of working women instead of home front volunteers. She examines some of Utah’s Minute Women as a case study for those women who as volunteers played an important role in the war effort by maintaining morale and helping alleviate wartime shortages. Katie Clark Blakesley, “‘Save ‘em, Wash ‘em, Clean ‘em, Squash ‘em,’: The Story of the Salt Lake City Minute Women,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 71 (2003): 36-51.

¹⁴⁰ “Ephraim’s Parachute Plant Workers: Scores Aid Production in Vital War Industry,” *Ephraim Enterprise*, 25 February 1944; “Manti Women In War Work At Parachute Plant: Manti Women Do Share At Parachute Plant, Over Hundred Aid Production of Parachutes,” *Manti Messenger*, 25 February 1944; “Contribute To War Production,” (which pictures and names the Independent Parachute Association workers, workers from Sterling, and men workers at the plant), *Manti Messenger*, 3 March 1944; and “Three Parowan Girls Work at Manti Plant,” *Parowan Times*, 3 March 1944.

entitled “Manti remembers its parachute workers of World War II,” in which a brief history of the plant, its workers, and the businesses to follow it was given. The twenty surviving former parachute company employees were honored at a senior dinner party along with a decorated veteran who received three purple hearts and knighthood from the queen of Holland. The article is favorable to the women workers by honoring them and their work as “a vital part of the military effort.” The current paper, now called the *Sanpete Messenger*, is also interested in additional information about the parachute plant workers for future articles. In 2006, residents of Sanpete County from Ephraim, Mt. Pleasant, Spring City and Moroni, though they recalled that the war was difficult for many and filled with bad news, also remembered the plant positively, commenting especially on the number of women who worked there. Many knew women who took employment at the plant, and one woman recalled that her mother worked there while she was a teenager.¹⁴¹

In general, community reaction and support for the parachute plant located in Manti was approving. Family and community encouragement buoyed up women’s opportunities in an environment of patriotic fervor and of newfound and appreciated economic opportunity in an industry brought by wartime conditions but maintained by female work of sewing. Even Church proscriptions against mothers working seemingly failed to discourage many in the community and the plant workers themselves, as many took advantage of work opportunities and child care options. Seeing their extended families as excellent substitutes for themselves prevented women from feeling conflict

¹⁴¹ Karen Buchanan, “Manti remembers its parachute workers of World War II,” *Messenger-Enterprise*, 18 September 2003 [quote 1]; Clifford Peterson, Jack H. Larsen, Lloyd Olson, LuJean Nielson, Donna Larson, and Bonnie Fulmer, interviews by author, 9 February 2006, Ephraim, Utah, digital recording in author’s possession.

about working. The very absence of strictures upon women in the community is telling, as negative pronouncements about working mothers by local church leaders and the local papers are non-existent. The women did not seem to feel conflict, as they likely agreed in principle with Church pronouncements yet felt like they were satisfying their motherly obligations. On a larger scale, Manti and the surrounding area encountered outside influences and experienced the pulls of national and worldwide conflict, including the need for women to enter the labor force in vast numbers, yet the community was largely supportive. Personal triumphs and gains, however, would prove even more significant and will be explored in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN'S WORK, OPPORTUNITY, AND PERSONAL IMPACT

In examining the workers at the parachute plant, it is useful to view motivations for work and work experiences in context of their long-term impact. The impact of war work on the individual women who worked at the plant varied, but it appears to have been quite significant. Opportunity, in a variety of ways personal as well as economic, private as well as public, opened new windows of possibility. There is a sense of pride that one senses from talking to these women about their wartime working experiences. As one parachute plant worker, LuRae Munk Greenwood, reflected, "I was proud to send those parachutes off."¹⁴²

In assessing the impact of war work upon women in the United States, historians generally agree that gains made by women in terms of sheer numbers and types of occupation were temporary rather than permanent. For example, by 1943, 37 percent of all women over fourteen in the United States held wage-paying jobs and the female labor force had grown by almost half since the beginning of the war. Twenty million women were in the labor force. According to historian Mary M. Schweitzer, "by 1945 there were 4.7 million women in clerical positions, an increase of 89 percent over 1940, and 4.5 million women serving as factory operatives, an increase of 112 percent. The number of women employed as production workers in durables manufacturing had more than

¹⁴² Greenwood, 5.

quadrupled, from 340,000 in 1940 to 2,173,000 in 1943.” But Schweitzer, looking at aggregate numbers to assess impact, claims that “while more women were in the labor force in 1950 than in 1940, they still worked primarily in those industries that had always employed women.” Furthermore, women were forced out of the previously male-dominated industries at the conclusion of the war.¹⁴³

Utah’s female labor force participation similarly rose. In 1940, 17.6 percent of Utah women were in the labor force. This amount rose to 24.5 percent in 1950, growing to 32.8 percent in 1960 and 39.4 percent in 1970 (40.7 percent if standardized to the 1940 age structure). The number of working women of child-bearing age and older women also rose. In Sanpete County, 1940 found 617 out of 5,374 of women fourteen years of age or older classified in the labor force (11.5 percent). In neighboring Sevier County, from which many of the plant workers came, 458 out of 3,941 women were in the labor force in 1940 (11.6 percent). In 1950, 837 of a total of 4,722 women were classed in the labor force in Sanpete County (17.7 percent). In Sevier County, 701 of 3,949 women were in the labor force (17.8 percent).¹⁴⁴ Notable is the decrease in population in Sanpete, perhaps some of which is attributable to men and women leaving for the Wasatch Front to find work. Several of Manti’s parachute workers did so. Such was part of a larger national trend of great rural-to-urban migration as the economy strengthened,

¹⁴³ Mary M. Schweitzer, “World War II and Female Labor Force Participation Rates,” *The Journal of Economic History* 40 (March 1980): 89-95 [quotes 1 and 2 from p. 90]. Her information is from the *Women’s Bureau Bulletin* that was written by the United States Department of Labor.

¹⁴⁴ Wheeler, 88-89, 93; *1940 Census, Characteristics of the Population*, Vol. II, Part 7 (Washington: U.S. Government, 1943), 48; *1950 Census, Characteristics of the Population*, Vol. II, Part 44 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 57. See also Murphy, 211.

especially as urban areas experienced economic growth, providing more opportunities for the young outside the farm and rural community. Because the plant was vacant for a time after Reliance closed in 1947, many former workers could have been voting with their feet, thus helping to explain the drop in population in 1950. This rural community was especially vulnerable to having this industry leave since it was the only major non-farming related industry and a major employer at the time.¹⁴⁵

Yet, the impact of war work on women was more complex and personal than such aggregate numbers have the power to show. Oral histories showcase this point well by offering a more longitudinal approach. Many times, historians focus on women's participation in the labor force, particularly in male-dominated occupations, as the primary indicator of change, because this effect is so easily measured. Oral histories, in contrast, can better reveal "the private face of change." As Sherna Berger Gluck stated, "changes in values and behavior do not occur rapidly and are not easily attributed to an immediate cause. . . . We are blinded to the slow incremental process of change, and, as a result, we underestimate the role that women's wartime experiences played in that process." It is imperative not to ignore "the often private and subtle ways in which individual women were changed by their wartime experience" because this private side of change teaches different things and illuminates other important facets of women's experiences.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Danbom, 244-245.

¹⁴⁶ Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited – Women, The War, and Social Change*, 260 [quote 1], 269 [quotes 2 and 3].

Worker satisfaction is one avenue in which to view the impact of war work upon the women parachute workers. As mentioned in chapter three, the comparably “pleasant and profitable” working conditions partially stemming from the nature of the work, sewing, combined with opportunities for sociability helped entice women away from work at home, on the farm, and elsewhere. Workers made and developed friendships and, as Betty Keller Anderson remembered, “learned to work with other people.” The women would talk while they worked. Numerous workers claimed that they were happy to join their friends at work and that they talked and gossiped while working. Cooperation and morale were remembered to be high at the plant as well. Such worker satisfaction gave women a positive outlet in a time of stressful wartime conditions, as well as an escape from less than perfect conditions at home. Friendships made in the workplace often continued long after the war ended as well.¹⁴⁷

In regard to home life, many families appeared supportive as did the community at large, as shown in chapter four. Yet, a memory recorded by Lila Keller illustrates the conflict experienced privately by men whose wives left the home to pursue wage-earning occupations, portrays the perhaps undesirable conditions and/or expectations set for women at home, and proves illuminating in regard to reasons why women enjoyed their work at the parachute factory. Andrew Judd, a husband of one of Keller’s employees at the Independent Parachute Company, gave a toast at the Company’s Christmas party and said,

I want you all to know, and I’m ashamed to admit it, but I was very opposed to Myrtle going to work. I wanted her home. It didn’t seem right to have her gone

¹⁴⁷ Betty Anderson, 6 [quote 1]. Examples include: Tatton, 6; Greenwood, 6; Draper, 7; Beesley, 5; Lila B. Keller, interview, 3; Jensen, 2.

every day. She told me it would only be in her spare time. I could see she had made up her mind, so I gave in and she happily joined her friends. I began to see something else, and that was how much my dear wife had spoiled me.¹⁴⁸

This man realized that his wife enjoyed her work, because soon her “spare time turned into a marathon.” He realized how much she had done for him in the past: “she had always been there with a hot meal and everything else that made me comfortable.” When she was working, he came home to a cold house and empty cupboards and then had to go shopping, buy food, and feed himself. This man’s honesty in sharing this inner conflict is illuminating. Perhaps some men gained a newfound appreciation for “women’s work” at home as a result of women working at factories. Such appreciation could either prompt them to learn to fend for themselves or else spur them to seek women’s return to the home. Worthy of note is the fact that this couple was in their fifties at the time, and were older than Keller and her husband and many of the women at the main factory. In some cases, generational differences meant that older men may have been more resistant to their wives working outside the home. Judd continued, (obviously pitying himself) by saying, “But there is something else that really gets to me about all this. Every time I go to the Bishop’s Store House to pick up Myrtle, there’s that picture of old Brigham Young with a twinkle in his eye smiling down on all those women. Then I think of him and all his wives and I only have one who is rarely ever home. When she is home she is either too tired or has a headache.” The time Myrtle spent away from home caused him to resent having to adjust to her new schedule and her new role as a wage worker. The impact upon Myrtle, his wife, could have been disruption and conflict at home, coupled

¹⁴⁸ Lila B. Keller, “The Independent Parachute Company,” 5-6.

with the newfound ability to escape some housework, which could have been difficult and liberating at the same time.¹⁴⁹

In addition, this memory is significant in relation to the impact of war work upon women in the long-term. The fact that Keller remembered it for so long and chose to include it in her memoirs is illuminating. Perhaps she thought it important that a man recognize all of the work women do, inside and outside the home. Keller's recollection is also noteworthy in that it claims that working was a pleasant escape from the travails of home and family life.¹⁵⁰

Notably, many women workers desired to and continued to work after the war ended, as public opinion polls suggested that they would. An article in the *Manti Messenger* in July 1944 reported that "women intend to stay at jobs." "Two out of every three women war workers," it claimed, "will be in the postwar competition for peacetime jobs, according to preliminary returns in a survey by Northwestern National Life Insurance Company. . . . the survey finds that 71 per cent plan to seek postwar jobs, and only 17 per cent expect to go back to 'full-time' housekeeping, while 10 per cent are planning to be married at the end of the war, and 2 per cent expect to go back to school." The article discussed married women as well, who "like the experience of working and want to continue getting a pay check of their own."¹⁵¹

When the plant ceased its parachute production at the conclusion of the war, several women continued to work in peacetime sewing industries in the Manti area.

¹⁴⁹ Lila B. Keller, "The Independent Parachute Company," 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ "Survey Shows Women Intend to Stay at Jobs," *Manti Messenger*, 7 July 1944.

Carlisle Manufacturing Company came in the 1950s and operated sewing plants in Ephraim and Gunnison for twenty years. In 1961, the Manti Improvement Business Association and members of local women's clubs collected donations to help remodel and buy the building that housed the parachute plant in order to lease it to a clothing manufacturer. Their efforts attracted Apparel Inc. of Seattle, makers of Pacific Trail Sportswear, which began in 1961 with a force of 100 women and 5 men employees and expanded to more than 150 employees within the year. Another plant was also opened in 1962 in nearby Richfield.¹⁵² Of these plants' opportunities for working women, the *Utah Economic and Business Review* reported:

The women of Manti have been working intermittently through the years in industrial sewing and their value as a pre-trained labor force was not overlooked in selecting an industry to invite to their town. An old armory building had been converted during World War II into a parachute factory where the women had their first taste of power machine sewing. During most of the ensuing years employment has been constant enough to provide an abundant supply of trained operators who flocked to apply for jobs with Pacific Trail.¹⁵³

Many women worked in this factory or in other occupations and made public contributions in their communities. Several remained in the larger Sanpete County area. Norma Christiansen Bauer continued to work in the plant from the war until 1970. Nita Price Madsen also continued work there, more or less continuously from 1942 until 1992, when she retired. In 1997, Madsen also served on the Manti City Council. Alice

¹⁵² Antrei and Roberts, 266-271; "Open House Scheduled by Factory At Manti," *Deseret News*, 6 October 1961; "Manti Enjoys New Unity, Hopefulness With 'Operation Bootstrap' Success," *Deseret News*, 28 February 1962; "Firm To Open New Plant At Richfield," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 19 April 1962; "New Business For Richfield," *Deseret News*, 27 June 1962; "Clothing Factory To Double Staff At Richfield," *Deseret News*, 14 June 1962.

¹⁵³ Katherine L. Lueck and John R. Evans, "From Overalls to Unmentionables," *Utah Economic and Business Review*, XXI (April 1961), 4, 8.

Fredricksen Clark worked at a sewing plant in Gunnison and in cafes in Sanpete and Sevier counties. Now in her late eighties, Clark still works in the local school's cafeteria system. She enjoys working with people and having the opportunity to "get out" of her home. Lila Bartholomew Keller, head of the Independent Parachute Workers, "worked as a supervisor in the clothing factory as it went from one company to another." She was active in community pursuits and LDS Church responsibilities. She also helped to publish a history of Manti in 1947 and was on public committees for the Utah pioneer centennial celebration (1847-1947). Betty Anderson was a seamstress for most of her life and taught sewing. Ruth Scow taught school, worked at Reliance clothing, and was subsequently employed as a school librarian and media coordinator. She retired in 1973 and in 1982 was co-editor of a history of Sanpete County with Albert Antrei. Odessa Young Mower worked with her husband in a local drugstore they owned. Sue Fields Tatton supervised and managed a variety of parachute-making and sewing plants in Manti and New Mexico. She is currently active in the Manti community and works with the senior citizens. Marjorie Jenson Anderson worked for a cannery, the parachute plant, the juvenile court, the forest service, and the Farmer's Home Administration and only recently retired.¹⁵⁴

Several also worked in areas outside Manti and Sanpete. Maurine Braithwaite Draper, who moved several times due to her husband's involvement in the construction

¹⁵⁴ Norma Christiansen Bauer, phone interview by Sarah Fowers Lewis, quoted in "Temporary Tents of the Sky," 11-12; Madsen, 4; Clark, 4; Sorensen, questionnaire, 3; Lila B. Keller, interview, 8 [quote 1]; Centennial Committee, Manti, Utah, *Song of a Century: 1849-1949* (Manti, Utah: Centennial Committee, 1949); Scow, questionnaire, 3; Betty Anderson, 6; Mower, 3; Tatton, 8-10 [quote 2]; Marjorie Anderson, 1-2; Fautin, interview, 3.

industry, worked in sewing plants, restaurants, and childcare. Bernitta Barney moved to Salt Lake City and worked at the Mode-O-Day dress factory. Vera Sorensen went to El Paso and worked on parachutes for astronauts using her skills from the parachute plant in Manti. She was also active throughout her life in local history efforts. Luzon Sondrup Longaker later worked as a secretary to a postmaster in Mesa, Arizona, and handled the payroll while her husband was in the ferry command. LuRae Munk Greenwood worked as an elementary school teacher. Zola Anderson Ruesch worked at a Safeway warehouse in Salt Lake City until she married. Carol Ney Beesley moved north to Clearfield and worked as a typist in the naval base there for about thirteen years. Zola Ann Jensen had many jobs throughout her life, from secretary to veterinary assistant. In the 1980s she was working as a central processing technician at LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City. Lois Tooth Kribs worked for the Forest Service and Hill Air Force Base in Ogden, Utah.¹⁵⁵

In all, over half of the women in this sampling continued working after the war's conclusion (eighteen out of twenty-seven, or approximately 66 percent). Perhaps even more than this percentage chose to work. Madsen recalled that "there was very little turnover at the plant" and "many women in the area have continued to work at the clothing manufacturing plant over the years." Betty Anderson did not "remember very many people quitting work at the Manti factory." Greenwood similarly remembered that "there wasn't much turnover at the plant. Once someone got a job there, they stayed." Dortha Bagley Braithwaite recalled that quite a few women worked for the parachute plant in Manti operated by Mayo Sorensen in the 1960s.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Draper, 8-9; Barney, 3; Longaker, questionnaire, 3; Greenwood, 5; Ruesch, 3; Beesley, 1; Jensen, 3; Kribs, 5-7.

¹⁵⁶ Madsen, 3-4; Betty Anderson, 6; Greenwood, 6; Braithwaite, 4.

Even those who did not choose to continue wage work for one reason or another seem to remember their work experience fondly and place it among the important events in their lives. For example, Alice Johnson Anderson, who quit working after her brother was killed overseas and her mother's health declined rapidly, claimed that she enjoyed her work. Eager to share her work memories with the author, she commented that she had good experiences with friends and felt proud of her war effort. She volunteered to share a variety of pictures and keepsakes relating to that period of her life. Anderson has contemporaneous pictures from the 1940s of the "parachute gang" and the "hearse gang" that rode together in an old hearse to work every day. She also has pictures from a parachute plant reunion that she attended at Nephi Park in August of 1968 and copies of the obituaries of parachute company friends. She includes her parachute plant work in the narrative of her personal history. Like Anderson, Zola Ruesch, who quit working once she married, took pleasure in her work at the plant. "I liked doing something at the time, and we enjoyed it," she said. Ruesch also has a portion of her personal history/scrapbook dedicated to information and pictures of her experiences working at the parachute plant, illustrating this period's importance among the events of her life.¹⁵⁷

For many, working at the parachute plant was a learning experience that promoted both confidence and independence. These women proved to themselves that they could do work outside the home, and it is evident that such experiences increased self-esteem and gave the women broader conceptions of their capacities. For nineteen-year-old Zola Ann Jensen, working meant an opportunity for education. "My family could not afford to

¹⁵⁷ Alice Anderson, 1, and her autobiographical reminiscences, pictures, and sketches, handwritten, April 2006; Ruesch, 1 [quote 1].

send me to college. If I had not had this job (at that time when I was college age) I probably would not have gone to college.” She claimed that added education helped her to get better jobs in the future as well. Lois Tooth Kribs, in commenting on some work training in Los Angeles, said, “Imagine, I got on the train at Salt Lake City, hardly ever having been out of Manti, let alone the state of Utah,” but she conquered her fears. She continued working for the government for many years, buoyed up by newfound experiences. Thirty-nine year-old Odessa Young Mower was glad for the experience away from home while also doing something for her country. She knew that she could do housework, but she was unsure if she could do work at the plant. She gained confidence, however, because she was able to do the work well. Carol Beesley claimed that working at the parachute plant in Manti taught her how to get along with others. She also said, “I learned how to run a machine and do what I had to do. So, it was a good education to start out there.”¹⁵⁸

Yet there is reason to believe that some women came away from their wartime work with more negative than positive experiences. Unpleasant relations with coworkers due to conflicting personalities or ideas could have made the workplace unpleasant. Sexual harassment, though less likely in the plant because it was staffed primarily by women, was often a problem in war industries. Some might have been fired for one reason or another. Others might have experienced marital disruption due to unsupportive husbands and families. The husband and wife mentioned earlier, Andrew and Myrtle Judd, could have had arguments about her unfulfilled household responsibilities, for

¹⁵⁸ Jensen, 3 [quote 1]; Kribs, interview, 5-7 [quote 2]; Mower, questionnaire, 2; Beesley, 5 [quote 3].

example. He could have been angry because of this burden shifted to him. It is likely that those with negative experiences such as these would be unwilling to share their reminiscences, and as such, are not represented here.

Economic independence was the influential legacy for some. As illustrated in chapter three, these women had additional resources at their disposal due to the money they were now able to earn and in some cases had the newfound ability to support themselves. Economic opportunity made Maurine Draper feel more independent, especially because she lived alone and had children. Recently divorced, she did not have to rely on her parents or move back in with them. She rented an apartment with a friend and moved on with her life, eventually remarrying. Luzon Longaker and Betty Anderson were also able to support themselves as young divorcees with children.¹⁵⁹

Women's war work not only contributed financially to the economic prosperity of the family, but influenced how their children viewed working women. As historian Jessica Weiss has found, the mothers of the baby boom balanced work, housework, and childrearing, and their daughters followed suit.¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, there is a sense that central Utah's former parachute workers are proud of their children who work, including their daughters. One former parachute plant worker spoke proudly of her daughter, an assistant manager at a local business, and a daughter-in-law who works at a local branch of Far West Bank. Another worker spoke of her sons and daughters with equal pride:

¹⁵⁹ Draper, 6; Longaker, questionnaire, 3; Betty Anderson, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Jessica Weiss, *To Have and To Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 49-81.

“They’ve all been real good—I’m proud of all of them.” Her youngest daughter works for the IRS and her oldest daughter is a schoolteacher.¹⁶¹

In all, twenty-five of the twenty-seven women claimed in one way or another that the experience of working at the parachute plant was significant for them, especially in giving them newfound economic resources or in providing new experiences in the workplace.¹⁶² Women’s self-esteem improved and they redefined how they saw themselves, as historians Gluck and Weiss have pointed out. One additional story illustrates this point well. Marjorie Anderson recounted, “When [my] mother was working at the plant, I was with her when her friend asked her if she wasn’t afraid of the high-powered sewing machine, and as fast as she sewed wasn’t she afraid of having the needle stick in her finger. Mother said, ‘No, it’s the only thing that goes as fast as I want it to.’”¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Beesley, 2; Clark, 6 [quote 1].

¹⁶² Twenty-five out of twenty-seven women represent approximately 92 percent of the sample. These twenty-five were more explicit in the case for significance, though it could be surmised that perhaps the other two women were affected in ways of which the author has no record.

¹⁶³ Gluck, 265; Weiss, 72; Marjorie Anderson, interview, 1 [quote 1]. Gluck stated, “One of the striking themes in the oral histories is the desire of the women to test themselves, stretch themselves, prove themselves. . . . the unintended effect of their wartime work experience was a transformation in their concept of themselves as women. . . . it did affect their status in their own eyes—and in their homes.” Similarly, Weiss argued, “Working transformed women’s sense of themselves. Devoting years to the care of others took its toll of homemakers in loss of self-esteem. Working for pay outside the home remedied this lack for many women who had spent between five and twenty years concentrating on raising their children. Middle-aged married women who worked attributed the sense of self-worth they gained in later life to their employment. Earning money in itself provided an enormous boost to self-esteem.”

Accordingly, there is a sense of pride that emanates from talking to these women about their work that was summarized well by Lila Keller: “My heart swells with pride when I think of the unity, love, and dedication they [the working women] displayed during those trying years.” Susie Fields Tatton also reflected, “I have spent a whole lifetime in that type of work [parachute and sewing production], and I haven’t been sorry.” As LuRae Greenwood aptly stated, she was “proud to send those parachutes off.” *Proud* is an excellent word to describe these women as they attached meaning to their work experiences. Proud of their newfound economic resources; proud of a job done well; proud of finding a job that paid well and went “as fast” as they wanted it to—these were the experiences of Central Utah’s parachute plant “rosies.” As such, Manti’s parachute plant and its workers provide a case study for the life-changing effects of work for women during World War II as they learned new skills, gained confidence in their abilities, chose various careers, viewed themselves differently, and influenced how others, especially their families, viewed them. Wartime work shaped the rest of their lives.¹⁶⁴

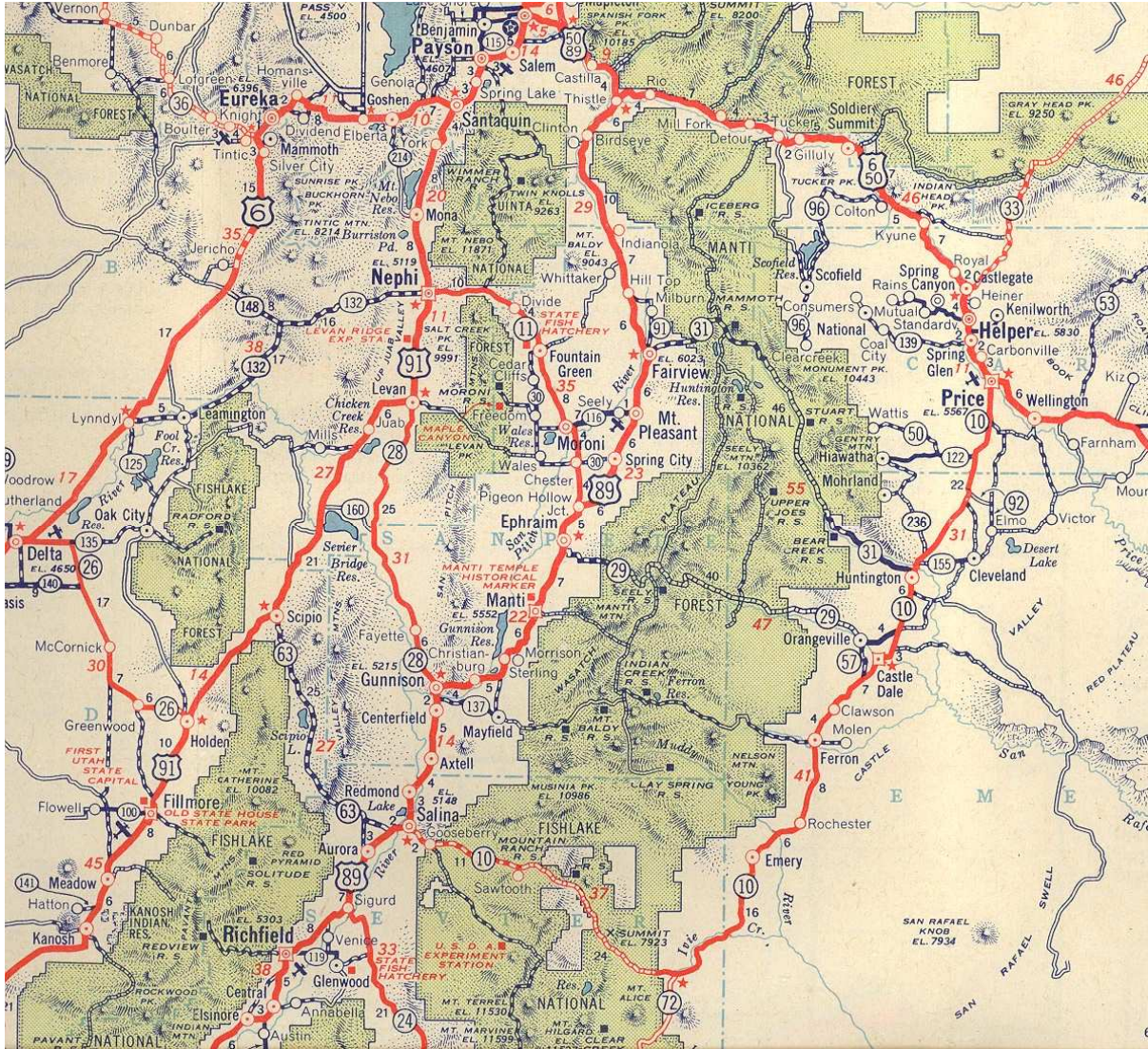
Overall, the story of central Utah’s “Rosies” is one important to western history, rural history, and women’s history. As a case study for changes affecting the west during the World War II era, Manti’s wartime parachute factory provides an example of a manufacturing enterprise not directly related to extractive or agricultural industries so typical of many western communities at the time. Manti’s rural community and its people had to open up and adapt to outsiders, people of different backgrounds and religions coming into a fairly tight-knit and close community because of the wartime

¹⁶⁴ Lila B. Keller, interview, 5; Tatton, 10; Greenwood, 5.

emergency. Women who had valued their work as farm producers of products for sale in the marketplace turned to a new industry not related to agriculture. Rural women who had always worked transitioned into wage work for war production. Enticed by opportunities for larger wages and patriotic contribution, women left the home for wage work and utilized the availability of childcare and family and community support. In the face of these changes, women appear to have not been deterred much by the admonitions of leaders of the dominant LDS religion as they made childcare accommodations with extended family and childcare facilities. They agreed in principle with Church admonitions and some were very active in Church participation, but did not see their actions in practice as being in conflict with their religious beliefs.

And finally, this study is in accord with the wave of new scholarship that utilizes local settings to illustrate the centrality of World War II in the understanding of later decades by arguing that this era was not just a passing stage but a time period that would heavily influence the future. Women redefined their senses of self, were proud of their accomplishments, gained economic resources, learned new skills, sought careers, and influenced the baby boom generation and other family and community members. They were an active part of the transitional forces of the wartime era. This study also agrees with the longitudinal approach set forth by oral histories. As such, the life histories of Manti's parachute workers claim great importance of women's World War II labor for women, families, and communities. Continued explorations of the untapped riches of local history and examinations of the life and career choices of the daughters of World War II's working women will provide new and exciting avenues of historical research in regard to these topics in future studies.

APPENDIX A



Central Utah Area

“Utah Road Map and Travel Hints, prepared for Utah Oil Refining Co., Utah.” Chicago:
Rand McNally & Company, 1940.
Brigham Young University map collection. Provo, Utah.

APPENDIX B



Above: Women workers at the parachute factory. Copy in author's possession.
Below: Independent parachute factory workers. Copy in author's possession.
Originals in Don Norton's possession.



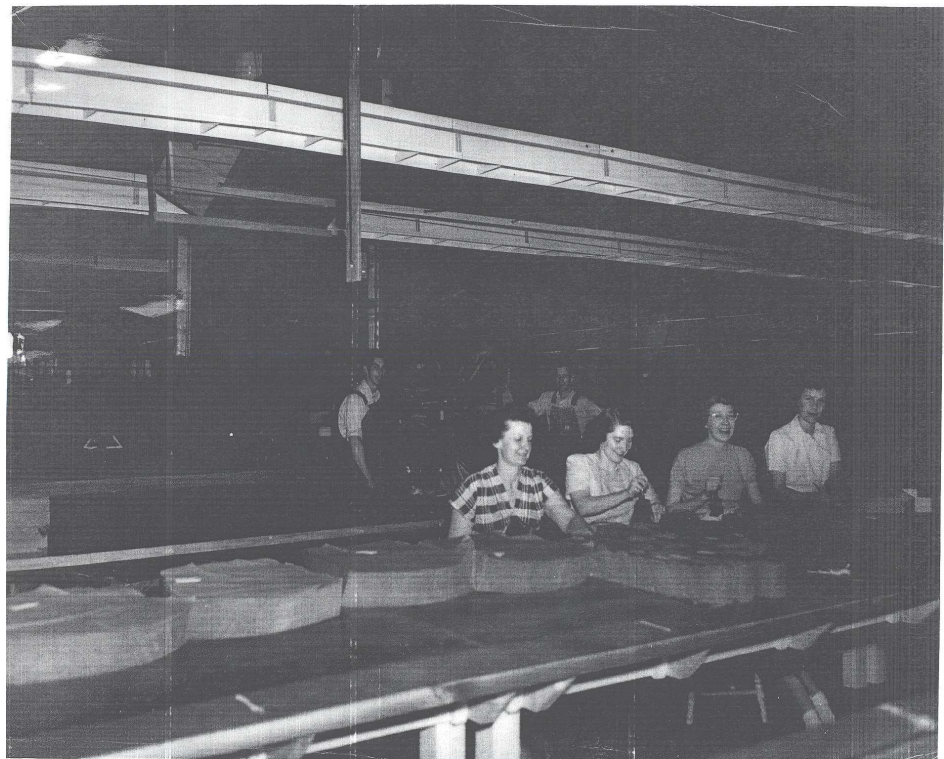


Above: The production floor of the Manti parachute plant. Copy in author's possession.
Below: Women workers at the parachute factory. Copy in author's possession.
Originals in Don Norton's possession.





Above and Below: Miscellaneous pictures of women at work in the Manti parachute plant. Copies in author's possession. Originals in Don Norton's possession.



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