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## Faith, Femininity, and the Frontier: the Life of Martha Jane Knowlton Coray

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Brigham Young University - Provo

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## ABSTRACT

### FAITH, FEMINITY, AND THE FRONTIER: THE LIFE OF MARTHA JANE KNOWLTON CORAY

Amy Reynolds Billings

Department of History

Master of Arts

Through examining the life of Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, a nineteenth-century Mormon woman, this thesis establishes an analytical framework for studying the lives of Mormon women in territorial Utah. Their faith, femininity, and the frontier form the boundaries in which their lives are studied. Their faith was primarily defined by the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, such as a belief in a restored gospel and priesthood, temples, and polygamy. These unique beliefs also fostered an identity as a chosen people and contributed to hostile feelings from their neighbors. Persecution followed and the Latter-day Saint community responded by isolating themselves geographically and ideologically from their perceived enemies. This isolation, in turn, elevated the importance of LDS doctrine and culture in Mormon women's lives.

Mormon women also brought to Utah Territory Northeastern notions of domesticity promulgated through women's magazines of the time. In Utah, local

newspapers also forwarded the ideals of purity, piety, submissiveness, and virtue. Mormon women claimed to implement these values in their lives, but Protestant women found their acceptance of polygamy an insult to womanhood.

Finally, Mormon women lived on the western frontier, isolated from markets in a desert. Such circumstances inevitably affected their lives. They had to sacrifice convenience, economic stability, and physical comforts while establishing a reliable food supply, irrigation systems, schools, and homes. Domestic production of food stuffs and goods became essential to a family's survival.

This picture of Mormon women, though generally accurate, is not enough to examine the many unique facets of their lives. The triad of faith, femininity, the frontier sets the boundaries for the study, but does not account for the differences between each woman's unique personality and circumstances. I have chosen Martha Jane Knowlton Coray to test the boundaries established in this framework. As a believer, Martha was concerned with building the Kingdom of God. She followed Brigham Young's 1870s directives and her own ambitions to sell medicinal products throughout Utah Territory. Doctrine regarding eternal families and her domestic ideals no doubt contributed to her choice to have twelve children. But Martha and Howard failed at their attempt to practice polygamy, and poverty prevented Martha from doing as much for her children as she would have liked. Martha's life illustrates that although the greatest influences in Mormon women's lives can be identified, the individual paths followed were forged by choice, personality, and determination.

FAITH, FEMININITY, AND THE FRONTIER: THE LIFE OF  
MARTHA JANE KNOWLTON CORAY

by

Amy Reynolds Billings

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 2002

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Amy Reynolds Billings

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

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Amy Reynolds Billings in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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for Shane  
and mothers everywhere

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## PREFACE

I was first introduced to Martha Jane Knowlton Coray when I was twelve years old. Brigham Young University had just remodeled the Maeser Building and was dedicating the lecture hall in honor of my great-great-great grandmother. My father had decided to attend, and I was invited to accompany him. I remember feeling shy and awkward in the presence of so many great aunts and uncles but also intrigued by their family stories. Following the dedication ceremony, my father took me to the university archives where we looked at Martha's diary and old family pictures of their homestead.

I don't remember thinking much about Martha after that until I arrived at BYU my freshman year. One of the classes I had that year was held in the Coray Lecture Hall. I was feeling a lot like a small fish in a big ocean that first day of class and remember taking the time to read the plaque on the wall about my ancestor. I saw that plaque several times a week which kept her in my mind long enough for me to change my major from chemical engineering to history. After I changed my major, Martha became a bit of an obsession. I wrote several small papers on Martha for various classes in my undergraduate career and an honor's thesis through which I came to know the woman and her achievements. Yet I hadn't really put her into any sort of context.

And so we come to my master's thesis. From the outset, I had specific goals. First, I wanted to study Martha and other Mormon women on their own terms. I felt that they were women who had made choices that led them to Utah and that they were there

because they believed in the religious message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I did not want to portray them as either victims of polygamy or liberated feminists because of polygamy; thus, the necessity of studying their faith and its impact on their lives became apparent. Second, it was clear that they had not completely separated themselves ideologically from their Burned-Over District counterparts. Mormon women followed the directives of domestic ideology with nearly the same devotion as their Northeastern counterparts; consequently, the "Cult of True Womanhood" needed to be addressed.

These initial observations led me to a simplistic comparison between the two groups until Dr. Susan S. Rugh recommended *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-Cultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*.<sup>1</sup> The multi-cultural analysis discussed in the introduction to this book immediately rang true to my understanding of Mormon women. Rather than analyzing them in terms of their deviation from a fictitious norm, Mormon women could be discussed in terms of their own unique cultural values combined with the realities of the constraints created by their physical surroundings. And so I began analyzing the multiple forces influencing Mormon women's lives.

As I began the formulation of my framework, however, weaving in Martha Coray's life, my mind wandered to other women in my family. I began thinking a lot about my grandmother, Virginia Noel Reynolds, and her experiences as part of the last generation of women to homestead. My grandfather was one of the lucky veterans to win 180 acres in the Heart Mountain Project about fifteen miles outside Cody, Wyoming. Like

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen Carol Dubois and Vicki L. Ruiz, "Introduction," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-cultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, eds. Ellen Carol Dubois and Vicki L. Ruiz (London: Routledge, 1990).

so many other couples, my grandparents negotiated who was going to be responsible for various aspects of the family and farm. Most of the labor assignments were typical, particularly during my grandmother's childbearing years. During that time my grandmother raised a garden, cared for the children, and helped her husband with farm tasks only when necessary. Yet, I knew so much more about my grandmother and grandfather that would never fit into some neat little standard of expectations. My grandmother had more education than my grandfather. She wanted to be a social worker when she attended college in the 1930s, but feared that it would limit her employment opportunities, so she became a teacher instead. My grandmother returned to the classroom the year before Jane, her youngest child, began school. The last year that Jane spent at home, she was Grandpa's shadow. She rode the tractors with him, helped with irrigation, and fed the animals. Grandpa later became responsible for getting the children ready for school in the morning, so he made breakfast and prepared lunches. In short, although my grandmother remained the primary care giver for the children and did not like caring for the animals, it does not follow that other aspects of my grandparents' domestic life were "typical." I knew that parts of her life could be used to support existing theories, while others would simply confuse them. I was left wondering if all theories were supported by convenient snippets of women's lives; have we been asking the right questions by defining women's experiences in a world which ignored men nearly as much as earlier histories had ignored women?

These questions led me to be more thoughtful about the analytical framework I was pursuing. I was excited about Martha Jane Knowlton Coray's life, but I didn't want to turn her into a "Woman Worthy." I didn't want to applaud her for making a difference



in the world by men's standards. I didn't want her to become significant to the world because she stepped outside traditional roles and accomplished something extraordinary. This, of course, denigrated the accomplishments of all women, Mormon and otherwise, who spent their lives in more insular pursuits within their homes and communities. Furthermore, Martha was a daughter, a wife, a polygamous wife, and a mother, and her diaries make it clear that those roles were more important to her than the distilled liniments and oils she made and sold. It would have been unfair to Martha to give less attention to her domestic life than to her academic and economic one.

What I did find interesting, however, was testing the canonized theories against the totality of the life of one woman, Martha Coray. Clearly the analytical frameworks enumerated by historians too numerous to name had relevance to Mormon women's lives. They discussed what physical circumstances were common among Mormon women, what kind of economic role they typically had, how their religious beliefs affected their lives, how they educated their children, how they practiced medicine, what their views of suffrage were, and how they strove to attain respectability by maintaining middle-class values whenever possible. But the idea that kept ringing true in my mind was Elizabeth Jameson's belief that women carved out their own place in the wilderness somewhere between the espoused ideals.<sup>2</sup> Jameson was referring to whole groups when she made this observation and would be pleased with the scholarship that has been done on Mormon women that has demonstrated their uniqueness as a group. I wanted to take this theory a

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<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," in *The Women's West*, eds. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 145-164.

step further and explore this idea on a personal level, with just one woman. I wanted to test the parameters that had been so carefully studied by others against one complete life.

Thus the triad of faith, femininity, and the frontier came to define my analysis of Mormon women, using Martha Jane Knowlton Coray not as the standard of what a Mormon woman should be, but rather as a measuring stick against which my theoretical framework could be tested. Martha was an excellent historical specimen because she had such a wide range of interests and occupations as well as giving birth to twelve children. If Brigham Young was enlarging the sphere of women's usefulness, then Martha Coray was nearly ideal for testing the boundaries of that sphere.

Mormon women lived in a world filled with authoritative directives and prescriptive literature. Their faith and their femininity set the boundaries that would define their lives. But in between the polar extremes that these directives implied was a continuum of possible interpretations that could be made by individuals. For Martha Jane Knowlton Coray these directives were not always simple to fulfill. Martha struggled with the Latter-day Saint practice of polygamy. The poverty of the frontier inhibited her ability to fulfill the female duty of educating her own children and improving the educational system in her community. Although the expectations for Mormon women sometimes conflicted with each other, Martha was able to negotiate the contradictions. She found a place along the continuum that was comfortable for her, choosing faith as the primary value against which her occupational choices and parenting tactics would be judged.

This paper will establish an analytical framework for Mormon women and explore how Martha Jane Knowlton Coray resolved these contradictions in her own life. In order to do so, this thesis has been divided into three different chapters discussing the various



aspects of Mormon women's lives. The first chapter delineates the components of my analytical framework, breaking it down into specific discussions of how faith, femininity, and the frontier contributed to Mormon women's lives. It is my belief that the unique and most intricate component of this framework was their faith, and thus the greater portion of this chapter is devoted to the numerous and seemingly incongruous aspects of Mormon doctrine that affected Mormon women's lives. Mormon adaptations of domesticity are also discussed in their turn, followed by a description of western historical theories and their application to Mormon settlements.

The following two chapters incorporate Martha on a much more fundamental level. These chapters focus on Martha's life, referring to the analytical frameworks established in the first chapter as well as concurrent historical events in order to place her life into context. The second chapter, focusing on Martha's domestic pursuits, is again broken down into three discrete units of discussion. The chapter begins with an exploration of the dynamics of Martha and Howard Coray's marriage, including their brief participation in polygamy. It is followed by a discussion of the Corays' "corporate family economy."<sup>3</sup> The Corays shift back and forth between agrarian pursuits and white collar occupations. Consequently, a nice, clean, lineal description of their economic progression to the middle class is impossible. Furthermore, Martha's contributions at times appear nearly identical to those of her rural women counterparts in the East, while at other times she appears to be not only pioneering in an arid land, but also into a land of economic and

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<sup>3</sup>Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 21-31.

political opportunity for women. The final component of the second chapter is centered on the Corays' children and their roles within the household. This section again contains aspects that would appear typical of agrarian families, such as the cooperative nature of their farming, but it also has a decidedly middle-class flavor; the Corays attempted to educate all of their children, instill moral values in them, and put great emphasis on which families their children are allowed to associate with.

The final chapter of this thesis is an attempt to draw specific connections between the changes in Brigham Young's directives to women and the corresponding events taking place in Utah during the 1870s. As the decade began, Congress was intensifying its attack on plural marriage, a federal land office was finally opened in Salt Lake City, the transcontinental railroad had reached completion, and Protestant churches were sending an increasing number of missionaries to Utah in order to open up schools. Brigham Young felt that his community of believers was under attack from outside forces and called on the women to aid in the effort to stem the tide of secularism in Utah. Martha and her family responded in ways specific to each perceived threat, through political activation, homesteading, home industry, and their participation both in establishing Brigham Young Academy and in teaching at various ward schools.

In completing this thesis I find myself intellectually indebted to several historians of Mormon history particularly Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Carol Cornwall Madsen, and Leonard J. Arrington, Kenneth Godfrey, Audrey Godfrey, and Claudia L. Bushman. But none more than Jill Mulvay Derr. It is her work on Brigham Young's ideas about women and their potential that has shaped my own interpretation of Mormon women's "sphere." Jill Derr also served on my thesis committee along with Brian Q. Cannon and Mary

Stovall Richards, each of whom gave me excellent direction. The archives staff at Brigham Young University was always friendly and helpful, and I am particularly indebted to Ron Esplin and the archivists at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for helping me to solve the mystery of Howard's polygamous marriage to Mary Ann Johnson. Ron Esplin and Richard Jensen taught the Mormon History and Culture class that introduced me to all of the fabulous nuances of Mormon history. Their class particularly shaped my analysis of the Latter-day Saint community boundaries used in my first chapter. I would also like to include a belated thank you in remembrance of my great aunt Jennie. She gathered many of the family treasures I relied so heavily upon in my thesis into a collection at Brigham Young University. Her genealogical research made my own research much simpler. Finally, a thank you to all my family members and friends who either gave me a bed during research trips or babysat my children while I worked on this project. Without such support this thesis would have been impossible.

## CHAPTER ONE

### FAITH, FEMININITY, AND THE FRONTIER: ESTABLISHING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When Elizabeth Wood Kane toured Utah in 1872, she observed some women working as clerks and telegraphers at a ticket office. She wrote, "It was an example of one of the contradictions of Mormonism. Thousands of years behind us in some of their customs; in others, you would think these people the most forward children of the age. They close no career on a woman in Utah by which she can earn a living."<sup>1</sup> Kane described her observations as a "contradiction," a word well chosen for Mormon women, whose lives have been misunderstood by both nineteenth-century reformers as well as today's historians. No analytical framework has yet to fully account for the "contradictions" that so many have found in studying Mormon women's lives.

When writing about the tensions pulling against each other in Mormonism, Gordon S. Wood described the religion as both "mystical and secular; restorationist and progressive; communitarian and individualistic; hierarchical and congregational; authoritarian and democratic; antinomian and arminian; anti-clerical and priestly . . . ."<sup>2</sup> Wood's insights into the contradictions that infuse themselves into cultures can also be specifically applied towards the lives of women living in Utah Territory. Conditions

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<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Wood Kane, *Twelve Mormon Homes Visited in Succession on a Journey through Utah to Arizona* (Philadelphia: printed privately, 1874), 4.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York*



there were both liberating and oppressive. Attitudes toward women's equality were both enlightened and archaic. And it was not always clear whether religion, tradition, or regional culture was responsible for the various contours of Mormon women's lives. Attitudes do not always provoke easily anticipated actions, however, and beliefs do not necessarily determine behavior. Mormon women lived their lives somewhere between the articulated ideals of their faithful community, the realities of more traditional female roles, and the struggles of their daily lives. This study examines the life of one Mormon woman, Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, who reflected the complexities of life for women in territorial Utah from 1850-1881.

This study of Martha is two-fold. First, it is biographical. Following her 1840 baptism, Martha Jane Knowlton Coray quickly assimilated herself into the Mormon faith, finding herself at the center of much of the church's early history. On February 6, 1841, Martha married Howard Coray, who had been working as a clerk for the prophet Joseph Smith and was well acquainted with his family. During this time Martha developed a great devotion to the prophet, as her husband noted:

In February of 1840, she embraced the Gospel and soon became well acquainted with the Prophet; and as such greatly venerated him. I have frequently heard her say, that he himself was the greatest miracle to her, she had ever seen; and that she valued her acquaintance with him above everything else.<sup>3</sup>

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*History* 61 (October, 1980) : 380.

<sup>3</sup>Howard Coray, *Journal, Coray Family Papers, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library*, 2. Howard Coray's *Journal* is really a memoir written after his wife's death and an 1882-83 mission of which three different versions were written. Of those three versions, two first halves and one second half currently exist. The copy housed at the archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differs in its descriptions of Howard's conversion and time in Nauvoo from the copy housed at Brigham Young University. Both, however, share the same ending, which actually comprises the majority of both memoirs. Thus, beginning with page seven, there is no difference between the two versions. In this paper the version held in the Coray Family Papers at Brigham

Joseph's brother, Hyrum Smith, privately taught Martha and Howard the doctrine of celestial, or plural, marriage prior to the public announcement of the practice.<sup>4</sup> After Joseph and Hyrum were killed, Martha was asked by their mother, Lucy Mack Smith, to help record Joseph's biography.

Howard and Martha chose to follow Brigham Young after Joseph's death and traveled to Utah in 1850. Soon they were back in the middle of church and community activities, where she remained well connected to members of the church hierarchy even though she lived outside Salt Lake City.<sup>5</sup> Martha served on the Board of Trustees at Brigham Young Academy, in addition to teaching at some of the local schools with Howard. She also developed an interest in chemistry and law. She had her own still from which she distilled liniments and oils. Besides these many activities, she held power of attorney for a few individuals and corresponded with judges, businessmen, and church authorities over various matters.

At Martha's death she was eulogized by both the community and her family. She was described as one whose "superior qualities impressed themselves upon those who approached her even for a brief period. She was possessed of indomitable energy, and besides being widely read and cultured . . . her mind was clear and comprehensive, and

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Young University will be referenced unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup>James S. Brooks, *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, Utah), March 26, 1886.

<sup>5</sup>Martha recorded in her diary, "President's Birthday today. He is 73," and the following day continued, "Went with Pres. to Salt Lake." (Martha Coray, Diary, 1-2 June 1873, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.) Additionally, Wilford Woodruff, the prophet and president of the LDS Church at the time of Martha's death, and his counselor, Joseph F. Smith, spoke at her funeral.

she employed it to good advantage.”<sup>6</sup> Her husband declared, “She lived as a consistent Latter-day Saint up to the time of her demise.”<sup>7</sup> Martha was also a wife, incurring significant familial responsibilities as she raised twelve children. She was intelligent, carefully articulating her thoughts in her writing. Finally, she was faithful, participating in religious rituals and following Mormon leaders’ counsel.

Martha Jane Knowlton Coray lived both an ordinary and an extraordinary life. She taught arithmetic and grammar to her own brood of twelve at home and to a few hundred in the classroom. She offered assistance to her husband in fields of wheat and of the law. She concocted medicines with the same skill as meals. Her achievements were varied, some of more importance to the community and some of more importance to her immediate family. Thus, her life is not simply a public or a private one, but a fusion of both.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>*The Salt Lake Herald*, December 16, 1881, as quoted in Jennie N. Weeks and Inez S. Cooper, “Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” Coray Family Papers, Special Collections, HBLI, Brigham Young University, Provo, 11.

<sup>7</sup>Howard Coray, Journal, 2.

<sup>8</sup>Mary Beth Norton discussed the idea of women’s public versus private lives by comparing two different political theories. The first came from Sir Robert Filmer and asserts that the family and state are analogous institutions. This “worldview assumed the necessity of hierarchy in family, polity, and society at large.” (4) She contrasts this with John Locke’s belief that the state and family are distinct units based upon the premise that the state is a social contract among men whose aims are very different from the family.(5) Under the Filmerian, paternalistic model, everyone’s lives were part of the public domain. Actions taken within the privacy of the home could be scrutinized publicly. Furthermore, women could assume public roles if they directly benefited their families. By the time the Mormons arrived in Utah, the Lockean theory dominated public life throughout the United States, creating a polis that consisted entirely of men. The Mormon community, however, more closely resembled the Filmerian model. There was not the clear separation between the family, the church, and the state that existed elsewhere. This, of course, caused numerous problems for Utah as it sought statehood, but it also helps explain why women were allowed a more public role in Utah than in the

Martha's life, while not unique in the individual activities pursued, was clearly unusual, if not unique, in its breadth. In addition to her interest in education, law, religion, and chemistry, she was well acquainted with and interacted with many leaders in the governing bodies of both church and state. These various accomplishments make her life worthy of study. The true significance of Martha's life to historians, however, is not what she accomplished individually, but rather what her life can tell us about the experiences of Mormon women in Utah Territory. The range of activities in which she was involved make her life a reference point useful in interpreting other women's lives.

Creating a broad framework analyzing the multiple forces acting on Mormon women's lives is the second purpose for studying Martha's life. Moving from "women worthies" to "separate spheres" to "The Pocahontas Perplex," women's history has begun to celebrate both the bonds that connect women and boundaries that divide them.<sup>9</sup> Mormon women's history has followed a similar historiographical progression.<sup>10</sup> There have been biographical sketches describing prominent women as well as more analytical pieces describing women's domestic roles and the doctrine of "separate spheres."

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East. This Filmerian philosophy is evident in Martha's life in particular. She pursued occupations unusual for women during the nineteenth century, but her private decisions were undoubtedly affected by both her desire to benefit her family and her church. (See Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1996], 4-10.)

<sup>9</sup>Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-Cultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, eds. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (Routledge: London, 1990), 15-21.

<sup>10</sup>Two essays are helpful in discussing the historiography of Mormon women's history: Patricia Lyn Scott and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Mormon Women: A Bibliography in Process, 1977-1985," *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985) : 113-128; and Carol Cornwall Madsen and David J. Whittaker, "History's Sequel: A Source Essay on Women in Mormon History," *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979) : 123-145.



Although Mormon women's history has been almost universally written in a scholarly manner, the majority has been written mostly for Mormons, by Mormons; as such it has unintentionally remained apart from the larger field of women's history.

As the field of women's history has progressed, however, it has been accurately noted that the analytical frameworks of domesticity and spheres do not adequately represent all women or even the majority of women.<sup>11</sup> The emphasis has now changed from an all-encompassing approach to women's history to one in which the individual experiences of women, particularly minorities, are told and analyzed according to the multiple forces and power structures working upon them. As historians have recognized the variations in women's experiences, there has been an ever-increasing focus on race, region, class, and religious affiliation to describe the complexity and diversity of women's lives. Mormon women's history should now be included in such discussions. Their history should be examined after the pattern of other minority women's history with scholars looking for both continuities and differences between LDS women and their counterparts.<sup>12</sup>

Such a methodology would not be used for the purpose of comparing experiences or measuring relative amounts of suffering, but rather as an example of how to examine more intricately the multiple factors that shaped each group's lives. Historians Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz have termed this analytical approach "multicultural" writing,

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<sup>11</sup>Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75, 1 (June 1988) : 9-39.

<sup>12</sup>In this paper *Mormon*, *Latter-day Saints*, *LDS*, and *saints* will be used interchangeably to refer to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We chose the term “multicultural” over “multiracial” because we seek to focus on the interplay of many races and cultures, because we acknowledge that not all white women’s histories can be categorized under one label, and because we seek to suggest the term “race” needs to be theorized rather than assumed.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, most members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the nineteenth century enjoyed being part of the racial majority in the United States, but their experience was not identical to other white women’s experiences. As members of a new and radical religious sect, they were targets for discrimination and violence. Latter-day Saints faced persecution for their beliefs as soon as it became known that Joseph Smith intended to translate a “gold bible.”<sup>14</sup> The height of violent persecution came during the saints’ time in Missouri, when Governor Lilburn W. Boggs declared that the Mormons represented such a severe threat to their state that they must either be expelled or exterminated.<sup>15</sup> But it did not stop there. Joseph Smith was killed by a mob in Illinois, and his followers were soon forced to move West.

Although the Latter-day Saints had hoped that isolation would protect them, opposition to their teachings did not end with the move to Utah Territory. Polygamy quickly drew national attention, and, following the Civil War, LDS families began to realize that an intense political battle would be fought over their marriage practices. The Republican Party had declared polygamy a barbaric practice in 1856; most Easterners considered polygamous wives similar to concubines or prostitutes who bore illegitimate

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<sup>13</sup>Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz, “Introduction,” in *Unequal Sisters*, xii.

<sup>14</sup>The early term that referred to the golden plates translated by Joseph Smith that has become known as *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*.

<sup>15</sup>James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 136.

children.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Mormon author Edward W. Tullidge declared in the introduction to *Women of Mormondom*: “Long enough, O women of America, have your Mormon Sisters been blasphemed! The record of their lives is now sent unto you, that you may have an opportunity to judge them in the spirit of righteousness.”<sup>17</sup>

Polygamy and other aspects of the strange new faith of Mormonism caused LDS women to face a double disadvantage. They dealt with discrimination and persecution for being women and for being Mormons. During the polygamy crusades Emmeline B. Wells wrote in an editorial, “We are assailed, and that too by our own sex.”<sup>18</sup>

Consequently, Mormon women serve as an excellent example of Dubois and Ruiz’s desire to “explore the dynamics through which women have oppressed other women.”<sup>19</sup>

While theories describing the experiences of Northeastern, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class women clearly have applications to the study of Mormon women, they over-simplify the

<sup>16</sup>The Republican platform included the statement, “it is both the right and the imperative duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism – Polygamy and Slavery.” (Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 305).

<sup>17</sup>Edward W. Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), iv. Eliza R. Snow helped compile and edit the women’s accounts used in the book, and the project itself was funded by the Relief Society, a charitable and religious organization for women that was part of the organizational structure of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For a detailed history of the Relief Society, see Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1992).

<sup>18</sup>*Woman’s Exponent* 7 (1 December 1878) : 102-3; as quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Feme Covert”: Journey of a Metaphor,” *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991) : 55.

<sup>19</sup>Dubois and Ruiz, *Unequal Sisters*, xii. The discussion continues throughout the introduction, xi-xvi; see also Nancy A. Hewitt, “Beyond the Search for Sisterhood,” in *Unequal Sisters*, 1-14; and Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1879-1939* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xix-xxii.



experiences of the women who joined a new religion, cutting family ties and crossing the plains, only to arrive in a desert that suffered from the additional debilitating plagues of locusts and grasshoppers.

Accepting Mormon women simply as products of “The Cult of True Womanhood” minimizes the complicated system of roles and power that membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints created in their lives.<sup>20</sup> Mormon women, consequently, defy easy categorization: rather, they lived at the crossroads of faith, femininity, and the frontier, the amalgamation of which created a unique world view for women such as Martha. This was a world view in which God was supreme and motherhood was a noble cause, but where both necessity and ideology did not make these Eastern notions of femininity mutually exclusive with learned occupations or political interests. These various forces in Martha’s life maintained a precarious equilibrium and were always subjected to God’s plan for his people, articulated through his prophet, Brigham Young.

*Faith:*

Martha’s membership and full participation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is fundamental to understanding her life and the lives of women around her. In fact, membership in the LDS church appears to have been a stronger identifying characteristic for Martha than her womanhood.<sup>21</sup> Living in Territorial Utah during a time

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<sup>20</sup>Barbara Welter, “The Cult of Domesticity,” in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 21-41.

<sup>21</sup>Emmeline B. Wells demonstrated her commitment to the LDS Church over her

when the LDS Church dominated the territory both politically and culturally most likely facilitated this strong identification with Mormonism.<sup>22</sup>

The permeation of the Latter-day Saint Church in Utah was no accident. Brigham Young had moved the Saints to Utah in order to create a community of believers dedicated, quite literally, to building the Kingdom of God on earth. Such an ambitious goal required that both the men and women of the community contribute their talents and time, as well as their financial support, to Church programs. In order to solidify the Latter-day Saints' commitment to building the kingdom, Brigham Young set about creating boundaries around his people that would divide them socially, politically, and economically from those not of their faith. These boundaries, in turn, created a culturally isolated community of believers where doctrine necessarily impacted everyday choices and activities.

Socially, it was not difficult to separate the Saints from the rest of the world. Several factors contributed to this social separation, most obviously their religious beliefs. A few doctrines, such as the LDS belief in a heavenly restoration of lost truth, polygamy, and millenarianism, caused conflict between Mormons and their neighbors. Persecution followed, but the Latter-day Saints were able to use this to their advantage as well, ritualizing their history to increase their group identity as a chosen people.

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feminist inclinations when she supported B.H. Roberts' constitutional right to hold public office, even when he had been against women's suffrage. Although she had worked hard to defeat him in the local elections, she strongly supported him when national groups, such as the National Council of Women of which she was a member, attempted to keep him from taking his seat in Congress. See Madsen, "Feme Covert," 53.

<sup>22</sup>Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1985), 61. For the pre-Utah period of Mormon history see Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

The Latter-day Saint belief that their religion was a restoration of lost truths and the only true church containing the fullness of Christ's gospel separated them ideologically from other Christian denominations.<sup>23</sup> A clear distinction must be made between the concept of a reformation and a restoration. Several contemporaneous churches, such as the Campbellites, believed that the religious organization established by Christ was no longer on the earth. These churches attempted to re-create the primitive Christian church by a thorough review of the New Testament. They did not, however, claim to have Christ or heavenly messengers come to restore what was lost, as the Mormons did.<sup>24</sup>

Other significant differences existed as well between Mormons and other Protestant groups. As the doctrine of the LDS church continued to unfold, members began to identify themselves with the ancient Israelites and believed that they too were a chosen people, intended to help usher in the Millennium. They believed that their salvation would be collective, imminent, and miraculous.<sup>25</sup> Religion scholar Jan Shipps has compared the LDS response to these sacred and spectacular manifestations, such as Joseph Smith's vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ and numerous visitations from other heavenly messengers, to those of ancient Israel. She wrote, "In each situation the

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 34-39.

<sup>24</sup>Jon Butler wrote, "A new Mormon revelation made possible the recovery of ancient spiritual truth that had been hobbled by the corruptions of time and imperfect Christian practice." (*Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990], 242.) See also Shipps, *Mormonism*, 67-85 and Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 183-188.

<sup>25</sup>Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 5.

appropriate response to powerfully perceived manifestations of the sacred was the building up of a separated community, one clearly set apart so that distinctions were easy to make between the chosen people and the non-chosen gentiles.”<sup>26</sup> The very concept of a chosen people, of insiders and outsiders, even the use of the term *gentile* to describe those not of their faith, created a strong boundary around the Saints that increased their cohesion as a group.

Polygamy became the one point of doctrine on which most of the national attention was focused and as such became an important boundary for Mormons by reinforcing the distinctions between the Latter-day Saints’ religious beliefs and those of their counterparts. It again connected them to the patriarchs of ancient Israel and, due to its uniqueness within a monogamous society, became perhaps the strongest identifying characteristic of Mormon doctrine in the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Jan Shipps has noted the particular significance of institutional practices, particularly polygamy, in creating group cohesion. She wrote, “Identity was maintained corporately, not individually, which explains why all the citizens of the kingdom –those who were involved in plural marriage and those who were not –were willing to defend to the last possible moment the practice of polygamy that kept them set apart.”<sup>28</sup> Howard and Martha were among those who

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<sup>26</sup>Jan Shipps, *Mormonism*, 120-21.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas F. O’Dea argued that separateness increased the Mormons’ willingness to accept innovative doctrines. He wrote, “As separateness encouraged innovation, innovation in return increased separateness by providing a creedal basis for evolving peculiarity.” (Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], 54-55; as quoted in Eugene E. Campbell and Bruce L. Campbell, “Divorce Among Mormon Polygamists: Extent and Explanations,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46, 1 (Fall 1978) :16.)

<sup>28</sup>Shipps, *Mormonism*, 24.



were not practicing polygamists most of their married life and yet defended the practice.<sup>29</sup>

As the Latter-day Saints busily set about establishing boundaries, they created two opposing groups of people.<sup>30</sup> One worked to build Zion; the others joined with the devil to work against God's chosen people. Such an ideology made it easy to villainize outsiders and contributed to antagonistic relationships with their neighbors. As discussed earlier, intense persecution followed, and LDS church headquarters were moved four times prior to the western exodus.<sup>31</sup> Even after arriving in Utah, the saints' isolation was challenged with the approach of Johnston's army in 1857.<sup>32</sup> It should be no surprise, therefore, that Brigham Young built a "practical kingdom," that stressed "conformity, obedience, and unity."<sup>33</sup> Unity appeared to be the only way to survive.

The saints also learned to capitalize on their difficult past to foster identity within

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<sup>29</sup>Howard published a statement that affirmed the practice of polygamy in Nauvoo. See James S. Brooks, *Deseret Evening News*, March 26, 1886.

<sup>30</sup>See Underwood, *Millenarian World*, 8-9.

<sup>31</sup>Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 65, 97-107, 113-151, 189-228. Clearly other religious groups have faced intense persecution as well. The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* states, "Although Latter-day Saints claim no greater suffering than many others who have also been persecuted for their religious beliefs through the ages, many Latter-day Saints have been persecuted, beginning with Joseph Smith." (Lisa Bolin Hawkins, "Persecution," in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism: The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 3:1076.)

<sup>32</sup>Responding to rumors initiated by federal appointees such as W. W. Drummond, who came into conflict almost immediately with his Mormon colleagues upon arriving in Utah, President Buchanan sent a large military force to Utah, led by General Albert Sidney Johnston, in order to quell a supposed rebellion against the United States. See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 305-311.

<sup>33</sup>Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), xv.



the group. Mormon artist C. C. A. Christiansen painted a series of murals entitled the Mormon Panorama depicting tragic scenes from LDS history. He toured the territory with the paintings, giving narratives of the atrocities committed against the Latter-day Saints. Mormons who were converted after the saints' expulsion from Nauvoo were then able to connect with those who had experienced the persecution first hand. As Davis Bitton noted, this simplified history allowed "new converts to more quickly assimilate themselves."<sup>34</sup>

Steven L. Olsen applied this theme specifically to the celebration of Pioneer Day, the day that Latter-day Saints commemorate Brigham Young's and the first company's arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, to explain how history can be simplified into ritual elements and collective memories that

create a public model for an idealized social reality. This idealized reality consists of acceptable attitudes, values, behaviors, and relationships that bind individuals to a community and engage them in the celebration of its past, confirmation of its present, and anticipation of its future.<sup>35</sup>

Martha and Howard Coray lived in Nauvoo and were well acquainted with the prophet Joseph Smith prior to his untimely death. They, too, were forced to leave their home and travel to Utah. While neither experienced the difficulties that the Mormons encountered in Missouri, Martha's family gave shelter and employment to some of the exiled saints. What Martha and Howard did not learn from personal experience, they quickly learned from writing histories of the church. When Howard first came to

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<sup>34</sup>Davis Bitton, "The Ritualization of Mormon History," in *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 182.

<sup>35</sup>Steven L. Olsen, "Celebrating Cultural Identity: Pioneer Day in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," *Brigham Young University Studies*, hereafter *BYU Studies*, 36, 1

Nauvoo, he assisted the prophet with secretarial work and began assembling a history of the church. After Joseph's death, Martha, and later Howard, helped Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith's mother, to write a biography of her son.

It is not clear, however, how these experiences affected Martha and Howard. Martha never mentioned any particular suffering or persecution in her writings, nor did Howard discuss the persecution that forced his family to leave Nauvoo in his memoirs. Yet they were participants in Pioneer Day celebrations and aware of the political pressures being lobbied against polygamy.<sup>36</sup> There can be little doubt, therefore, that the Corays were affected by the general cultural climate in the church that emphasized the boundaries of being a chosen people, of polygamy, and of persecution as a way to foster community and identity.

Political boundaries around the saints were sometimes more obvious than others. These ranged from Brigham Young's continued influence over the Territory, even after his removal from public office, to block voting by Mormons to ensure local control of the government. The saints also avoided any federal intervention in their judicial proceedings by using bishop's courts and expanding the jurisdiction of locally elected probate judges.

Brigham Young may not have always held a political office, but his influence over the affairs of the Territory extended far beyond Sunday worship. Jan Shipps accurately noted, "Brigham Young was not king –after 1858 he was not even governor – but he might as well have been, since Latter-day Saints actually, if not officially, lived in

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(1996-97) : 160-61.

<sup>36</sup>"All but Donnie went to Salt Lake City with 2000 souls." Martha Coray, Diary, 24 July 1874.

a literal LDS kingdom over which an ecclesiastical establishment presided for nearly fifty years.”<sup>37</sup> Mark Twain left Utah with a similar impression after witnessing Brigham Young’s word carry more force on his followers’ behavior than any court of law. He concluded, “There is a batch of governors, and judges, and other officials here, shipped from Washington, and they maintain the semblance of a republican form of government – but the petrified truth is that Utah is an absolute monarchy and Brigham Young is king!”<sup>38</sup>

Latter-day Saint doctrine taught obedience to prophetic decree; consequently, Mormons maintained a surprisingly high level of religious devotion and obedience to Brigham Young’s leadership. They protected their religious beliefs with political unity; throughout most of the territorial period most Mormons belonged to the People’s party. Members such as Martha passed out voting pamphlets to support their candidate or proposition of choice.<sup>39</sup> They united against outside influences as they used block voting to elect faithful bishops and members to serve as police chiefs, judges, and other important community officials.<sup>40</sup> Wilson Howard Dusenberry, who was both a nephew and a son-in-law to Martha and Howard, wrote in his diary about the religious fervor

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<sup>37</sup>Shippo, *Mormonism*, 61. Shippo frequently reminded her readers that the saints were “literalists,” believing in a literal gathering of Israel and building a physical kingdom of God to welcome the returning Christ. This contrasted with other religions’ metaphorical beliefs regarding the establishment of Zion, the second coming of Christ, and their status as a chosen people. See also Shippo, 62-63.

<sup>38</sup>Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Co., 1872; reprint, Pleasantville, NY: The Reader’s Digest Association, Inc., 1994), 65.

<sup>39</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 9 February 1874 and 5 August 1876.

<sup>40</sup>Dean L. May, *Three Frontiers: Family, Land, and Society in the American West, 1850-1900*, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 231-234.



stirred up by elections: "The point of the preaching is concerning the election next Monday." A few days later he wrote, "I had almost forgotten the election but of course *everybody* has voted, with a vengeance."<sup>41</sup>

In order to avoid any risk of exposure to federally appointed judges, many members chose to settle disputes through bishops' courts, a judicial process presided over by the bishop in which the bishop and his counselors would issue judgment.<sup>42</sup> For example, when the jurisdiction of the irrigation company servicing Martha and Howard's ranch was questioned by a neighboring irrigation district, they sought to resolve the conflict through their bishop first. When that course failed, the saints also isolated themselves from federal control by using the probate courts, with locally elected officials, for many court cases that would ordinarily be outside the jurisdiction of these courts.<sup>43</sup> Martha recorded an example of this tactic: "Prisners [sic] from Green River tried before E. Smith, probate judge."<sup>44</sup> Such maneuvering allowed the Mormons to maintain a

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<sup>41</sup>Wilson Howard Dusenberry, *Diary*, 31 January 1867 and 4 February 1867, respectively, in Kate B. Carter, ed., *Our Pioneer Heritage* 1 (1957) : 245-46. Emphasis in original.

<sup>42</sup>Block Teachers (male members of the congregation) were sometimes in charge of settling disputes also. See William G. Hartley, "Common People: Church Activity During the Brigham Young Era," in *Nearly Everything Imaginable: The Everyday Life of Utah's Mormon Pioneers*, eds. Ronald W. Walker and Doris R. Dant, vol. 1 in *Studies in Latter-day Saint History* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1999), 262.

<sup>43</sup>For more information on the settlement of disputes, both personal and legal, see James B. Allen, "The Unusual Jurisdiction of County Probate Courts in the Territory of Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 36, 2 (Spring 1968) : 132-142; Elizabeth D. Gee, "Justice for All or for the 'Elect'? The Utah County Probate Court, 1855-1872," *Utah History Quarterly* 48, 2 (Spring 1980) : 129-47; Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 214-221.

<sup>44</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary and financial notebook*, 14 September 1853, Coray Family

significant amount of control over the politics of Utah, resulting in an effective, but controversial, political separation from the federal government. The Latter-day Saints guarded this separation from the outside world as long as possible because living in a literal political kingdom to the extent that they did both protected the Mormons' religious practices and increased the saints' identity as God's chosen people.

Economic boundaries, particularly the United Order and home production, were the final tools used by Brigham Young to foster community among his people. The Cooperative Movement introduced by Brigham Young was not unique to either Brigham Young or the Mormons. Joseph Smith had attempted to implement a variation of Young's cooperative venture much earlier, and many other religious groups used communal living to strengthen their cohesion.<sup>45</sup> As the railroad neared completion in Utah Territory, however, Brigham Young saw new reasons to integrate the gospel into financial matters. Young was particularly concerned that improved transportation routes with easy access to other markets would ruin the saints financially. He feared that the saints would spend all of their cash on goods imported from outside Utah instead of purchasing local goods. Young believed that "the closer connection in a business point of view that a community holds themselves together, the greater will be their joy and wealth."<sup>46</sup>

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Papers, HBLL.

<sup>45</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, "Communitarianism Under Joseph Smith: The Law of Consecration and Stewardship," in *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976; reprint, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 15-40. For a comparison of Mormons and other communal groups, see Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

<sup>46</sup>Brigham Young, sermon of 6 October 1870, in *Journal of Discourses* (cited

Although Brigham Young was fully aware of the economic benefits that Utah would gain from the railroad, he was also concerned about the saints' autonomy. Emphasizing home production, Young attempted to make his people completely self-sufficient and independent. They produced cotton, silk, shoes, sugar, and numerous other items that were distributed through local cooperative institutions. Members of the LDS church were called on missions just to produce items such as cotton for use within the territory.<sup>47</sup> Other wards and communities sponsored a communal factory to meet some aspect of the Latter-day Saints' needs. Martha and her family produced soap in conjunction with the nineteenth ward's lye factory.<sup>48</sup>

These economic boundaries were intended to separate the Mormons from the world and strengthen them by uniting them for the financial good of Zion, rather than fragmenting themselves into smaller competitive groups. Brigham Young said that "the underlying principle of the United Order was that there should be no rich and no poor, that men's talents should be used for the common good, and that selfish interests should make way for a more benevolent and generous spirit among the saints."<sup>49</sup> As members of the LDS church cast their lot with Young's financial programs, they increased their commitment to the group.

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hereafter as *JD*), 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86), 13:267.

<sup>47</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *The Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958; reprint, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 216-222.

<sup>48</sup>There is also some evidence in Martha's diary that she was a member of the board for the Provo Woolen Mills. (See 10 August 1874, 3 November 1874, 19 December 1874, 18 December 1875, *passim*.)

<sup>49</sup>Manuscript History of Brigham Young as quoted in Hugh Nibley, "We Will Still Weep for Zion," *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 363.



Of course the actual implementation of the United Order never equaled the ideals espoused by Brigham Young. Some members opposed the movement outright, several of whom organized themselves in the Godbeite movement. These individuals opposed the economic control exerted by the LDS church, and many of the leaders were eventually excommunicated.<sup>50</sup> Even Mormons with good intentions struggled to implement the principles of cooperation.<sup>51</sup>

President John Taylor, Young's successor, officially declared the end of the cooperative movement in May 1882, acknowledging that their imperfections had prevented the establishment of such a system. But he resisted declaring the attempt a total failure, believing that they had taken a step in the right direction by "leading our bretheren to reflect upon the necessity of union as one of the fundamental principles of success in temporal things as well as spiritual. . . ."<sup>52</sup> Although the program had introduced some elements of contention and division among the Saints, they had succeeded in raising the general level of consciousness regarding the importance of union

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<sup>50</sup>The Godbeites also opposed Latter-day Saint marriage practices, i.e. polygamy, and the political control exerted by the church. For more information regarding the Godbeite movement see Walker, *Wayward Saints*.

<sup>51</sup>In Richfield, there were complaints that some members were growing lackadaisical in their efforts knowing that their wages were guaranteed. The initial St. George United Order dissolved after only a few years and attempts to reinstate the program failed even more quickly. Other communities endured with some success, most notably the Brigham City Coop, but that too became unprofitable over time and the various enterprises were all sold into private hands by 1895. For a thorough overview of the cooperative movement among Latter-day Saints, see Arrington, Fox, and May, *Building the City of God*. The United Order was actually dissolved in April of 1878 (315). George Q. Cannon, counselor to Brigham Young, defined the United Order as a union of capital and labor, while cooperation was a union of capital (311).

<sup>52</sup>John Taylor, as quoted in Arrington, Fox, and May, *Building the City of God*, 334-335. Hugh Nibley took a much more critical approach to the LDS attempts to live

among themselves.

The social, political, and economic boundaries were maintained by the corporate identity of the church during the nineteenth century. These tactical boundaries, both calculated and unintended, were extremely effective in creating a strong sense of community and commitment to the cause in which the saints were engaged. Young clearly described his beliefs when he said, "I am prepared to prove from all the facts that have existed or that now exist in all branches of human affairs, that union is strength, and that division is weakness and confusion."<sup>53</sup> Although Brigham Young was never quite satisfied with the community's progress in building the kingdom of God, outsiders felt Mormons' cohesion, and many felt threatened by it. But it was this group solidarity that weathered the Saints through Johnston's Army, the coming of the railroad, the Godbeite movement, and several years of polygamy prosecution during the territorial period.

In a culture so heavily defined by its religious beliefs, doctrines necessarily dictated daily lives to a greater degree than in more pluralistic societies. Mormon women felt the influence of their religion in their daily activities; they were particularly affected by doctrines regarding restored priesthood, the resulting patriarchy, and polygamy. These doctrines shaped women's roles in the home, church, and community. They also affected women's interactions with both men and women, and, in some measure, determined what were acceptable occupations for women.

The priesthood is the foundation for every aspect of Mormon religious life and differs from other churches' conceptions of the priesthood. Joseph Smith taught that

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the United Order in "We Will Still Weep for Zion," 341-377.

<sup>53</sup>Brigham Young, JD 13:267.



Christ's Church fell into apostasy following the death of His apostles. The death of the apostles resulted in a loss of priesthood authority, decentralization of the church, and a resulting departure from the pure doctrines taught by Christ. Joseph Smith claimed that John the Baptist appeared in resurrected form to return the Aaronic priesthood through an ordination ceremony that required the laying on of hands. The Melchizedek priesthood, or higher priesthood, was similarly bestowed upon Joseph by Peter, James, and John, thus restoring lost apostolic authority.<sup>54</sup> In Mormon theology, therefore, the priesthood can only be passed from individual to individual through a specific ceremony. Similarly, a calling to become a priest does not come to an individual other than through approved priesthood lines. One cannot claim this power for oneself. It must be bestowed by God through His servants.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, Latter-day Saint priesthood was established as a hierarchical system with a specific line of authority and leadership. Initially, ordination to the priesthood was based upon the needs of the church and callings extended.<sup>56</sup> This resulted in some social deference given to men who held the priesthood. The priesthood, however, was always intended to be shared and used by the common members of the church, even though the

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<sup>54</sup>See Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 49, 88.

<sup>55</sup>Further details can be found in Richard G. Ellsworth and Melvin J. Luthy, "Priesthood," *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism: The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 3: 1133-1138.) Among the differences between the Latter-day Saint conception of priesthood and other denominations the authors listed: "Priesthood is not vocational or professional . . . . It is not hereditary . . . . It is not offered for money . . . . It is not held by a group of specialists who are separated from the community . . . . And yet it is not a 'priesthood of all believers,' as in the Protestant conception." (1134-35).

<sup>56</sup>For example, men such as Howard and Sidney Knowlton were ordained as

priesthood was not given to every man in the early history of the church. Thus, it was significant that when the Nauvoo temple was dedicated, several thousand men received the Melchizedek priesthood prior to receiving their endowments. Brigham Young further democratized the priesthood in 1877, when the priesthood was universally given to white males over the age of twelve living the principles of the gospel as defined by the LDS church.<sup>57</sup>

Brigham Young discussed the priesthood on numerous occasions, giving it several different connotations.<sup>58</sup> According to Young, it gives men the authority to bless others in the name of Christ; it serves as the foundation of a church government and is a creative power. As such, the priesthood undergirds other religious beliefs, such as eternal families, the role of men and women, and the performance of saving ordinances, permeating almost every aspect of Mormon religious life. Furthermore, the priesthood was considered central to the whole idea of the gospel and of the church as a physical

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elders prior to departing on missions.

<sup>57</sup>For a further explanation of the changes that took place in 1877, see William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement," *BYU Studies* 20, 1 (Fall 1979): 3-36.

<sup>58</sup>Brigham Young declared, "[It is] the holy Priesthood which gives men authority and power to administer in [Christ's] name." He also said, "The Priesthood . . . is a perfect order and system of government." And lastly he described the priesthood as "the law by which the worlds are, were, and will continue for ever and ever. It is that system which brings worlds into existence and peoples them." (Brigham Young, sermon of 3 June 1866, *JD*, 11:238; 20 February 1870, *JD*, 13:242; 31 July 1859, *JD*, 6:343, respectively.) William G. Hartley also said that the priesthood "encompasses powers, keys, ordinances, offices, duties, organizations, and attitudes"; see "Upon You My Fellow Servants': Restoration of the Priesthood," in *The Prophet Joseph Smith: Essays on the Life and Mission of Joseph Smith*, eds. Larry Porter and Susan Easton Black (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 49.

institution and thus greatly respected and revered as both a power and an organization.<sup>59</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gave women and men equal access to salvation and the sacred rituals associated with it; however, women did not hold the priesthood in a manner equivalent to men. The power of the priesthood was considered necessary for performing ordinances, and there are no examples of women performing what LDS theology considered essential public ordinances: baptism, confirmation, and administering the sacrament.<sup>60</sup> These uses of the priesthood were exclusively male. Nor are there any examples of women's being ordained to the priesthood or to a specific office within the priesthood. Priesthood power was also generally considered necessary for anointing and blessing the sick. There are, however, numerous accounts of women's anointing and healing each other, children, and their

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<sup>59</sup>Brigham Young spoke of the priesthood when he said, "Did they destroy it when they took the life of Joseph? No. 'Mormonism' is here, the Priesthood is here, the keys of the Kingdom are here on the earth; and when Joseph went, they did not go. And if the wicked should succeed in taking my life, the keys of the Kingdom will remain with the church." (Brigham Young, sermon of 26 July 1857, *JD*, 5:78.) Further clarifying priesthood keys and authority, Thomas Alexander wrote, "Though virtually all males over twelve years of age hold the priesthood, authority in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is exercised according to an hierarchical structure. The highest officials are general authorities, a term used to designate the principal of presiding offices of the church. . . . The President of the church is the only person authorized to exercise all priesthood authority or "keys" at any time." (Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition, A History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986], x; see also Derr, "Brigham Young and the Awakening of Mormon Women in the 1870's," in *Lion of the Lord: Essays of the Life and Service of Brigham Young*, eds. Susan Easton Black and Larry Porter [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995], 315; and Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia*, 225.)

<sup>60</sup>Women continue to aid in the administration of the essential temple ordinances of washing and anointing and the endowment; however, there is no public statement that I am aware of to clarify whether or not such participation is exercising priesthood authority.



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During the Second Great Awakening, women in many denominations became more direct participants in public religious life.<sup>62</sup> Thus, it was not unusual that Mormon women participated in prayer circles, spoke in tongues, anointed and healed one another, and received revelations and manifestations of the spirit.<sup>63</sup> Most spiritual gifts were received by men and women alike and were not considered directly connected to the priesthood, anointing and healing serving as the exception. Mormon women anointed and blessed other women during the nineteenth century. It was then church policy to anoint the actual body part requiring the blessing. This practice required women to participate in this ordinance since nearly all women were anointed during childbirth; Victorian Mormons thought that it would be inappropriate for a man to perform such

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<sup>61</sup>Linda King Newell lists several examples of women giving blessings in "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, eds. Lavina Fielding Anderson and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, with a foreword by Jan Shipp (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 111, 113, 117, and 121. She also quoted Elizabeth Ann Whitney who said, "I was also ordained and set apart under the hand of Joseph Smith the prophet to administer to the sick and comfort the sorrowful. Several other sisters were also ordained and set apart to administer in these holy ordinances." (115.) Many examples of women blessing other women during childbirth are found in Kenneth Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, eds., *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 189, 190, 354. More general examples of women blessing and healing women and children can be found on 193, 195, 377.

<sup>62</sup>Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion 1800-1860," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, ed. Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 137-157; Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 86-104; and Nancy F. Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 87-98, 156-158.

<sup>63</sup>Linda King Newell has contended, "There was initially little difference between women and men as recipients of these gifts." ("Gifts of the Spirit," 111-150.)

blessings.<sup>64</sup> It is unclear, however, whether the women performing these blessings were doing so under the auspices of the priesthood, or whether they were exercising spiritual gifts extended to all believers in Christ. Evidence, however, supports the conclusion that many Mormon women in the nineteenth century believed that they held the priesthood as well as men.<sup>65</sup> This belief was intimately associated with their understanding of temple ceremonies.

Carol Cornwall Madsen explained the effect that the doctrines taught in the temple had on women of the early church. Madsen observed, "In Mormon doctrine the temple is the heart and core of the gospel, and all else derives meaning and purpose from it."<sup>66</sup> Many Mormon women understood, as Jill Mulvay Derr has noted, that they were not considered true equals with men in this life.<sup>67</sup> They also, understood, however, that through obedience to ordinances the equitable relationship that had existed between Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden would be restored.<sup>68</sup> The temple, which symbolically placed men and women in roles of Adam and Eve, was an essential element

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<sup>64</sup>D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1992), 379.

<sup>65</sup>Edward Tullidge wrote, "The Mormon women, as well as men, hold the Priesthood." (See *Women of Mormondom*, 487.) Further supporting the important connection between the temple and priesthood Ron Esplin wrote that Joseph felt he could not finish organizing the church "unless the sisters, too, were properly organized under priesthood—something possible only in connection with the temple." (Ronald K. Esplin, "The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints," *Journal of Mormon History* 16 [1990] : 82.)

<sup>66</sup>Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple," 89.

<sup>67</sup>Jill Mulvay (Derr), "Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question," *BYU Studies*, 16, 2 (Winter 1976) : 29-39.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 261.

of that restoration.

Preparatory to the first women's receiving their endowments in 1843, Joseph Smith incorporated the Relief Society into the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although the Society was initially begun by women for secular purposes, Joseph proposed that they organize it under the auspices of the priesthood. Joseph later "turn[ed] the key" to them; with this act women were given authority to govern themselves within the organization of the church.<sup>69</sup> It was understood by many that the Relief Society was intended to prepare women for the blessings they would receive in the temple.<sup>70</sup>

The temple was generally viewed as a place associated with acquiring the priesthood and keys. Not only were Mormon women anxiously awaiting the fullness of the priesthood that would be given them in the temple, but many men were awaiting ordination to the priesthood. Prior to the temple's dedication, ordination to the priesthood occurred when a need was identified. It is thus plausible that LDS women included themselves in this broad connection and ownership of the priesthood associated with the temple. In fact, Eliza R. Snow clearly believed that a connection existed between the temple and the priesthood when she taught that only endowed women should

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<sup>69</sup>The phrase ". . . I now turn the key to you . . ." from the original Nauvoo Minutes was later altered to "on your behalf" in the *History of the Church*. Scholars hold varying interpretations for this change. D. Michael Quinn argues that changing such phrases was done deliberately by general authorities to obscure and change their meaning in an attempt to exclude women from the priesthood. (Quinn, "Mormon Women," 366) In *Women of Covenant*, the authors state that the change was made to clarify confusion about whether this phrase indicated that women held the priesthood or were given permission to run their society under the auspices of the greater priesthood and church organization. (Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 49.)

<sup>70</sup>Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 53, and Madsen, "Mormon



be giving blessings.<sup>71</sup> Because women felt such a profound connection and ownership of the priesthood, they did not feel alienated from it even though they were never ordained to offices within the priesthood and were consequently non-participants in the hierarchy.<sup>72</sup>

It is unclear how Martha felt about women's exercising priesthood power.

Martha certainly would have been in a position to be influenced by the same people as Eliza R. Snow. Martha and Howard were sealed by Hyrum Smith prior to the completion of temple and received their endowments in Nauvoo. Martha was also a member of the Relief Society in Nauvoo where Eliza R. Snow and others gained their early

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Women and the Temple," 80-81.

<sup>71</sup>Eliza R. Snow said, "Any and all sisters who honor their holy endowments, not only have the right, but should feel it a duty, whenever called upon to administer to our sisters in these ordinances, which God has graciously committed to His daughters as well as to His sons; and we testify that when administered and received in faith and humility they are accompanied with all mighty power." (*Woman's Exponent* 13 [15 September 1884]: 61.) Statements quite opposite in nature have been made by other general authorities, leading to many different opinions regarding women and the priesthood. Rex Eugene Cooper forwards the idea that women share their husbands' priesthood only when sealed, or eternally married (also known as the Patriarchal Order of Marriage) (*Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization*, Publications in Mormon Studies, ed. Linda King Newell, no. 5 [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990], 114-116). D. Michael Quinn's search through historical documents led him to believe that women have always had the priesthood, as the title of his article indicates, and that men who were insecure with their position within the church provided the catalyst for restricting women's authority to perform healings and other functions typically associated with the priesthood. (See D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women," 365-409.) Carol Cornwall Madsen discussed women and the priesthood in her essay, "Mormon Women and the Temple," in which she wrote, "The ambiguity that came to surround the relationship of women and the priesthood seemed to center on the extent to which women shared or held the priesthood in connection with their husbands, the distinction between 'sharing' and 'holding,' and the manner in which the investiture of priesthood was to be manifest in a woman's life." (100.) See also Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 47-50.

<sup>72</sup>Derr, Cannon, and Beecher state that the ambiguity of language regarding the priesthood was less important to Mormon women than the knowledge that they were organized by a prophet after the order of God. (See *Women of Covenant*, 50.)



understanding of doctrines connected with the temple.<sup>73</sup> The Corays were also recipients of priesthood administrations and blessings, but there is no evidence to suggest that Martha ever participated in administering them.<sup>74</sup>

Regardless of whether Mormon women had some form of priesthood, patriarchy existed within the church structure. In practical terms this did very little to differentiate nineteenth-century Mormon women from their counterparts elsewhere in America, but the ideological differences between Mormons and their Protestant counterparts caused conflict between the two groups. Mormons and Protestants emerged from the same traditional patriarchal structure based on the belief in woman's original sin. Mary P. Ryan also gives this patriarchy an economic component. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the economy of New England and the northeastern United States was primarily agrarian, resulting in a corporate family economy where each member of the family contributed to the work on the farm or in the family-owned business. The wife and children were dependent upon the father for their economic support and for their inheritance to ensure future economic security. Under the common law of coverture, the wife's and daughter's economic identity was subsumed by that of the husband and father.<sup>75</sup>

An important shift occurred as the frontier transformed into densely settled

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<sup>73</sup>“A Book of Records Containing the Proceedings of The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 31 August 1842, transcript in possession of Jill Mulvay Derr, Smith Institute for Church History, 83, original in LDS Church Archives, also in “Members of The Nauvoo Relief Society,” *Handbook of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Relief Society, 1931), 82.

<sup>74</sup>“John gave Edna a blessing,” Martha Coray, Diary, 15 March 1877. Other diary entries mention blessings but were not specific about who gave them. See 19 Nov 1875 and 22 May 1875.

<sup>75</sup>Ryan, 61-65.

communities. The scarcity of land forced many sons to abandon agricultural production for commercial enterprises. This diminished the patriarchal structure of the family as the corporate household economy evolved into a commerce or market-oriented economy. Sons were no longer as dependent on their fathers for their future income. Reciprocal obligations decreased between sons and fathers as these generational ties lessened.<sup>76</sup>

According to Ryan, diminishing patriarchal authority from the economic changes in the area was of great concern, particularly to the ideological descendants of Calvinism.<sup>77</sup> They sought to emphasize the parents' moral responsibility, in particular the father's responsibility, to inculcate moral values in their children, invoking the clearly patriarchal model of the Abrahamic Covenant.<sup>78</sup> The rhetoric reemphasized the bonds between generations, but also reinforced women's lesser status in the family, church, and society. Women were reminded not to teach or pray publicly. Such patriarchal imagery was effective until the Second Great Awakening. During this revival, men grew statistically more skeptical of religion, while women tended to increase their denominational devotion. In 1823, ministers again altered their rhetoric to accommodate these demographic changes in their congregations, allowing women the privilege of informally teaching friends and relations, particularly their children. Women were also allowed to instruct their husbands "as long as they acted through persuasion rather than

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>It is essential to note, however, that while the destruction of patriarchal authority found much of its troubles in the economic organization of the community, the clergy articulated the problem in religious, rather than economic, terms. (Ryan, 65.)

<sup>78</sup>"In the pages of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist press, it was fathers rather than mothers who exercised supreme authority and the responsibility in the education of children." (Ryan, 71.)

authority.”<sup>79</sup> Women quickly included missionary and charitable organizations as part of their area of influence.

Although women in America were acquiring greater roles in their churches and the community through the formation of evangelical societies and other charitable organizations, Nancy F. Cott believed that these societies had an ambiguous effect on women. She wrote, “Evangelical activity fostered women’s emergence as social actors whose roles were based on female responsibilities rather than on human rights.”<sup>80</sup> By using this rhetoric to expand women’s sphere, the ministers were also containing women. While there may have been some women who gained a greater voice in their congregations, most were told by their ministers that women were not allowed to preach or pray publicly when men were present. Cott found that ministers warned women who questioned their subordinate role in both their families and society that they would not gain freedom, but rather destroy themselves.<sup>81</sup> In addition to these religious imperatives, coverture remained intact. Thus, in Protestant New England patriarchy was continually reinforced through religious, economic, and political constraints.

Within the Mormon community, however, the Abrahamic Covenant and patriarchal authority had different connotations. Joseph Smith, harkening back to Old Testament motifs, carefully articulated the doctrine that the Abrahamic Covenant

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<sup>79</sup>Ryan, 73-74. Kathryn M. Daynes also noted that the anomie caused by the market revolution “accelerated the loosening of the authority of the patriarchal family and its replacement by the middle-class family, with the mother as a central figure in the home and in her children’s lives.” (*More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840-1910* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 190.

<sup>80</sup>Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 156, 158.

included the similar obligation for parents to teach their children the gospel of Jesus Christ, passing both their religious beliefs and, more specifically, the priesthood from one generation to another.<sup>82</sup> In the Mormon version, however, parents who performed their duties faithfully were promised eternal increase in the hereafter.<sup>83</sup> Mormon women were taught the familiar patriarchal imperative that because of the fall of Adam, they were dependent on man to be their head, leading them in righteousness back to God.<sup>84</sup> Yet the Mormon concept of exaltation simultaneously created an interdependent relationship between spouses and children. A man could only have an eternal kingdom if he were married for eternity, or sealed by the priesthood, to a righteous woman. This logic also

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 157-59.

<sup>82</sup>Other possible motivations for stressing the patriarchal order in Mormon theology could be related to the organization used during the exodus to Utah. Lawrence Foster discussed the law of adoption in which men were adopted as sons by church leaders. Church leaders thus became patriarchs to large extended families through this practice. (See *Religion and Sexuality*, 195-99.) Instituting polygamy as part of the patriarchal order also helped distribute wealth through Mormon society. Daynes discussed how plural wives typically came from economically disadvantaged groups such as the widowed, fatherless, or immigrants. As wealthier men married these women, wealth was more evenly distributed among the members. (*More Wives than One*, 13-14.)

<sup>83</sup>Cooper, 102, 114.

<sup>84</sup>“The endowment, a prerequisite for sealing, presented a pattern of patriarchal organization that identified the husband as presiding patriarch within the family with wife and children expected to obey him.” (Cooper, 191.) Brigham Young also taught that the greatest curse given to women was her dependence on man. (Brigham Young, sermons 19 August 1866, *JD* 11:271; 6 April 1869, *JD* 12:194; 8 August 1872, *JD* 15:132.) Likewise he taught, “Let the father be the head of the family, the master of his own household; and let him treat them as an angel would treat them.” He further instructed “. . . my counsel is -obey your husbands; and I am sanguine and most emphatic on that subject. But I never counseled a woman to follow her husband to the Devil.” (Brigham Young, sermons 21 September 1856, *JD* 4:55; 11 September 1853, *JD* 1:77, respectively.) But even though Brigham Young encouraged kindness between spouses, he never repealed the clear directive that women were to be guided by their husbands, who alone held ordained priesthood.



increased the importance of insuring that one's children were righteous heirs to the kingdom, too; the more righteous children a man had, the greater his kingdom.<sup>85</sup> This "eternal perspective" "separated a Latter-day Saint sharply from a Gentile and created an expectation of eternal relationships within a covenant relationship."<sup>86</sup>

Although patriarchal leadership was experienced by both Mormon women and their Northeastern counterparts, their different conceptions of the Abrahamic Covenant caused sparring between the groups. Each accused the other's patriarchal system of being more oppressive than their own. One woman believed that women in Utah became "merely the minister to [Mormon men's] passions and physical comforts."<sup>87</sup> Horace Greeley said that no Mormon man ever bothered to introduce his wife during Greeley's 1859 visit.<sup>88</sup> Reports such as these convinced many outside Utah that women were entrapped in a sinister religion beyond the Rockies. Women in Utah responded quite forcefully in the 1870s with a Great Indignation Meeting to dispel the myths of their oppression.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Cooper, 116.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 162.

<sup>87</sup>Mrs. C. V. Waite, *The Mormon Prophet and His Harem; or an Authentic History of Brigham Young and His Numerous Wives and Children* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1866), 217-18; as quoted in Jill Mulvay Derr, "Brigham Young and the 'Female Portion of the Community,'" available from [http://fhss.byu.edu/jfsinst/Publications/Brigham\\_Young\\_Symposium/Jil.../jill\\_mulvay\\_derr.htm](http://fhss.byu.edu/jfsinst/Publications/Brigham_Young_Symposium/Jil.../jill_mulvay_derr.htm) accessed 26 August 1999, 1.

<sup>88</sup>Horace Greeley, "Two Hours with Brigham Young," *Daily Tribune* (New York), 20 August 1859; as quoted in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds. *Among the Mormons: Historical Accounts by Contemporary Observers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 327; as quoted in Derr, "Brigham Young and the 'Female Portion of the Community,'" 1.

<sup>89</sup>"Great Indignation Meeting," *The Deseret Evening News* (Salt Lake City) 14-15



The patriarchal influences on women's economic and political life varied between Utah Territory and areas such as Ryan's Oneida County. Jill Mulvay Derr discussed Brigham Young's changing view of women's roles in LDS society in her essay, "Brigham Young and the 'Female Portion of the Community.'"<sup>90</sup> There Derr explained that Greeley and other visitors to Utah Territory would have acquired very different impressions in the early 1870s.

By 1871, Latter-day Saint women were casting their votes at the ballot box, a privilege shared only by women in Wyoming. Most likely prompted by a need to fully incorporate women into the conflict between the saints and their enemies, Young's rhetoric had moved from disbanding the Relief Society to assigning Eliza R. Snow the responsibility of making sure the organization flourished in every ward. Where he once encouraged women to stay at home, he now encouraged women to gain a skill or enter a profession.<sup>91</sup> Many women, such as Martha Coray, quickly moved into new economic ventures when the opportunity arose.

Jill Mulvay Derr has clarified the opportunities available to women in Territorial Utah.<sup>92</sup> After studying the words of both Brigham Young and Eliza R. Snow, Derr concluded that while Brigham Young encouraged women to develop their talents and intellect, he was not an advocate of the nineteenth-century woman's movement. Young stressed both domestic duties and professional skills in his addresses to women, always

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January 1879. See also Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 379-402.

<sup>90</sup>Derr, "Brigham Young and the 'Female Portion of the Community,'" 1.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>92</sup>Jill C. Mulvay [Derr], "Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question," 29-39; and Jill Mulvay Derr, "Brigham Young and the Awakening," 312-37.

emphasizing community goals over personal ambitions. Such a pragmatic approach may not have affected the Mormons' religious interpretation of patriarchy, but it did offer Mormon women an opportunity to escape male assumption of their economic and political identity. The difference, then, is that while there were women elsewhere in the United States pioneering the same occupations as Mormon women in Utah, due to Brigham Young's rhetoric, Mormon women generally encountered less resistance from their male counterparts.

Further underscoring the importance of context when evaluating Mormon women's lives, Jan Shipps wrote in her introduction to *Sisters in Spirit* that Mormon women had a fair measure of independence, but she warned that their independence must not be misinterpreted. Shipps continued, "The countless diaries and letters of such women extant reveal that the primary concern of LDS women was not personal independence. . . . The lives of most Mormon women were dedicated, as were the lives of the men, first, last, and always to the success of Mormonism."<sup>93</sup>

How this general depiction of patriarchal structures within the Mormon community affected individuals is less certain. One of the implications of Gordon Wood's discussion of the contradictions of Mormonism is that Mormon doctrine can best be described as a continuum rather than polar extremes of orthodox belief versus unbelief. Consequently, each member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is allowed a certain amount of latitude to interpret the doctrine. Similarly, each married couple negotiates their own division of power and how much authority the priesthood

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<sup>93</sup>Jan Shipps, "Foreword," *Sisters in Spirit*, vii-xii.

gave the husband over the wife.<sup>94</sup> Although neither Martha and Howard ever explicitly discussed such issues in their writings, there are other indications of mutual respect.

Rather than dominating his wife, Howard wisely used her as a partner in many ventures.<sup>95</sup>

Although there were clear theological differences between Protestant and Mormon women's version of the Abrahamic Covenant and patriarchal authority, Utah women's subordinate role within society, church, and their families differed little from the general patterns of male dominance exerted over women elsewhere in the United States. The greater concern with Mormon lifestyles in American culture was that the doctrine of polygamy pushed patriarchy too far. Protestant women contemporaneous with those living in Territorial Utah found polygamy particularly oppressive. They sought to free Mormon women from this salacious practice. Mormon women, however, strongly defended the practice insisting that polygamy was beneficial to both men and women and that they were not subjected to cruel conditions under the practice.<sup>96</sup>

The Republicans and other Protestant groups eventually won. Wilford Woodruff, under severe legal and economic pressures to end the practice, announced in an 1890 Manifesto that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would subject itself to the laws of the land.<sup>97</sup> Many families had been broken up while husbands and fathers went

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<sup>94</sup>Several possible marriage models are proposed and discussed at length in chapter two, 62-63.

<sup>95</sup>Martha and Howard taught school together on several occasions, compiled Lucy Mack Smith's history, worked diligently to prepare for their trip west, and cooperated to secure the success of their ranch in Mona.

<sup>96</sup>"Great Indignation Meeting," *The Deseret Evening News*, (Salt Lake City, Utah) 14 January -15 January 1879. See also Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 379-402.

<sup>97</sup>"Official Declaration 1," in *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

into hiding, and property had been confiscated.<sup>98</sup> While polygamy was a trial of faith for more than one Mormon woman, they rarely connected their troubles with their supposed second-class status as women within Utah Territory. Mormon women generally felt more outside persecution for their religious beliefs than oppression for their gender within LDS culture.

Mormon women's identity was heavily influenced by their faith. Patricia Nelson Limerick goes so far as to describe Mormonism as not only a religion, but as an ethnicity that in turn created a boundary that told others to "keep out."<sup>99</sup> These religious boundaries created many contradictions that affected the roles held by women in the community, and Mormon women lived their lives somewhere between the extreme implications that these seemingly incongruent doctrines espoused. By the standards of the woman's movement, they were both liberated and oppressed by their religion. They looked forward to a time when they would be priestesses and queens in the hereafter and believed that only their religion had the ability to exalt women to the highest degree possible. Faith was infused into nearly every activity, from the mundane daily tasks to the more unusual roles women were assuming.

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day Saints, 1981), 291-293

<sup>98</sup>For details regarding the legal penalties and their effect upon polygamous families, see James B. Allen, "'Good Guys' vs. 'Good Guys': Roger Clawson, John Sharp, and Civil Disobedience in Nineteenth-Century Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48, 2 (Spring 1980) : 148-74; B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 48-56; Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 116-123.

<sup>99</sup>Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Peace Initiative: Using the Mormons to Rethink Culture and Ethnicity in American History," *Journal of Mormon History* 21, 2 (Fall 1995) : 4.



In such a culture, Martha could not help but feel the effects of the church in her daily life. The church employed her husband at different times. She was actively involved in the woman's organization, the Relief Society, the United Order and home production, and her children participated in church-sponsored colonization efforts in southern Colorado. She taught school, served on the Board of Trustees of an institution of higher learning, worked on legal matters, and voted. But whatever activities she logged into her diary at the end of the day, Martha was ever within the Kingdom.

*Femininity:*

After Martha's faith, her gender was the most influential factor in her life. Martha married at age twenty and bore twelve children. Her diary is filled with entries containing daily tasks of washing clothes, mending, cooking dinner, tending children, and generally taking care of her family. Martha's family life resembles the model for the emerging middle class discussed by Mary P. Ryan in her book, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865*.<sup>100</sup> Ryan found that as the frontier became more established, transforming into densely settled communities, and as religion became more influential in the community, familial roles began to change. Initially, everyone in the family was involved in home production and contributed to the "corporate family economy." With increasing urbanization, however, many fathers found themselves working outside the home.

This separation of the home from the work place had important consequences for family roles. Women were no longer considered direct contributors to the family's

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<sup>100</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 1-17.



economic well-being. Woman as a mother and nurturer became an increasingly important image. They were expected to be more religious, and women's higher church attendance and participation in social reform seemed to make them best qualified to raise a good member of society. These were the good republican mothers.

These small differences in family life eventually developed into more specialized gender roles for the family, or "separate spheres" of influence for mothers and fathers. Mothers nurtured in the home, and fathers provided financially through the workplace. The goal of the family shifted from daily survival and providing children with land to providing children with all of the necessary skills and education to be gainfully employed and well married. The Coray family was making this transition in territorial Utah. While farming remained the most common employment among Utah immigrants, and the Coray family was frequently involved in farming enterprises, there was an increasing emphasis on the importance of education and manufacturing. In order to prepare their children for economic independence, the Corays emphasized education in their home. All of their children attended school at some point in their lives, and Martha encouraged and supervised their education at home as well. In the end, several of Martha's children remained farmers, but others went on to either marry educators or join the educational field themselves.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Hattie married Wilson Howard Dusenberry; Martha and Eppie married Theodore Beldon Lewis; and George later attended Cornell University and taught economics at the University of Utah. Wilson Howard Dusenberry spent a great deal of his life forwarding education in Utah. He was a school teacher from 1863-75; he was county superintendent of schools from 1874-80; he organized the Timpanogas branch of the University of Deseret in 1870; he was the secretary and treasurer of Brigham Young Academy for several years; he served as the chairman of the house committee on education in the state legislature in 1880, 1882, and 1884. Theodore Beldon Lewis had a similarly impressive career. He taught school in various locations throughout Utah

Martha and Howard moved to Utah in 1850, just as these patterns of domestic life were solidifying in Oneida county. Yet as Laurel Ulrich pointed out, territorial Utah cannot be compared to New York during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Ulrich argued that because of the frontier and relative isolation experienced in Utah, conditions were similar to the Maine frontier in 1790.<sup>102</sup> Although Ulrich's major premise, that lateral chronological comparisons are inaccurate, was sound, frontier Maine is a little too far back in time. As Ulrich noted, the industrial revolution had already taken place prior to the saints' western exodus. Thus, the similarities between the family structure that was just forming in Oneida county in 1820 and the family structure prevalent in territorial Utah in 1850 will serve as the foundation for this study.<sup>103</sup>

While no comparison between two varied regions will be exact, ideas of domesticity in Utah in the 1850s were nearly identical to notions of domesticity in more developed regions of the country, particularly the Northeast. Changes in woman's sphere allowing women to attend institutions of higher learning and allowing them to become teachers and nurses were influenced by "social reform, westward migration, missionary

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Territory from 1865-67 and 1870-78; he was the county superintendent of schools in 1879; he became the principal of Ogden High School in 1885 and served for many years; he was appointed the territorial commissioner of public schools by the Utah Supreme Court in 1894.

<sup>102</sup>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "The Significance of Trivia," *Journal of Mormon History* 19, 1 (Spring 1993) : 59.

<sup>103</sup>Nancy Grey Osterud argues that the transition to capitalism makes women's work more marginal, making dates less important than proximity to the market in determining influences on women's roles. See Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 12.

activity, utopian communities, industrialism, and the Civil War.”<sup>104</sup> Within Utah, however, ideas about domesticity and family were also heavily influenced by their frontier conditions and unique theology.

Robbie Schoonmaker compared Welter’s Cult of Domesticity with articles and editorials published in the *Deseret Evening News*, a Latter-day Saint-sponsored newspaper during the 1850s in territorial Utah.<sup>105</sup> Welter listed four qualities emphasized by Eastern women’s magazines from the 1820s through the Civil War: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Because the “Cult” was already being disseminated during the 1820s, it is likely that most converts to Mormonism from the Eastern United States had come into contact with its philosophies regarding the ideal woman prior to the saints’ Western immigration and relative isolation. Schoonmaker discovered in his study of the *Deseret News Weekly* that the cardinal virtues of womanhood were also encouraged in articles, editorials, stories, and poems published in the *Deseret News*. According to Schoonmaker, domesticity, a term that refers both to a loose definition of gender-related expectations for behavior and more specifically to home and family-related duties, was the primary focus of articles aimed at female audiences. The *Deseret News* did not discuss expanded roles for women in its first years.<sup>106</sup>

The four virtues of a “True Woman” were discussed in similar tones throughout the *Deseret News* as they were in Welter’s article. Virtue and purity were considered of

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<sup>104</sup>Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions*, 40-41.

<sup>105</sup>Robbie Schoonmaker, ““True Womanhood”: An Examination of the *Deseret Weekly*’s Presentation of Womanhood,” a paper written for a senior history seminar, 13 March 1997, in author’s possession, 1.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.* Schoonmaker also asserts that women did not begin to fill more

primary importance. Dramatic stories depicted immoral women as lesser creatures who typically lost their sanity after the compromising experience.<sup>107</sup> In Utah the importance of virtue was further emphasized by banners held in parades and statements such as “[A man’s] moral strength is inconceivably increased by [his wife’s] sympathy, her counsel, her aid.”<sup>108</sup> A difference was found between Eastern domesticity and Utah’s practices, however, in that Mormon women were not made responsible for changing men’s morals. Women in the East were made to feel that they must exercise their influence over men to help them become more noble creatures. In Utah, however, men were expected to provide the religious leadership, bringing the women closer to God.<sup>109</sup>

Although Mormon culture highly valued purity, Eastern Protestant groups did not accept their polygamous marriages as virtuous, thus creating another odd duality in Mormon women’s lives. In fact, it was most likely polygamy to which Elizabeth Kane indirectly referred when she described Mormons as “backwards.” The Latter-day Saint

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progressive occupations until the 1860s (10-11).

<sup>107</sup>Welter wrote of this twaddle, “The frequency with which derangement follows loss of virtue suggests the exquisite sensibility of woman and the possibility that, in the women’s magazines at least, her intellect was geared to her hymen, not her brain.” (Welter, 25.)

<sup>108</sup>*Deseret News Weekly* (Salt Lake City, Utah), 22 October 1856, quoted in Schoonmaker, 3.

<sup>109</sup>In a sermon delivered 22 November 1857, Lorenzo Snow declared that women had a lesser degree of light and knowledge than man (*JD*, 5:291). Heber C. Kimball said that a good wife let her husband lead and guide her (sermon of 9 November 1856, *JD*, 4:82). Brigham Young said that women were the weaker vessels and that if they were to lead the church, the church would fail (sermon of 15 June 1862, *JD*, 9:308). Annie Clark Tanner also wrote in her memoirs that she was “imbued with the old tradition from my religious training that man is superior to woman. . . . A woman should never oppose her husband as he was supposed to have superior wisdom.” (*A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography by Annie Clark Tanner* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1983], 116-117).



community, however, lauded polygamy as a protector of women's virtue because more women were able to have husbands of good character. They also claimed that it kept men from soliciting prostitutes and women from falling victim to immorality. It was commonly believed in the West that "prostitutes offered men an outlet that enabled wives to hold on to the role of pure creatures set above human biological compulsions."<sup>110</sup> In a twist on conventional opinions of sexuality, Mormon women believed that if men could satisfy their "biological compulsions" within the bonds of matrimony, which included polygamous marriages, they would be ridding their community of immorality. Thus, Mormon society conformed to the cult's ideals of virtue, but women outside Utah thought Mormon women to be little more than degraded concubines.

Piety was not directly discussed in the *Deseret News* perhaps because religious devotion was such an integral part of all Latter-day Saints' lives that it was assumed that the women were living this standard, partly because members were living in the kingdom, outside the world. As such, all work was an act of devotion, a contribution towards Zion. Yet more typical recitations of woman's superior spiritual abilities were voiced by Edward Tullidge, who wrote in *Women of Mormondom* that "Woman is a child of faith. Indeed she is faith . . . . It is woman who is the chief architect of a spiritual church."<sup>111</sup> He elevated woman above man saying that "men are reason," and reason led to priestcraft.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton's Company, 1987), 51. She also wrote that prostitution was a plague in the West.

<sup>111</sup>Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 20.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

Submissiveness was another virtue with a unique Latter-day Saint twist. Mormon women had directives to be submissive to their husbands, fathers, and priesthood holders; however, they were very firm in their belief that the restored gospel gave them more freedom than other women. Mormon women insisted that they chose to be submissive, while women elsewhere were coerced into submissive behavior—a fine distinction to be sure.<sup>113</sup> Brigham Young was also careful to clarify statements such as, “It is a law that man shall rule over [woman]; his word is [woman’s] law, and [woman] must obey him. . .” with a softer interpretation of “rule.” He said that he did not “mean with an iron hand, but merely to take the lead.”<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, women needed only to follow the directives of the priesthood hierarchy when they were being led in righteousness. Brigham Young viewed submissiveness as an essential aspect of Mormon theology for both sexes. It permeated LDS culture as in any hierarchical society; women as well as men were expected to submit to church and God.<sup>115</sup>

Domesticity, the major focus of this comparison, was a more universal trait applied to women both in Utah and elsewhere in the United States. Jill Mulvay Derr stated, “In no other area were Young’s teaching so nearly identical with the ideals of the larger society.”<sup>116</sup> Mormon women were definitely encouraged to take care of the home and hearth; their children were supposed to be their first priority. For those women in

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<sup>113</sup>Susa Young Gates and Leah Widstoe, *Women of the ‘Mormon’ Church* (Independence, Missouri: Press of Zion’s Printing and Publishing Co., 1926), 3.

<sup>114</sup>*JD*, 16: 167 (31 August 1873); 9: 39 (7 April 1861), as quoted in Derr, “Brigham Young and the Awakening,” 318.

<sup>115</sup>See previous discussion of patriarchy in chapter one, 29-37.

<sup>116</sup>Derr, “Brigham Young and the Awakening,” 320.

Utah choosing to work outside the home, Brigham Young warned them to be careful that such tasks did not interfere with their familial responsibilities. He stated that the woman who neglected her family would find her “whole life had been a failure.”<sup>117</sup>

Nancy F. Cott also noted how central the children became to women’s domestic duties in New England. Because women were not part of the workforce, they remained outside “the world.” According to the evolving rhetoric, this made them more qualified than men for the “virtuous education” of their children which would in turn “stabilize society by generating and regenerating moral character.”<sup>118</sup> Thus religion in New England gave purpose to motherhood, and women looked to God for support in this great call.<sup>119</sup> A successful, moral adult child was the highest honor to a mother.

Clearly, Mormon theology also gave purpose to motherhood through its emphasis on eternal families and eternal increase. Though similar, the child rearing aspect of domesticity differed in Utah in two notable ways. First, in Mormon theology, men shared the glory and honor for their posterity with Mormon women. Men were also directed to take responsibility for their children’s moral upbringing. Mormon men’s work outside the home did not ideologically contaminate them as it did for Protestant men in New England, because the work was done for the Kingdom and within its boundaries. Consequently, Mormon men were expected to be the moral leaders in the home, and Protestant women were again outraged at this distortion of their domestic

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<sup>117</sup>Brigham Young as quoted in Susa Young Gates, “Editor’s Department,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 5 (June 1894) : 449; as quoted in Godfrey, Godfrey, and Derr, *Women’s Voices*, 13.

<sup>118</sup>Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 87, 97, respectively.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 84-98.



values.<sup>120</sup> They felt that it devalued women's contributions when Mormon men shared in the glory for raising good children. Barbara Welter, however, asserted that Mormon theology extending marriage and childbearing into eternity as the highest reward given to believers actually elevated women's status within the Latter-day Saint community.<sup>121</sup>

Yet even as Mormon women were encouraged to give careful attention to their role as mother, they were also allowed more latitude in their occupational choices than women in the East. The "separate spheres" doctrine was not as strictly enforced in Utah as in other areas. Here, Mormon theology and frontier expediency overlapped. Clearly, Brigham Young had at least somewhat more liberal notions about women's capabilities. But his motivation for encouraging women to gain a trade or skill and work outside the home was based on more than ideology; demands perceived as essential to the Mormons' success also significantly contributed to his opinions. Furthermore, Young maintained a belief in separate spheres. Not all jobs were suitable for women; Young had merely expanded that sphere.<sup>122</sup> For example, Young wanted women to become clerks in stores so that men could be free to do heavier work. Manual labor, particularly in the fields,

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<sup>120</sup>Derr, "Brigham Young and the Awakening," 320-321. Derr also suggested that contemporary critics found Young's teachings even more disgusting as they more closely resembled the mainstream.

<sup>121</sup>Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion," 149-50. Derr discussed Welter's theory in "Brigham Young and the Awakening," 317.

<sup>122</sup>Brigham Young said that women should not only raise babies, but also study and become gainfully employed, "all this to enlarge their sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large." (Brigham Young sermon, 18 July 1869, JD 13:61.) Susa Young Gates took her father's directive quite literally and later wrote with satisfaction, "My sphere of usefulness is being enlarged." (See Godfrey, Godfrey, and Derr, *Women's Voices*, 13.)



was not encouraged for women.<sup>123</sup> Brigham Young perceived an ever-increasing threat to the kingdom that the saints were trying to build and consequently encouraged women to contribute to the cause in new ways.

*Frontier:*

As Ulrich aptly noted, living on the Western frontier changed Mormon women's experiences.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, one must question which aspect of the frontier affected women more –scarcity, distance from the market, or a disruption of socially determined gender roles. Was the West an inherently more democratic place, allowing greater opportunities for all marginalized groups, including women? Did the Saints allow greater diversity in women's roles because of their theology or because of frontier induced-necessity?

Elizabeth Jameson addressed applications of Western theoretical debates to women.<sup>125</sup> Jameson focused particularly on the conflicting theories of Frederick Jackson Turner and Earl Pomeroy.<sup>126</sup> Jameson extended Turner's ideas of heightened democracy to ideas about women's sphere, which allowed for an increasing equalization of occupational opportunities for women in the West. As Jameson interprets Pomeroy, his

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<sup>123</sup>Brigham Young, sermon delivered on 7 April 1873, *JD*, 16:16.

<sup>124</sup>Ulrich, "The Significance of Trivia, 59."

<sup>125</sup>Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," in *The Women's West*, eds. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 145-164.

<sup>126</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, 1920); Earl Pomeroy, "Toward a Re-orientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41, 4 (March 1955) : 579-600.

theory does not allow for expanded roles for women since he believed that there was no adaptation of democratic principles in the West, but rather a repetition of Eastern patterns. Jameson concluded that the frontier liberation vs. genteel womanhood argument was a false dichotomy. Instead, women should be seen as individual actors in Western history, not just as a docile group accepting whatever was handed to them. Individuals carved their own place somewhere between the theories depending on their unique circumstances.

According to Jameson's interpretation, the West would not be the most significant factor shaping Mormon women's lives, a conclusion supported by Dean May in his book, *Three Frontiers*. May compared settlers in the Willamette Valley, the Wasatch Front of Utah, and the Boise Valley in order to determine how and why they were different. He discovered that each group migrated west for different reasons; the Willamette folk migrated first and were primarily concerned with acquiring enough land to give their children an inheritance; the Wasatch Front was settled by Mormons, who did not move west for adventure or land, but rather to escape religious persecution; the Boise Valley was settled last by a group of people generally wanting to escape the conflicts embodied in the Civil War.<sup>127</sup> May found that because of their strong religious ties and sense of group, women in Utah were by far more likely to be involved in some sort of community program or charitable work that extended beyond their own kin, such as Martha's membership in the Relief Society or her position on the local Sunday School Board. It does not necessarily follow, however, that Utah women's work was more highly valued than that of the women in Oregon or Idaho. Because Latter-day Saint converts did not

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<sup>127</sup>Dean May, *Three Frontiers*, 15, 18, and 68, respectively.

necessarily come into the church with a larger kin group, they were more dependent on the larger religious community and, therefore, more direct participants in community activities. In contrast, settlers in the Willamette Valley met their needs within their extended kin groups and with a few close neighbors.<sup>128</sup> Thus, women in both locales were important to the success of the community, but in Mormon communities women performed their duties in a more public setting.

It seems clear that LDS religion was the most influential factor in shaping many Mormon women's lives, but frontier scarcity and other related hardships sometimes altered their gender roles and community goals. Maureen Beecher specifically addressed how the frontier affected Mormon women's roles.<sup>129</sup> She was responding in particular to some earlier claims in Mormon women's history that applauded polygamy and LDS culture as extremely progressive elements allowing women a variety of occupations. Beecher questioned whether or not the women living during the nineteenth century felt as liberated as current LDS women were claiming. Beecher concluded that women were not particularly excited to take on more responsibility; rather, they continued to incorporate as many typical gender-based divisions of labor as possible. They considered this a sign of civilization as they struggled for survival in the wilderness. Beecher used Patty Sessions, a famous midwife, as an example of one who was able to provide for herself financially through her profession. Even though this woman was independent in many ways, she was still grateful when she remarried writing, "I feel to thank the Lord that I

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<sup>128</sup>May, 185.

<sup>129</sup>Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Women's Work on the Mormon Frontier," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 49, 3 (Summer 1981): 276-290.

have some one to cut my wood for me.”<sup>130</sup> Yet although Mormon women sought to preserve traditional gender divisions of labor, at times survival and necessity superseded their domestic ideology. Martha Coray seems to fall somewhere in the middle; it is true that most traditional divisions of labor were maintained within the household, although the men in the Coray family did help wash the clothes and clean the house. Likewise, Martha did not indicate any particular enthusiasm for the expanded roles she was able to take on, but there was never a complaint given either.

It seems clear that Mormons did not have the typical frontier experience. Patricia Nelson Limerick wrote that Turner’s frontier thesis could not encompass the Mormons’ tight knit communities, so he dismissed them.<sup>131</sup> Other historians have noted the impact of the frontier on women’s lives that simply do not apply to Mormon women. For example, Mary Ryan wrote that women became more independent religiously in the frontier, preaching and proselytizing in a way that subtly subverted the patriarchal system that was firmly entrenched in nineteenth-century America.<sup>132</sup> Perhaps patriarchal authority broke down somewhat on the plains for LDS women, but within Territorial Utah, the rules of the society were quickly reinstated. Although women were allowed more latitude in their prayer and worship patterns on the plains, they were more regulated in Utah. But it must be remembered that LDS society was not severely disjointed by the move. Mormons traveled across the plains in organized companies with leaders accounting for every 10, 50, and 100 members. Through these methods thousands of

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<sup>130</sup>Patty Bartlett Sessions, Diaries, 14 December 1851, holograph, LDS Archives, as quoted in Beecher, “Women’s Work on the Mormon Frontier,” 281.

<sup>131</sup>Limerick, “Peace Initiative,” 6-7.



members of the LDS church moved to Utah within just a few short years in the late 1840s and early 50s, and converts continued to come throughout the following decades.<sup>133</sup>

The organization and communal methods employed during the western migration were quickly replicated in Utah. Brigham Young enforced policies that benefited the whole rather than the individual. Land speculation was forbidden, and lotteries were held to distribute the land. There was no private ownership of forests or water.<sup>134</sup> This spirit of cooperation was not unique to Mormonism; in fact, this method of organized colonization was typical of the age which produced Mormonism. Yet these methods were unique to the American West in which immigrants typically employed the more laissez-faire attitudes that became increasingly dominant after the age of Jackson. Leonard J. Arrington wrote regarding Mormon colonization, "It is perhaps this ideological principle of group stewardship which most clearly differentiated the Mormons from other frontiersmen."<sup>135</sup> Such efforts resulted in the rapid reproduction of organized communities throughout Utah and the "Mormon Corridor."<sup>136</sup> Again, the

<sup>132</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 71.

<sup>133</sup>Approximately 16,000 Mormons were in Winters Quarters, and it should be assumed that the bulk of them moved to Utah. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 47.

<sup>134</sup>Large tracts of forests and water rights were given to church leaders, but they were supposed to act as stewards and ensure equitable distribution and discourage waste. For a less complimentary viewpoint of this policy, see Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 76-83. See discussion of irrigation in chapter three, 135-137.

<sup>135</sup>Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 94. This entire paragraph is drawn from Arrington's conclusions. See 51, 52, 57, and 62.

<sup>136</sup>This term refers to a planned string of settlements that were to run from Salt Lake City to ports on the Pacific Ocean near Los Angeles. Brigham Young envisioned Saints arriving in California by boat and traveling to Utah through this Mormon-controlled corridor. His vision was never realized, however. The farthest settlement, San

Mormon frontier experience was shaped less by distance between neighbors than by scarcity and access to distant markets.

As with most rural and frontier communities, local transactions of bartering and trade were important to the farm family's survival in Territorial Utah. Both isolation from markets and home production contributed to this economic system. Because families traded their surpluses for cash or commodities, women's contribution to the home economy was essential to the family's well being. If any cash were acquired from selling eggs, butter, or cloth, it was quickly absorbed into the farm, either in terms of necessary commodities for the household or re-invested into farm capital.<sup>137</sup> This remained essentially true for Martha; her production efforts were absorbed back into the household, as were her husband's. A difference, however, existed in Martha's frontier experience. Martha was never so isolated from the market that she could not purchase cloth or other manufactured goods. Although Brigham Young's isolationist economic policies did extend the economic importance of women's household production, women in Utah were never entirely removed from their role as consumers. Even though cash was scarce in Utah, making bartering and trading essential to the community, the manufactured goods desired by households were usually available.<sup>138</sup>

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Bernardino, was discontinued in 1857. See Allen and Leonard, 273-277.

<sup>137</sup>Joan M. Jensen, *Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 186-209. She also talks about these activities as important survival strategies, 259. See also Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>138</sup>"Self sufficient household were rare; most acquired some of the essentials through purchase or bartering." (Godfrey, Godfrey, and Derr, *Women's Voices*, 245; Beecher, "Woman's Work," 283-286.)

*Conclusion:*

As Mormon women, such as Martha Coray, migrated to the Great Basin, they came for one reason: to escape religious persecution. Many of them had broken family connections to be part of this new religious movement that was now taking them west of the Rockies. Their faith was the overriding characteristic in their identity, binding them to a group that had covenanted to contribute all they had to build up the Kingdom of God.

Their religious devotion, however, was also intermingled with the mundane chores and routines of daily life. These behaviors and routines were heavily influenced by Eastern notions of domesticity and traditional gender-based divisions of labor. Within the community women still wanted to be thought of as feminine and cultivated domestic skills and proper respect for male authority among their daughters, even when the frontier made traditional divisions of labor difficult.

But the dynamics between faith, femininity, and the frontier created subtle differences in the lives of Mormon women. They lived in a patriarchal society, but they were also given the vote and a legal identity earlier than most of their contemporaries. This same patriarchal structure, led by Brigham Young, encouraged women to take jobs and gain an education. He also protected and encouraged expansion of women's home industries.

Somewhere among these contradictions of revolutionary and traditional, liberal and conservative, liberating and oppressive, individual women carved out their own experiences in the wilderness. Martha Jane Knowlton Coray is the subject of this study; she was a woman who fulfilled the ideals of prescriptive literature by mothering twelve

children. She also wrote about woman's rights and developed her talent and intellect, devoting these efforts not to women's advancement, but to her family and the Kingdom.



## CHAPTER TWO

### DOMESTICITY AND MORMON WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the nineteenth century, few white women, if any, could escape the general expectation that their lives would center around their families. By 1820, ideas of domesticity began to emerge in many established areas, and it wasn't long before women's magazines and church sermons promulgated these ideas throughout the Northeast and then onto Western settlements.<sup>1</sup> Mormon women in territorial Utah lived under circumstances that were common to other women living in the arid Western frontier, and they shared ideals common with many Anglo-Saxon women in the Northeast.<sup>2</sup>

Contrasting with these commonalities were doctrines that clearly distinguished Mormon women from many of their counterparts. For example, Eliza R. Snow and some followers widely taught that there would be an equality of the sexes in the next life, and

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<sup>1</sup>Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 11; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1800-1860," *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 21-41; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 7-9.

<sup>2</sup>Jill Mulvay Derr noted that "[Eliza's] 1850's poems dealing at length with woman's status reveal that she, like most Latter-day Saint women and men, brought to the Salt Lake Valley traditional ideas about men's and women's roles within marriage, applying them even to plural marriage." ("The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, 1 (1996-97) : 102.) See also my discussion of femininity and gender roles in chapter one, 38-47.

polygamy greatly altered family life for many Mormon families. These doctrines created important differences in Mormons' perspectives on family life and the eternal role of women. In addition to these less tangible distinctions were practical differences as well. Brigham Young was building a literal kingdom of God that required women to take on unusual economic roles. In the 1870s, women were encouraged to gain occupational skills by LDS Church leaders. But before these ideological differences could be fully implemented in Mormon women's lives, the wilderness had to be conquered.<sup>3</sup>

Here Mormon theology and frontier expediency overlapped. For most Mormon settlers, particularly through the first decade of settlement in Utah, building the kingdom of God seemed more dependent on raising enough grain to survive the winter than implementing millenarian rhetoric. The Mormons, like so many other settlers, struggled to maintain a steady food supply, which meant that during the early years in Utah, emphasis on several distinguishing doctrines of the LDS Church regarding women was supplanted by satisfying their physical needs. They were struggling to survive as individuals; consequently, many women were spending much of their time improving their farms alongside their husbands.<sup>4</sup> Even after the settlements stabilized and women began

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<sup>3</sup>See Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, eds. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 80-110; Derr, "Brigham Young and the Awakening of Mormon Women in the 1870's," in *Lion of the Lord: Essays of the Life and Service of Brigham Young*, eds. Susan Easton Black and Larry Porter (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 312-37. Historians Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr stated, "By the 1870s Mormon women would be actively involved in that conflict (between Mormons and the Federal Government), but through the 1850s and '60s their concerns of necessity seem to have been more insular." (*Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982], 245.)

<sup>4</sup>"Women . . . played a critical role in providing food, clothing, and shelter for their

engaging in more varied occupations and in political pursuits, domestic life still consumed much of their time. It is the domestic aspect of Mormon women's lives, Martha's in particular, that will be studied in this chapter.

The term *domesticity* will be used in this chapter with two different applications.<sup>5</sup> The first is a very general use of the word: that is, aspects of life centering on the home and family. Mormon women, like most of their female counterparts, expected to someday marry and have children. With the role of wife and mother also came a list of typical "domestic" duties, such as cleaning, cooking, raising food in a kitchen garden, preserving food for the winter, washing, and mending. But, as noted in chapter one, domesticity also developed beyond the list of daily chores into a canon of acceptable behavior for a woman, which included piety, purity, and submissiveness. Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, like so many other Mormon women, emulated these ideals in her marriage, her child rearing responsibilities, her daily work, and her religious beliefs. It is important to remember, however, that every marriage and family negotiated its own division of labor among its members. Since this study focuses on the Coray family, it will of necessity look at some situations that would not be typical for most women within or without Utah.

#### *Marriage:*

Martha's relationship with her spouse demonstrates both traditional notions of male and female relationships and adaptations in territorial Utah. Howard, 24, and

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families." (Godfrey, Godfrey, and Derr, *Women's Voices*, 245.)

<sup>5</sup>Barbara Welter canonized these behaviors in her essay, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," 21-41.



Martha, 19, married February 6, 1841, in Nauvoo, Illinois. Both were recent converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when they met. Howard had been working in Nauvoo as the secretary to the church founder and president, Joseph Smith. One day, after Howard broke his leg when wrestling with the prophet, Joseph Smith prophesied about Howard's future spouse, telling him he would "soon find a companion, one that will be suited to your condition and whom you will be satisfied with. She will cling to you like the cords of death; and you will have a good many children."<sup>6</sup> About three or four weeks later, Howard attended a conference in Nauvoo with the promised blessing on his mind. He wrote, "So I thought I would take a square look at the congregation and see who there was; that, possibly the fair one promised me, might be present."<sup>7</sup>

Howard's eye soon fell upon a young woman sitting in a buggy. This woman was Martha Jane Knowlton, who had joined the church in February of 1840. Howard recalled,

I concluded to approach near enough to scan her features well, and thus be able to decide in my own mind, whether her looks would satisfy my taste[.] She had dark brown eyes, very bright and penetrating; at least they penetrated me; and I said to myself, she will do; the fact is, I was decidedly struck.<sup>8</sup>

Following the meeting, Howard sought out this woman and soon found himself

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<sup>6</sup>Howard Coray, *Journal, Coray Family Papers, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah*, 8 (cited hereafter as HBL). This journal is actually a memoir written sometime around 1883; see Charles D. Tate Jr., "Howard and Martha Jane Knowlton Coray of Nauvoo," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History*, ed. H. Dean Garrett (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1995), note 2, 353.

<sup>7</sup>Howard Coray, *Journal*, 10.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.



face-to-face with her. The two were introduced; as Howard recounted in his journal:

[I], of course, bowed as politely as I knew how! And she courtisied [*sic*], and we then fell into somewhat familiar conversation. I discovered at once, that she was ready, off hand, and inclined to be witty; also, that her mind took a wider range, than was common for young ladies of her age to take. This interview, though short, was indeed very enjoyable; and closed with the hope, that she might be the one, who the Lord had picked for me; and thus it proved to be.<sup>9</sup>

Although Howard declined to go into any further detail about his courtship with Martha, two letters exist from this period from Martha to Howard. The letters are uncharacteristic of the demure female figure of nineteenth-century prescriptive literature. Martha communicated her feelings boldly to Howard, so clearly, in fact, that they bordered on impropriety. The first letter described an incident that had caused Martha some embarrassment and contained an apology for a “circumstance that may have injured [Howard’s] feelings.”<sup>10</sup> Martha continued, “The Origin of the matter was as no more or less than this. Esq. [Sidney] Rigdon observed that Mrs. Coray was going down in town. I (sportively) curtseying thanked him saying I considered myself most highly honored by the appellation.”<sup>11</sup> Word got back to Howard that Martha had willingly accepted his last name as her own, breaching propriety and requiring an explanatory letter.

Martha was not apologetic for long, however, and continued the same letter in a rather bold manner. She wrote, “My cousin esq. (Kimball) has been paying the most

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>10</sup>Martha Jane Knowlton (Coray) to Howard Coray, date unknown, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

assiduous attention to myself for the near 4 years in which he has prosecuted an entirely hopeless suit." Having thus assured Howard that she had no intentions regarding her cousin's suit, she gave him some direct encouragement for himself. She wrote, "I may as well drop a hint with regard to your course of conduct-you have indeed expressed yourself [in] terms calculated to be understood which some would consider hasty upon short acquaintance [*sic*] but I have no objections to your manner of expression as it is in accordance with the liberty I gave you."<sup>12</sup> She continued her letter, teasing Howard with statements such as, "I have not said I am in love do not take it so [.] [It] did come into the neighborhood etc, etc," that demonstrated a playfulness in her relationship with Howard. Martha reminded Howard at the end of the letter that he still had an honorable escape from his courtship if he found her too frivolous, but also stated that she wished his feelings to be made known to her clearly. She closed the letter with "consider it and let me have your answer soon," a statement that indicated a little impatience on Martha's part.

Although Howard's response was not preserved in records, other than the fact that they did indeed get married, another letter exists from Martha to Howard that demonstrated the continued progression of their relationship. This letter from Martha must have been written just before their engagement, for it included expectations of a formal application for Martha's hand in marriage by Howard to her father. Martha wrote,

I will merely say sir that any time it suits your convenience to visit our house I will find me free to converse upon the subject which seems to interest you most. Please if convenient bring with you a statement of facts by Bro. Thompson and Joseph [.] My parents will require it and it may be things will be settled to the satisfaction of all parties. I would be glad if you could slip a note into Miss Sarah's hands to inform me when you can

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

honor me with a call.<sup>13</sup>

These letters are uncommonly forward for this time period, indicating a level of assertiveness from Martha in the courtship that was usually reserved for men. Such behavior does not support a strict adherence to the virtue of submissiveness. Women were expected to wait patiently for the man to take the lead, and then follow without question. Here Martha was doing the leading. Yet Howard's remarks regarding his wife were also out of the ordinary. He was initially impressed with her wit and breadth of mind compared to those of other women her age. Such a compliment was highly unusual during a time when women's minds were supposedly too small for intellectual thought, but just large enough for love.<sup>14</sup>

Howard's appreciation of Martha's intellect probably allowed her more freedom of expression in their relationship, and thus a more equitable relationship, than was typical for Mormons of the time period. Marybeth Raynes described three different marriage patterns she has observed in nineteenth-century relationships.<sup>15</sup> The first model is the typical male-dominated, patriarchal family. She noted that this did not make the female powerless, but that her power was derived from the man either from assigned tasks based on gender roles

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<sup>13</sup>Martha Jane Knowlton (Coray) to Howard Coray, date unknown, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>14</sup>One Eastern doctor wrote, "Woman has a head almost too small for intellect but just big enough for love." (Welter, 28.) For an alternative view of men's appreciation of women's education, see Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 126-128.

<sup>15</sup>Marybeth Raynes, "Mormon Marriages in an American Context," in *Sisters in Spirit*, 232-33.

or from her husband's permission. Rodney Turner declared that in the Mormon version of the family patriarch, he is both the "priest and king ruling wife and children and mediating between them and God."<sup>16</sup> Second, according to Raynes' analysis of the work of J. Joel Moss, the LDS concept of "stewardship" resulted in a different family structure. Thus the Mormon patriarch, when following the imperatives given to priesthood holders in the Doctrine and Covenants, gained his power from love and acquired his authority "from the respect freely given to him by those in the household."<sup>17</sup> In this structure, everyone's needs are equal.<sup>18</sup>

The third marriage relationship, and the one that most closely resembles that of Martha and Howard, is one forwarded by Marybeth Raynes. This model is based upon the doctrine that a Mother in Heaven exists in partnership with Heavenly Father. It also assumes that a "complete unity is necessary to return to God." Thus, power is shared by both individuals in the marriage, but this model also contains the caveat that it remains a male-headed home.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Turner's argument also rests upon the assumption that the male is a righteous mediator between woman and God. (Rodney Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972], 52, as discussed by Raynes, "Mormon Marriages," 232.)

<sup>17</sup>See *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (hereafter known as Doctrine and Covenants) 122:36-46 (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 242-43.

<sup>18</sup>J. Joel Moss, "Family Organization," *Supplementary Readings for Family Relationships*, rev. ed., ed. Wesley R. Burr, Richard W. Cantrell, Everett Pollard (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1970), 346-47, as discussed in Raynes, "Mormon Marriages," 232-33.

<sup>19</sup>Raynes, "Mormon Marriages," 233; Lynn A. McKinlay, "Patriarchal Order of the Priesthood," *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism: The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow



When Martha and Howard were courting, neither the Relief Society nor the temple rites had been introduced to women, although parts of the doctrines were informally circulating among the Saints.<sup>20</sup> It is unclear, therefore, to what extent the doctrines of the church that elevated the status of women in the Latter-day Saint community would have influenced the interactions between Martha and Howard in 1841. It should also be noted, however, that Howard's assessment of Martha's mind comes from memoirs contained in his journal. These memoirs were written after the late 1860s when Brigham Young began to more actively encourage the development of women's talents and intellect.<sup>21</sup> The language of these courtship letters, however, clearly indicated an assertiveness that was at least tolerated by Howard, if not encouraged. Howard and Martha, it seems, were innately inclined towards the partnership model of marriage.

Howard and Martha appeared to have a happy marriage. About a year before Martha's death she wrote to her daughter Nellie that Howard helped her all he could whenever she was at home. She also thought he looked quite handsome in his new suit of

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(New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992), 3: 1067; Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father,'" 105.

<sup>20</sup>The Mormon concept of a Mother in Heaven was first written in a poem by Eliza R. Snow entitled, "Invocation, or The Eternal Father and Mother," in October 1845. There are earlier accounts of a vision by Joseph Smith and oral discussions between Joseph Smith and Zina Diantha Huntington. (See Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Sisters in Spirit*, 64-77.) Furthermore, the "New and Everlasting Covenant" as defined in the Doctrine and Covenants was recorded on 12 July 1843, but it is clear that this concept of eternal marriage was known by Joseph Smith as early as 1831. The logical extension of this doctrine is, of course, that there is both a Heavenly Mother and a Heavenly Father. (Doctrine and Covenants 132: 19-20.)

<sup>21</sup>Jill C. Mulvay (Derr), "Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question," *BYU Studies* 16 (Winter 1976) : 250-64; Jill Mulvay Derr, "Brigham Young and the Awakening," 312-37.

clothes writing that he looked "as brisk as a young widower."<sup>22</sup> Howard wrote upon her death, "Now, that she has gone, the fondest hope I have is, to again strike hands with the wife of my youth, in a more genial clime, where sorrowing and sighing there is none, and parting shall be no more."<sup>23</sup>

Howard's writings are filled with admiration for his wife's intellect, her ability to sacrifice, her dedication to the gospel, and her success in the roles of wife and mother. Yet Martha was not the only woman in Howard's life, something that a diary might have given more clues to than his memoirs do. According to the Salt Lake Endowment House records, Howard Coray was sealed, or married by priesthood authority, to Mary Ann Johnson on January 13, 1853, shortly after Orson Pratt's 1852 public announcement of polygamy.<sup>24</sup>

Polygamy was practiced several different ways in territorial Utah.<sup>25</sup> Some families

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<sup>22</sup>Martha Jane Knowlton Coray to Helena (Nellie) Knowlton Coray, 9 November 1880, Coray Family Papers, HBLI.

<sup>23</sup>Howard Coray, Journal, 21.

<sup>24</sup>Endowment house records, Family History Library, Salt Lake City. According to the same records Mary Ann Johnson was born 24 August 1836 in Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts. She and Howard were sealed by Ezra T. Benson in his office when she was sixteen years old. Such a significant event should warrant a mention in a diary by both Martha and Howard; however, available records are silent on this matter. Martha's diary for this time period is incomplete, and Howard neglects this perhaps embarrassing or awkward subject in his memoir.

<sup>25</sup>For more information on polygamy see Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle*, Publications in Mormon Studies, ed. Linda King Newell, no. 1 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987); B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989); Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon*

lived under the same roof, although most men tried to provide separate homes for each of their wives. Under such circumstances many wives were required to contribute to their own support. Also, some marriages were more token arrangements intended to fulfill a perceived religious requirement while the connubial marriage relationship never truly existed. While we do not know the particulars of Howard's polygamous relationship, we do know that it did not last. The two were divorced on April 10, 1855.<sup>26</sup>

Martha's feelings about polygamy are difficult to discern from the records left to us, but Howard and Martha were some of the select individuals who were introduced to the doctrine of polygamy in Nauvoo. Howard wrote in his journal about an evening spent with Hyrum Smith during which Hyrum explained the sealing ceremony.<sup>27</sup> Also, Howard affirmed that polygamy was practiced in Nauvoo. In an 1886 article in the *Deseret News*, Howard again recounted learning of celestial marriage from Hyrum, but this time added the additional detail that Hyrum recited the revelation from Joseph regarding plural marriage. Hyrum apparently also warned Howard and Martha that the revelation was not yet public knowledge. In the newspaper article, Howard specifically stated that after referring to the doctrine generally, Hyrum went over the practice of plural wives again, wanting to make sure that Howard and Martha "clearly understood the principle."<sup>28</sup>

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*Marriage System, 1840-1910* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup>Divorce Certificate, Brigham Young Office Files, LDS Church Archives, as provided by archive staff.

<sup>27</sup>Howard Coray, Journal, 16.

<sup>28</sup>James S. Brooks, *Deseret Evening News* (Salt Lake City, Utah), March 26, 1886. Both Howard's journal and this statement in the newspaper were written within a few years of one another (mid 1880s), making it difficult to explain the differences in the details between the two stories.



Howard also wrote that he saw plenty of other things in Nauvoo that convinced him that plural marriage was practiced there. Yet within this testimony, Howard never indicated his own feelings regarding the marriage practice.

Only one source reveals any indication of Howard's and Martha's personal feelings on the matter. Howard's sister, Mary Ettie V. Smith, left the Mormon church after becoming disillusioned with it and particularly the doctrine and practice of plural marriage. She wrote an expose of the Mormon Church in which she recounted her experience with great bitterness.<sup>29</sup> Included in her book is an account, tainted though it may be, of Martha's dislike of polygamy.

Mary first discussed polygamy with Martha and Howard when Martha was tending ferry on the Nishanobotany River in Iowa in 1848. Mary and her husband, Wallace, had been preparing to move to Utah when he took a second wife. Mary was extremely upset and decided to go visit her mother for a while. On the trip she became ill and serendipitously stumbled upon Martha's and Howard's house. She told Howard about the

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<sup>29</sup>Mary Ettie V. Smith, *Fifteen Years Among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith Late of Great Salt Lake City: A Sister of One of the Mormon High Priests, She Having Been Personally Acquainted With Most of the Mormon Leaders, And Long in the Confidence of the "Prophet," Brigham Young*, ed. Nelson Winch Green (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858). Mary Smith's account of polygamy is decidedly vitriolic. A more impartial view of the practice is given by Marybeth Raynes who wrote, "Polygamy has been assumed to be the most restrictive form of patriarchal power possible. The actuality was probably very different for many women. Each person or couple has only so much time to engage in cooperative decision making; when that time is divided with other pairings within the family, often each person gains more autonomy. Many women supported households entirely by themselves. Additionally, maintaining separate households when husbands were hiding from polygamy persecution on 'the underground' meant wives of necessity made more decisions. Of course, this pattern could simply mean that women made decisions by default in the absence of their husbands. Present husbands, if only occasionally, could still make arbitrary decisions." (Marybeth Raynes, "Mormon Marriages," 233.)



second wife and wrote down her memory of his response:

After listening to me with great patience, and thinking the matter over for a long time, he said, "Mormonism is true. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, else how did he heal my broken leg; and how was my mother healed? How have others been healed and how have his prophecies been fulfilled? Your husband has not done right. This is not Mormonism."

"But," said I, "Wallace has obeyed 'counsel.' David Fulmer, President of the Stake, has counselled him to steal and rob; and he has stolen and robbed. Fulmer has counselled him to take another wife, and he has taken one."

"But," said he, "you will find when you see Brigham Young, that Mormonism differs from that. It is not true that such crimes are countenanced by the Church."

Mary later defended her brother's good intentions and concluded, "I am satisfied that at that time Howard would have denounced Mormonism, had he known to what it was leading."<sup>30</sup>

This story, of course, apparently contradicts the testimony given by Howard in which he stated that he and Martha were taught the principle of polygamy by Hyrum Smith in July of 1843. But the discrepancy between Howard's journal and his printed statement leave some room for doubt. Howard only used the word *polygamy* in his 1886 statement. Yet at that time celestial marriage was synonymous with polygamy, at least among the members of the hierarchy; thus, it can be safely assumed that Martha and Howard were taught the principle of plural marriage by Hyrum Smith. Furthermore, Howard may have been referring to either the stealing or the manner in which the polygamous marriage was contracted when he declared the situation inconsistent with the teachings of Mormonism.

Howard's journal makes it clear that Martha accepted the principle of plural

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<sup>30</sup>Mary V. Ettie Smith, *Fifteen Years*, 96-97.

marriage when taught it in Nauvoo. It does not necessarily follow, however, that Martha thought well of the practice. Mary's record indicates that she did not. She wrote that Martha refused to speak with Wallace when he came to persuade Mary to return with him. When he arrived at their home, Martha reportedly said, "If he [comes in the house], I will go out, the trifling scamp. Let him go back to his spiritual mistress. He cannot come here." To which Howard replied, "I think this man is not as bad as we supposed. It is this Mormonism that has made the trouble; it is hard on women at the best."<sup>31</sup> Such a statement implies that neither Martha nor Howard believed in the doctrine of polygamy at that point.

Howard's sister, Mary, did return with Wallace on this occasion, but she later divorced him. She claimed in her book that church leaders then tried to force her into another polygamous marriage after discovering that she was in love with a gentile. She tried to escape from Utah Territory but was prevented by the Bretheren.<sup>32</sup> She was forced to stay with Howard and Martha, who were supposed to supervise her and report any suspicious behavior.

Mary "passed the fall [in Tooele] very pleasantly with [her] brother and the society of Martha, his only wife." But Mary clearly believed that she had a sympathetic friend in Martha. She wrote of Martha's kindnesses to her while imprisoned in their house and was impressed that Martha "had thus far successfully fought spiritual wifeism from her door,

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<sup>31</sup>Smith, *Fifteen Years*, 101.

<sup>32</sup>"The Bretheren" is a cultural term that usually refers to members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. It can also be expanded to include other ecclesiastical leaders. Mary believed that there was a conspiracy among the priesthood leaders to keep her from leaving Utah and marrying outside the church.

and still preserved her isolated household.”<sup>33</sup> Absolutely convinced that Martha was similarly trapped in Utah by the priesthood, Mary remembered years later that

Martha was a good and kindly woman, when excited by no wrong that was crying for redress; but she had a soul of greatness, and a will of iron. I take pleasure in making this mention of her, as she was of great service to me afterwards in Salt Lake, and I would do anything in my power to assist her to escape from the cruel bondage she is suffering in common with all Mormon women there.<sup>34</sup>

Mary seemed always to love her brother but was disappointed in his later acceptance of polygamy. Conversely, she had a great admiration for Martha’s ability to avoid polygamy. She wrote,

I am equally satisfied he has since known of the existence not only of these crimes, and their practice by the direction or “counsel,” as it is called, of the Prophet; but has actually acknowledged the spiritual wife doctrine, by attempting to take another himself; which, up to the time I left Salt Lake, Martha had prevented by driving the “new wife” out of the house.<sup>35</sup>

This “new wife” was quite possibly the divorced Mary Ann Johnson, giving some credence to Mary’s story. Mary also indicated that Howard was not discouraged by this first failed attempt, nor was Martha weakened:

Martha is a good and pure woman, and will not submit to the double wife *practice*, although she is forced to acknowledge, in common with all Mormon women, that it is right in principle, each week when she is questioned, as they all are, by the “teachers.” When my brother Howard one time brought home another wife, Martha fought her out of the house, and he was forced to console himself with one. But when I left Salt Lake last year, he was courting two *sisters*, whom he intended to take home, thinking they would together be able to hold the balance of power in Martha’s household. I presume she will in the end submit, as that is sure to

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<sup>33</sup>Smith, *Fifteen Years*, 326.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 102-103.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 96.



be the fate of most Mormon women.<sup>36</sup>

Though no mention of the marriage to Mary Ann Johnson was made by either Howard or Martha in any of their personal records, they do give clear indications of commitment to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They attend church meetings, accept mission calls, pay their tithing, express joy in the belief of an after-life with family, maintain friendships with Church leaders, hold positions in the church and community that would have been predicated upon others' belief in their commitment to the Church, and bear testimony of their belief that Joseph Smith was a prophet. It is not surprising, therefore, that Martha and Howard would have at least attempted to practice plural marriage, which was seen as another measure of piety.

If Howard or Martha did harbor a serious dislike of the practice, they must have been discreet about it, for two of Howard and Martha's daughters, Martha and Eppie, practiced polygamy. They practiced the most successful type of polygamy, sororal, in which a man married two or more sisters; both of them were married to Theodore Beldon Lewis.<sup>37</sup> This marriage, however, was not without its own challenges. A relative later

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>37</sup>George P. Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1949), 111; as quoted in Campbell and Campbell, "Divorce Among Mormon Polygamists," 20. Murdock found that polygyny was the preferred marriage practice in most societies he had studied and that among most of them the system was quite stable. He attributed these societies' success to their internal system of controlling the interactions within the marriage. He believed that Mormon polygamy failed because Mormons never established consistently enforced societal rules for polygamous marriages. (Murdock, 31; as quoted in Campbell and Campbell, 16.) Kimball Young held a similar belief: "It should by no means be assumed that conflict was the inevitable aspect of plural family life. The real problem was that the difficulties could not be easily settled because the culture did not provide any standardized way for handling these conflicts. For the most part, these people genuinely tried to live according to the Principle, but when they applied the rules of the game



wrote of Eppie, "Doubtless her position as second wife in a polygamous family had mellowed her character into the beautiful soul she was."<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the sisters lived apart following their husband's early death in 1889.

Eppie and Martha Lewis were also married when the government passed a series of laws meant to punish polygamists. Martha Lewis wrote a letter to her father expressing some of her concerns for the increasingly hostile environment for those practicing polygamy in Utah Territory and in the United States generally. For Martha, ending polygamy seems to have been more difficult than living the principle. While her letter no longer exists, Howard's reply addresses specific questions from the original letter. Martha had clearly built a significant part of her religious identity upon the principle of polygamy and was questioning what was going to happen. Howard quoted Martha's statement, "It is painful to see one's landmarks being swept away."<sup>39</sup> Howard, however, felt entirely different about the matter. He believed Mormon men had brought the persecution upon themselves by not living the doctrine as purely as it was intended:

Ancient Israel was permitted to practice polygamy; but the Nephites were forbidden to do so on the ground that they, as well as ancient Israel had caused their fair wives and daughters a great deal of sorrow etc. Now have not the Mormons been as unwise and cruel as they were? And was not a check necessary -something to bring them to their senses? I think so.<sup>40</sup>

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borrowed from monogamy, such as not controlling feelings of jealousy, they got into real trouble." (Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* [New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1954], 209; as quoted in Campbell and Campbell, 20).

<sup>38</sup>Ezra Clark Knowlton, *The Utah Knowltons*, 118.

<sup>39</sup>Howard Coray to Martha Jane Coray Lewis, 2 August 1889, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

Again we are left to question how Howard actually felt about polygamy. Was he a supporter of the doctrine but disappointed in its practice, or was he opposed to it altogether at this point in his life? The rest of the letter contained a strong testimony of the truthfulness of Mormonism and the Prophet Joseph Smith. Whatever his feelings about polygamy, he was clearly still committed to his religion. While the details of the marriage between Howard and Mary Ann Johnson remain obscure, it is certain that a second wife would have some effect upon a previously existing marriage relationship with Martha, possibly explaining Martha's detailed financial accounts.<sup>41</sup> The second marriage probably also had significant emotional impact on the original union. Although divorce was unusually high among polygamists, the marriage failure may also have been difficult for the Corays on a religious level.<sup>42</sup> There were serious pressures to live polygamy in Territorial Utah, particularly during the "Mormon Reformation" of 1856-57, a period when church leaders placed great emphasis on repentance and absolute commitment to the LDS faith.<sup>43</sup> Their failed attempt at polygamy must have felt all the worse when listening

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<sup>41</sup>These will be discussed in detail further in chapter two, 83, 86-87, and 90.

<sup>42</sup>Campbell and Campbell estimate that 2000 divorces were granted for polygamous couples prior to 1890. They assert that this was a much higher rate of divorce (1/60) than the national average (1/1000) based on the estimation that there were 2,400 men practicing polygamy in 1885. This, of course, is a very rough estimation based more on projections than on fact. In addition these figures do not account for separations or dissolved marriages that never received official sanction. (Campbell and Campbell, "Divorce Among Mormon Polygamists," 6,8.) Kathryn Daynes's analysis of divorce rates appeared more thorough, but she only discussed divorces in Manti. (See *More Wives Than One*, 160-170.)

<sup>43</sup>Campbell and Campbell, "Divorce Among Mormon Polygamists," 7. During the Mormon Reformation church leaders preached that members of the LDS Church should repent, confess their sins, attend church, pay tithing, and enter into plural marriage. Their faithfulness was also determined by a catechism administered by the home missionaries. This reformation culminated in the rebaptism of most members in March 1857. The

to Orson Pratt speculate that Jesus practiced polygamy.<sup>44</sup>

Martha and Howard's membership was important to them, and their inability to live this difficult principle might also explain Martha's apparent preoccupation with polygamy. She wrote on March 3, 1856, "Saw Heber [Kimball] he said there very hard times coming and that it was not necessary for a man to marry more than 2 wives in order to enter upon Celestial glory that he was just as much claimant as if he had fifty."<sup>45</sup> She also recorded in her diary of "going to meeting" where polygamy was preached.<sup>46</sup> One entry tells of a woman who came to Martha with her protest against polygamy; yet another entry states that Brigham Young "wound up with a storm at women who did not encourage polygamy!!!"<sup>47</sup> And as Jeffery O. Johnson noted, "That's more exclamation points than she normally uses in six months."<sup>48</sup> Martha never recorded a personal response to any discussions about polygamy. Although she left many other pieces of information about her life, her feelings about polygamy remain locked in her heart.

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sacrament, which had not been given since December 1856, was also resumed in April 1857. (Paul H. Peterson, "The Mormon Reformation of 1856-1857: The Rhetoric and Reality," *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989) : 70, 76.)

<sup>44</sup>Orson Pratt, as quoted in Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*, 39-40; as quoted in Campbell and Campbell, 7.

<sup>45</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary and Financial Accounts*, 3 March 1856.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, see 10 March 1856 and 13 April 1856. This time period is also known as the Mormon Reformation, during which the practice of polygamy was strongly encouraged by church leaders.

<sup>47</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 19-21 May 1874 and 26 July 1874, Coray Family Papers, HBLL (exclamation points in the original).

<sup>48</sup>Jeffery O. Johnson, "Martha Jane Knowlton Coray: 'Masculine in Her Strength of Character,'" *Dedication Colloquiums, Harold B. Lee Library: March 15-March 17, 1977*, Coray Family Papers, Special Collections, HBLL, 125.



*Corporate Family Economy:*

Romantic attachments were but one aspect of Martha and Howard's relationship. Also central was what Mary P. Ryan termed the "corporate family economy."<sup>49</sup> Ryan's phrase described the economic well-being of the family. When New York's Oneida County (Ryan's area of study) was first settled, the community was primarily agrarian. Women, men, and children worked side-by-side to ensure the family's success. The greater the productivity of the farm, the more land the family could purchase and give to the next generation. Ryan asserted that it is the transition between the agrarian based society and the urban manufacturing and industrial society where the solidification of woman's roles occurs. As Oneida County's families moved into the newly developed middle-class, the corporate family economy dissolved, and the father was given sole responsibility for the family's economic security.<sup>50</sup>

Territorial Utah was at the crossroads of this transition. Some communities, such as Salt Lake and Provo, became established urban centers by the 1860s. Other areas were settled later and remained focused on agricultural ventures. In fact, most of Utah remained rural throughout the territorial period. As the Corays moved between these worlds, their daily routines and contributions to the family corporate economy changed. In Tooele, where the Corays farmed, Martha's diary emphasized the importance of her

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<sup>49</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 31.

<sup>50</sup>Nancy F. Cott believed that the role of provider was assigned specifically to men by 1692. This role was decreed by Cotton Mather, who also instructed women that their role was consumer oriented and thus they were obligated to use their goods frugally. Female dependency did not become prominent, however, until the market assigned a



dairy production and aiding Howard as he made improvements to their land. Conversely, Howard's journal and the diaries of Martha's children indicate that their time in Provo had more elements of the middle class family. Howard listed the many occupations he had during his time in Provo: "farming, clerking, school teaching, building a sawmill and sawing lumber, running a molasses factory, and hauling lumber to Fairfield, etc, etc." He even claimed to be "getting on pretty well till [he] undertook the saw mill, which resulted in embarrassing [him] not a little."<sup>51</sup>

It is perhaps because of this embarrassment that the Corays abandoned the city and homesteaded several quarter sections in Mona, Utah. During this period they seemed to revert to the agrarian goals of acquiring enough land to pass on to the next generation.<sup>52</sup> With the second move to a farm, however, Martha's contributions were different. Her home production changed from cheese to soap and medicinal products. But wherever they lived and however typical or atypical the contribution might have been, everyone in the Coray family—Martha, Howard, and the children—contributed to the family's economic well-being. Sometimes they worked on the farm, while on other occasions they sought outside employment. It was this cooperative nature that helped the family to survive through lean years.

Howard and Martha worked as partners in almost every financial venture either one entered. Immediately after their marriage in February of 1841, Martha began teaching

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monetary value to men's work. Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 20-22.

<sup>51</sup>Howard Coray, Journal, 17.

<sup>52</sup>When Howard and Martha moved to Mona in 1872, their daughters Martha, Mary, and Eppie were already living there with their husbands. Martha and Howard soon entered a claim as did their children Howard, Will, and Nellie.

school with Howard and continued until the end of 1844 when Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, asked Martha to serve as her scribe while she dictated her memories of her son's life. Lucy probably requested Martha's help based on her reputation for taking excellent notes. As the project continued, Howard was asked to assist his wife. Howard consulted Brigham Young, who agreed that Howard should quit his school and devote his attention to the life history of Joseph. The two of them finished the manuscript around the close of 1845 and received payment for their work in 1846.<sup>53</sup>

Howard and Martha left Nauvoo with the bulk of the Saints in the spring of 1846. They were unprepared to cross the plains, however, and the two of them worked together to earn enough money for the journey. Howard described their situation saying, "My wife tended ferry and I got 5 or 6 yokes of unbroken steers and broke them for their use and broke prairie that season."<sup>54</sup> The Corays crossed the plains with the John Sharp company in 1850. As a result of their cooperation and preparedness, their daughter, Martha Jane Coray Lewis, remembered the trip west as a pleasant one with "plenty of milk, bread, beans, and sometimes either fish or buffalo meat."<sup>55</sup>

Once in Utah, the Corays moved from place to place. They initially settled in Salt Lake City where Howard was employed as a tithing clerk earning \$1000 per year, but they relocated to E.T. City (Ezra Taft City, now Lakepoint) in Tooele county sometime in 1855. The exact date of the move is unknown, but their son William Henry Coray was

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<sup>53</sup>Howard Coray, Journal, 16.

<sup>54</sup>Howard Coray, Journal, 12. Martha tended ferry on the Nishanebotany River, Iowa (sometimes spelled Nishnabotna) in 1848.

<sup>55</sup>Lamont Poulter, "A Spiritual Life Comprising Certain Experiences of Martha Jane Coray Lewis," *Relief Society Magazine* 16 (July 1929) : 366.

born November 3, 1853, in Salt Lake City, and their next child was born in Tooele, July 9, 1855. The Corays did not stay in Tooele very long, however. At the close of her 1856 diary, Martha recorded Howard's disappointment in the land and their situation.<sup>56</sup> They moved to Provo before the year was out. Later, Howard purchased a ranch in Mona, Juab County; however, the family continued to maintain a home in Provo, traveling back and forth.

Since Martha and Howard did not arrive in Utah until 1850 and did not begin farming until sometime around 1855, it could be argued that they missed the true "frontier" period. Yet even though they missed many of the first difficult years of settlement, they still continued to struggle to produce a living from their land. Furthermore, the Mormon frontier was constantly expanding as Brigham Young and other leaders sent faithful members off to form new communities. Although women such as Martha could reach markets with manufactured goods, it required a significant journey; thus, they remained relatively isolated.

But obtaining manufactured goods was not their greatest concern. When the saints arrived in Utah, their first priority was to begin planting crops. They understood that their success in colonizing was directly dependent on establishing a reliable food supply. Husbands and wives in Utah worked together to provide stability for their families and to increase their future prospects as they did in other western communities.

Historian Nancy Grey Osterud provided some guidelines about typical divisions of

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<sup>56</sup>Martha wrote, "Mr. Coray is now determined to leave if prospects do not look better." "Saw Mr. Kisler. Said he did not think this place good for anything." (Martha Coray, Diary, 17-19 May 1856, *passim*.)



labor between spouses on the farm. She observed that the fields were typically worked by the men, who were aided by women during haying and harvesting. Women and men held joint responsibility for the barn and livestock; which spouse cared for the milk cows and the poultry was an area that could be negotiated by individual couples. Keeping house was nearly always the woman's job, which included cooking and preserving food, sewing and mending clothing, cleaning the house, and caring for small children, although many men did help maintain the water and fuel supply so essential to these tasks.<sup>57</sup> Although there were differences, Martha shared much common ground with other frontierswomen. The numerous commonalities found among women have led Glenda Riley to declare:

Women did play highly significant and multifaceted roles in the development of the American West but also . . . their lives as settlers displayed fairly consistent patterns, which transcended geographic sections of the frontier. Further, I maintain that these shared experiences and responses of frontierswomen constituted a "female frontier." In other words, frontierswomen's responsibilities, life styles, and sensibilities were shaped more by gender considerations than by region.<sup>58</sup>

Although most of this thesis argues that Mormon women, particularly Martha, had a unique experience as they settled Utah, there is one aspect of their lives in which Glenda Riley's scholarship rings true: that is daily divisions of work, or domestic duties.

The Coray family's general division of labor was typical for women in Utah as well as for other frontierswomen. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher argued that although the gender-related divisions of labor in territorial Utah revealed situations where women

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<sup>57</sup>Nancy Grey Osterud, "Gender and the Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *Agricultural History* 67, 2 (1993): 19-20.

<sup>58</sup>Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 2. Glenda Riley's book includes such states as Colorado and Wyoming in its analysis of Plains states,



demonstrated incredible independence, it was usually not by choice. One of Martha's entries stated, "Tilly's calf is dead, because I did not fix the calf house door or help to do it, but I'll go now and attend to it. I fixed the door and find that Fan's colt is missing."<sup>59</sup> Another entry stated, "Washed in the forenoon, plowed in afternoon."<sup>60</sup> Martha was not normally responsible for the care of the animals, nor did she usually plow. Necessity, rather than desire, typically forced these pioneer women into their unusual occupations and manual labor. Even though women were needed to fill clerking positions, they were not encouraged to work in unbecoming fields requiring manual labor that were better suited for men. Brigham Young asked women to help with the harvest only once, and even then he apologized for the request.<sup>61</sup> Beecher concluded that rather than a "merging of roles," there was a "tenacious clinging" to more standard gender roles in both the workforce and domestic duties.

Mary Neth brought children into the equation stating that children performed a wider variety of work, crossing gender lines when they were young and assuming more gender-related tasks as they made the transition into adulthood. The survival of the farm, however, was more important than who did what. Neth continued, "Children learned expectations and labor skills based on gender; they also learned an obligation to the farm

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but does not discuss Utah.

<sup>59</sup>Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, *Diary*, January 22, 1877, HBLI.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 3 June 1875.

<sup>61</sup>Brigham Young, 31 July 1854, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, 1854-86), 1:166 (cited hereafter as *JD*).

and family that superseded such definitions.”<sup>62</sup>

The Corays generally followed this division of labor, particularly during their time in Tooele. Martha recorded Howard’s working on the corral and moving the fence for their lot, while she washed, kept house, and Hattie, her second daughter, cooked. But Martha and her eldest son, Howard, worked on the fence closer to the home, the yard fence. On another occasion they all worked together to put up fencing and to plant trees, radishes, and lettuce.<sup>63</sup>

Preparing food alone must have been exhausting work for Martha. August and September of 1874 are bursting with entries about peaches. Martha and her children (and occasionally Howard) picked them, cut them, dried them, pickled and preserved them, and sold them, freestone and clingstone, by the bushel and the pound. She wrote in October “still picking peaches.” Certainly what she meant was “*Still* picking peaches!!!”<sup>64</sup> That process ended just in time for Martha to begin putting up pears and beans for the winter. Throughout these months Martha also mentioned apples, plums, tomatoes, making catsup, and acquiring and preserving a variety of other foods.

Although the work was difficult, the Corays were probably extremely grateful for the bounty. The Saints had previously suffered food shortages as insects destroyed their crops two different years. During such shortages even the younger Coray children were expected to contribute to the family’s food supply. Mary Coray Roberts recalled having

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<sup>62</sup>Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 19.

<sup>63</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 12-17 March 1856.

<sup>64</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 11 October 1874.

to take the younger children out to find wild onions to make a little stew, while the older children worked with the parents in the fields, attempting to beat off the crickets and protect what crops they could. Martha would also make tallow candles that the children would sell.<sup>65</sup> During this time the Coray family struggled to survive eating “sego lillies, watercress, wild onion, rabbits, and whatever else they could find.”<sup>66</sup> Although Martha was a strong woman, it was difficult to see her children go hungry. On one occasion Martha had gone out to a field to gather a little grain. After gleaning what she could, she returned home, ground the wheat, and cooked some bread. “When her children begged for another piece of this unpalatable food as for candy, she cried.”<sup>67</sup> During the grasshopper famine, food again became scarce. Martha knew of a man who had extra grain stored and asked if she could purchase some. The man refused. As Martha began to leave, she turned to him and said, “You will live to regret this, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.” He quickly changed his mind about the grain and called after her, “Come back Mrs. Coray. You can have it.”<sup>68</sup>

The years without famine brought more typical contributions from the children. The daughters helped cook and clean. The sons helped to mend fences and plough the fields. With so many small children, Martha was quite dependent upon the assistance of her older children. She recorded one day’s work in the garden writing, “3 girls dropped

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<sup>65</sup>Mary Eliza Noel, “Life of My Mother Mary Knowlton Coray Roberts,” Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>66</sup>Jennie N. Weeks and Inez S. Cooper, “Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” unpublished manuscript, Coray Family Papers, HBLL, 6.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 7.

seed. I held baby and tended Will.”<sup>69</sup> Later in her life, when her children were grown and independent, she noted in her diary, “I washed alone; the first time since Martha [her oldest daughter] was 12 years old.”<sup>70</sup>

The Corays’ time in Tooele was particularly difficult financially. While trying to establish a farm, Howard also taught school. Martha supplemented the family income with dairy products. She wrote, “Making cheese every day for several days. Sent Pa my first cheese and Mary Ann [Martha’s sister] 3 ½ lbs. butter.”<sup>71</sup> Women were typically responsible for such income-generating aspects of dairy production. And although the transition to capitalism marginalized many women’s earnings from butter, cheese, eggs, and poultry, Joan Jensen discovered that data from agricultural censuses as late as 1860 supported the conclusion “that income from sales of butter on small farms provided a significant addition to the income of farm families and a substantial potential for generating income through market trade.”<sup>72</sup> Martha used her dairy products in daily bartering to meet her financial obligations. She recorded giving butter to Mrs. Baldwin writing, “Weighed Baldwins butter 4 ½ lbs -put in MA’s jar 5 ¾ lbs took from the last 2 lbs tithing & 1 lb for Mrs. Baldwin which pays for Mrs. Baldwins rent up to this date. Some 2 ½ lbs butter still due her.” “Sent Sister Baldwins jar home with 5 ½ lbs. butters

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<sup>69</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary and Financial Accounts*, 1856, 21 April 1856.

<sup>70</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 1 July 1875.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 27 May 1856.

<sup>72</sup>Osterud, “Transition to Capitalism,” 20-22; Joan M. Jensen, *Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 193.



by our scales.”<sup>73</sup> Perhaps it partly through her efforts that Martha was able to write, “I am at last making bills.”<sup>74</sup>

Martha’s dairy production did not seem to be nearly as important to the family when they were on their ranch in Mona. She still churned butter and made cheese in the 1870s, but was more likely to make exchanges with beef or pork from an animal they recently slaughtered. She also used more cash or factory pay to settle debts.<sup>75</sup> During the 1870s, however, Martha engaged in more unusual work for women that generated cash rather than reciprocal obligations. That Martha changed her methods of contributing to the household economy in the 1870s is no large surprise. Joan Jensen notes that “as household production became unprofitable, women became either wage-workers or housewives.”<sup>76</sup> But such efforts, although significant, were again overshadowed in Martha’s diary by her daily chores.

Martha’s assistance to the corporate family economy was no doubt essential to the family’s survival. Martha’s daughter, Mary Coray Roberts, remembered growing up with “eight of us children, poor and destitute, . . . always looking forward to a time when in his mercy [God] would lift the cloud of darkness that shadowed our financial pathway. Eleven

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<sup>73</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 16-17 March 1856.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 22 February 1856.

<sup>75</sup>“Factory pay” was received when members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints worked in one of the many cooperative ventures that were a part of the United Order. In Martha’s case her factory pay most likely came from exchange or working in either the Provo Woolen Mills or producing soap for the 19<sup>th</sup> Ward Soap Factory.

<sup>76</sup>Joan Jensen, *Promise to the Land*, 203.

years passed on this way. Four more boys were added . . . .”<sup>77</sup> Mary recalled giving part of her “ration” of food to her younger siblings, growing weak and fainting as a result. She also taught school at age seventeen to help with the family income.<sup>78</sup> Wilson Howard Dusenberry, a nephew of Howard Coray and husband of his daughter Harriet, wrote of some business he had in common with his uncle and the poor economy in Utah. “Uncle and Warren are winding up our accounts. The whole town and country are in debt. We are getting a labarynth [*sic*] of exchange in our merchandise accounts. Are taking cattle. Heaven, where will it end.”<sup>79</sup> Financial difficulties seemed to never fully leave the Coray family. Even in 1880 Martha wrote, “. . . I hope [Pa] will get more suitable work before long and that pays him better.”<sup>80</sup>

Although the Coray family lived in poverty for several years, Martha’s daughter, Mary Knowlton Roberts, had fond memories of her childhood and of her mother’s efforts:

Eleven years passed on in this way . . . . [Mother was] untiring in her efforts to benefit and brighten the lives of her children, which she did in spite of the disadvantages she had to work against . . . . She sought to impress in us a trusting confidence that we would be rewarded, if not here, hereafter for our industry and faithfulness, . . . with her will, hope was cultivated and although deprived we did not despond.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Mary Coray Roberts, *Diary*, 28 February 1882; quoted in Daphne R. Hartle, Jennie N. Weeks, and Margaret Watkins, *Roberts Family: Connecticut to California* (Salt Lake City: published privately, 1965), 71.

<sup>78</sup>Hartle, Weeks, and Watkins, *Roberts Family*, 64.

<sup>79</sup>Wilson Howard Dusenberry, *Diary*, 13 February 1867 -20 April 1867, *passim*, typescript, *Daughters of the Utah Pioneers*, Salt Lake City, Utah, 22, 29.

<sup>80</sup>Martha Coray to Nellie Alexander, 9 November 1880.

<sup>81</sup>Mary Knowlton Roberts, *Diary*; as quoted in Jennie Weeks and Inez Cooper, “Martha Jane Knowlton Coray,” 7.

Mary P. Ryan stated that women's contributions to the corporate family economy generally applied to domestic duties and frugal money management. Ryan's account of family finances in Oneida County, New York, is dominated by the husbands. Women rarely received pay for their work, and if they did, it was usually absorbed by a husband or father. Ryan wrote, "Most Whitestown patriarchs assumed, first of all, that a wife's economic identity was fully incorporated into the family business." In addition, when families worked together in the factories, the patriarch usually collected everyone's paychecks even though separate accounts were kept for each individual working.<sup>82</sup> In fact, women held no legal title to anything produced by themselves. Under the English common law of coverture, woman's legal identity was transferred from father to husband after marriage. Thus female "ownership" of anything was unusual in the United States during this time period.<sup>83</sup>

This arrangement applied to the Coray family as well, although it is unclear if Howard instigated it or if it were merely part of the culture. The most obvious example of coverture in Martha's life occurred when Martha, with Howard's help, finished working on Lucy Mack Smith's biography of her son. Instead of Martha's receiving the money for her own work, the payment was made in Howard's name. A document dated 14 January 1846 and authorized by Bishop Newel K. Whitney settled the debt to the Corays: \$200 "For compiling the history of Lucy Smith, mother of the Prophet Joseph," and \$35 for transcribing it.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 27 and 46, respectively.

<sup>83</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 28, and Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 5, 21.

<sup>84</sup>Howard Coray's Bill Labor for Compiling and Transcribing Mother Lucy

Although Howard was the legal recipient for payment for Martha's work on the Smith manuscript, the Coray corporate family economy differed from the typical Eastern family's finances in other ways, and probably most families' in Utah as well. While we do not have any specific financial records for the Corays' time in Nauvoo, Martha had ownership of her income and made independent choices about its use in Utah. Martha wrote on 21 March 1874, "Went to the store, bought on my order 4 ½ yds dress stuff at 70 cents per yard. 3 yds of corded alpaca on Mr. Coray's order." This entry implies that Martha and Howard had separate financial accounts at various merchants. She also wrote on August 16, 1875, "I left home with \$35.00 of my own money; made good use of it. I now have \$2.50," indicating that Martha had her own funds and income. Even though Martha had some income of her own, she was not expected to support herself and her remaining dependent children on her own. Howard did give her items and funds from time to time, which Martha duly noted in her diary. Furthermore, Martha's purchases did not appear frivolous or self-centered. Her choices were still focused on the family's welfare. Perhaps if she had made poor choices, Howard would have interfered more directly in her finances.

Martha's 1853-56 diary did not tell of separate financial accounts; however, Martha did keep track of her expenses and noted when and for whom purchases were made.<sup>85</sup> She wrote of buying material for pants for Mr. Coray or ribbons for her daughters' hair. In addition, Martha paid for more products in kind. She measured out cheese or butter to pay her accounts. In the 1870s, Martha pursued activities outside the



home that could bring in a cash compensation; however, in the 1850s Martha had small children at home, which probably forced domestic production upon her. In fact, Martha had another child, Wilford, in 1856, and would have four more before completing her family in 1864.

Besides this difference in Martha's home responsibilities, territorial Utah was a much different place in the 1850s than it was in the 1870s. When Martha and Howard farmed in Tooele, they were on the frontier. The railroad had not yet come to Utah and although manufactured goods were available, they were more of a luxury due to poverty, scarcity within Utah, and the Corays' distance from retailers. In addition, there was little cash circulating in Utah's economy, necessitating payment in kind.<sup>86</sup> Thus, it is possible that Martha's detailed notation of in-kind payments to her neighbors and associates represented a certain level of financial responsibility and independence when any sort of financial independence would have been unusual for women in most parts of the United States during this time period.<sup>87</sup>

Martha's financial independence might be at least partially explained by the fact

<sup>85</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary and Financial Accounts, 1853-56*.

<sup>86</sup>Godfrey, Godfrey, and Derr, *Women's Voices*, 245.

<sup>87</sup>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has compared the economic and social life of early Utah to colonial Maine in her article, "The Significance of Trivia," *Journal of Mormon History*, 19, 1 (Spring 1993) : 52-66. Although I do take issue with some of her comparisons (see discussion in chapter one, 40) her description of economic forces is accurate for the first decade in territorial Utah. Thus, it is useful to discuss her work on colonial women. In "A Friendly Neighbor': Social Dimensions of Daily Work in Northern Colonial New England," Ulrich concluded that the typical household was not self-sufficient and that therefore "a good housewife was also of necessity a 'friendly neighbor'" as she traded and borrowed from other women in the community. She also noted that men viewed this "informal, oral, and local" trade done by women as "petty," but that it had significant value to the women and the community. (*Feminist Studies* 6, 2 [1980] : 39-42.)

that women in Utah had more legal rights than women elsewhere. An 1853 Utah law allowed women their own legal voice in court, and woman's suffrage increased their political and legal voice in the 1870s. In addition, relatively liberal divorce laws and complex polygamous marriage systems, by necessity, allowed some women to maintain ownership of property.<sup>88</sup> In fact, Martha's separate financial accounts could be explained to some degree by the Corays' participation in polygamy.<sup>89</sup> But even with these important legal differences for women, Marybeth Raynes still concluded that the typical Mormon family, monogamous or polygamous, was presided over by men. Males simply maintained the "balance of power" in Utah, holding resources and having a greater legal authority and higher standing in society. Raynes acknowledged that the wife had her realm of decision-making, but it was a lesser status.<sup>90</sup>

If Martha's financial independence were unusual, so was the fact that she kept records of it. Joan Jensen wrote, "Even among most Euro-American farm women, almost none had a system of books that analyzed home production."<sup>91</sup> Nancy Grey Osterud gives a plausible explanation for why records were rarely kept, stating that women rarely

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<sup>88</sup>An Act for the Regulation of Attorney, Section 1, February 18, 1852, *1851-1852 Laws of Utah*, as discussed in Madsen, "Sisters at the Bar," 217; and Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 217.

<sup>89</sup>Although the degree and length of the Corays' participation in polygamy remains in question, there might have been some financial implications. Jessie L. Embry wrote that in 88 percent of polygamous marriages, women and men shared the financial responsibility for raising the family and that 58 to 70 percent of the men were proprietors (ranchers and farmers). The families tried to be as self-sufficient as possible, and everyone was expected to contribute to the family economy. (Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families*, 90-95.)

<sup>90</sup>Marybeth Raynes, "Mormon Marriages," in *Sisters in Spirit*, 233.

<sup>91</sup>Jensen, *Promise to the Land*, 196.

assigned a market value to their labor. Osterud and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich give women's work another value, that of creating community through "reciprocal relationships of mutual aid."<sup>92</sup> Yet Martha was almost fastidious in her efforts, even keeping careful records of her church donations. One entry is particularly thoughtful.

I take from a little cheese hoop about 30 oz. of new milk cheese. I ascertain these facts from calculation. 1 Qt. of new milk gets 4 2/3 oz. cheese or about 11 1/2 oz. butter of ordinary new milk I also find that I have made about an average of 1 1/2 lbs of butter per for 3 weeks thus my tithing is 3 lbs. & 3 oz in the whole time. 3 lbs. pd see T [tithing] acct & 3 oz due on tithing.<sup>93</sup>

Even if Martha did assign a specific value to her domestic production, maintaining close relationships with those she bartered with would have been important. Dean L. May believed this sense of community actually diminished on the western frontier and that independence or a dependence on a relatively small group of individuals (perhaps extended family members or a few close neighbors) became more common. He argued that Utah was one of the few communities that maintained this sense of connection past the 1850s. He believed that the bartering and trading that occurred in cash-poor Utah helped to strengthen community ties. He wrote, "Informal borrowing and lending, characteristic of early Alpine [Utah] and Sublimity [Oregon], created unspecified feelings of future obligation and connection. Exchange mediated by cash and contracts, as in Middleton

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<sup>92</sup>Osterud, "Transition to Capitalism," 23. See also Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Housewife and Gadder: Themes of Self-Sufficiency and Community in Eighteenth Century New England," in *To Toil the Live Long Day: America's Women at Work, 1780-1980*, ed. Mary Beth Norton and Carol Groneman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 21-34.

<sup>93</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 20 May 1856. It is possible that Martha kept careful records, in part, to track what she owed for tithing. The Corays were likely more consciousness of their tithing obligations than the average Mormon due to Howard's 1852 employment as tithing clerk.



[Idaho], minimized such obligations.” As these community ties diminished, so did people’s connection to place. Consequently, Alpine was the only community that retained a significant percentage of the initial settlers’ posterity.<sup>94</sup> Joan Jensen argues that these support networks were preserved in other communities and even facilitated by other churches, but she does acknowledge that local transactions of bartering and trade continued to be essential in Territorial Utah much longer than market forces allowed elsewhere, due to Brigham Young’s isolationist policies.<sup>95</sup>

During the 1870s, Brigham Young encouraged women to acquire as much of their necessities as possible from within the Territory. His admonitions specifically included producing “home spun” cloth. In an act of faithfulness, many women began to raise silk worms. Mary Roberts recalled their own family’s efforts at “home spun.” “She and her sisters had a pet sheep. Once they sheared this sheep, washed and dyed the wool, spun thread, wove it into cloth, and then made themselves dresses, each sewing her own dress by hand as they had no sewing machine. They were very proud of those dresses and got many compliments on them.”<sup>96</sup> Although there were many success stories of women producing silk and other cloth, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher believed that, in general, these efforts were never very successful: most Utah women continued to purchase their cloth.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Dean L. May, *Three Frontiers*, 185.

<sup>95</sup>Jensen, *Promise to the Land*, 259; see also Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm*, 3.

<sup>96</sup>Mary Coray Roberts, *Memoirs told to Daphne Hartle, Jennie Noel Weeks papers*, HBLL.

<sup>97</sup>Beecher, “Women’s Work on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*



Joan Jensen supports Beecher's conclusion, stating, "By the 1870s, the price of yardage had dropped so low that store bought calico had begun to replace homespun everywhere, even in the remote areas of the Southwest. . . ." She continued, however, with the important exception that "manufactured rugs had not yet captured the national market, and surplus from local markets filled the void. Mormon women wove large quantities of rugs for sale in the 1880s."<sup>98</sup> Martha's children were probably all too aware that producing rugs at home was profitable. Her daughter, Hattie, wrote, "Has not this been an interesting week, school and carpet carpet and school till I get so out of patience I can hardly endure the sight of you."<sup>99</sup> Several weeks were spent by Martha, her daughter-in-law, Mary, Nellie, and even occasionally George working on carpet rags or weaving carpet.<sup>100</sup>

### *Childrearing:*

The Coray children were not always working, however. There is actually a great difference between the early memories of their children, which were most likely connected to their time in Tooele or their first year in Provo, and the later years in Provo. By the time Martha's and Howard's older children kept diaries of their own, court, and marry, the

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49, 3 (Summer 1981) : 284-285. Leonard Arrington held a very different interpretation of women's efforts, believing them to be quite significant in "The Economic Role of Pioneer Women," *Western Humanities Review*, 9 (1955) : 147-150.

<sup>98</sup>Jensen, *Promise to the Land*, 191-192.

<sup>99</sup>Harriet Virginia Coray, *Diary*, 30 January 1864, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>100</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 4 August 1873B13 December 1873; 28 December 1876B1 May 1877, *passim*.

Corays' lifestyle had a decidedly middle-class appearance. It should be no surprise that their middle-class lifestyle was coincident with greater prosperity and Howard's physical removal from the home for his work. It was during her time in Provo that Martha shared the greatest commonalities with "True Womanhood" notions of motherhood and domesticity. It is also evident, however, that these ideals were taken to Utah by Martha, for even as the family fought off poverty in Tooele, Martha was a good republican mother, instilling in her children values of honesty and industry.<sup>101</sup> Martha wanted the best for her children and had high expectations of their behavior.

According to her husband, Martha raised her children to be strictly honest at all times—a lesson her son, Howard, never forgot. Howard was the oldest child and took upon himself the role of protector for the other children. He was always trying to plan some fun treat for his siblings, particularly during periods of hardship. While playing with a neighbor boy one day, Howard noticed that his family was raising a nice crop of watermelons. Howard offered to trade his pocketknife for one of the melons. The deal was made, and Howard left with the melon. He decided to surprise his sisters so he "crept along behind screening brush wood and hid his melon in the water of an irrigation ditch where it would keep cool until ready for the surprise." The boy's father happened to see Howard sneaking along the water and promptly reported what he saw to Martha. She called Howard in to listen to the accusation of theft, after which she heard Howard's version. She then asked the man to call his son over to hear what he had to say. The pocket knife was produced, and Howard was exonerated. Martha's husband recalled that

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<sup>101</sup>Ryan's list of important traits lists honesty, industry, frugality, temperance, and self control. (*Cradle*, 161.)

“this man was abashed and did not meet the mother’s irate eyes, as she quietly remarked, ‘you should be more careful about jumping at conclusions especially when a boy’s honor is at stake.’”<sup>102</sup>

The moral education of children was a mother’s most important role. A few noticeable differences existed between Utah and Eastern families; however, the most prominent were theologically based. Northeastern women were taught that their piety made them the natural spiritual guardians of the home and, therefore, the most qualified to teach their children morality.<sup>103</sup> In Utah, however, Mormon men held the priesthood and were thus the spiritual leaders of the home. These men were encouraged to teach their families in their home, sharing the responsibility with their wives. Howard Coray was an ordained elder and an experienced missionary. As such he was well qualified to instruct his children on matters of morality and doctrine. There are several excerpts in Martha’s diary that tell of the children’s attending meetings with Howard; Martha was often sick and could not always accompany them.<sup>104</sup> Howard, like so many Mormon men, was more apt to attend meetings than his Protestant counterparts.

Martha sought to instill gentility in her children beyond their moral character and protected them from influences that she didn’t approve of. Mary Roberts remembered “hanging on the fence that was around their home, watching the children playing in the street and wishing she could get out and join them for her mother kept her children very

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<sup>102</sup>Edna Coray Dyer, “Incidents About Martha Coray Related by Grandfather Howard Coray.”

<sup>103</sup>See discussion in chapter one, 45-46.

<sup>104</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary and Financial Accounts*, 16 March 1856.

much to themselves.” Her daughter, Daphne, later concluded that this careful isolation was successful. She wrote, “Since her mother was on the first Board of Directors of the B.Y.U. and since the family was only allowed to associate with children of the best families, it is not surprising that Mary’s natural talents were encouraged and developed to a high degree.”<sup>105</sup> This memory indicates a class consciousness in Martha that resonates with the ideals of domesticity. Her role as a mother was to prepare her children for advantageous matches where their social position could be maintained.<sup>106</sup>

Martha also spent a great deal of energy educating her children. Again, she could not have fulfilled the prescriptive literature’s directives with more exactness. As the productive roles of children decreased with the family’s move to middle-class ideals, the mother as educator took on an increasingly important role.<sup>107</sup> But Martha was more qualified than most middle-class mothers to supervise her children’s education since she herself taught school. An important difference existed between the Coray family, however, and the middle-class families described by Ryan. In Oneida county, education was reserved mainly for the boys. Indeed, Ryan discovered that middle-aged, middle-class women, and occasionally their single adult daughters, sought employment in order to help support a son or brother at school. Thus the family focus was to secure the sons’ financial

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<sup>105</sup>Mary Coray Roberts, *Memoirs told to Daphne Hartle*.

<sup>106</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 180.

<sup>107</sup>Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 87. When the children were young, “education” generally referred to the formation of their character. Women were also expected to perform some teaching of skills, but it was also generally acknowledged that boys would have to receive formal schooling in order to prepare them to enter into the white collar work force. (Ryan, *Cradle*, 162-171.)



future through education.<sup>108</sup> The Coray family, however, bestowed education more equally among the sexes; the census records confirm that all of Martha's children attended school at some time in their lives.<sup>109</sup>

Although many of Martha's children did not spend long periods of time in school—George, was the exception, attending Cornell University—their educational progress was carefully noted in her journal. She recorded several different evenings where she and her family read or studied. She wrote, “Donny has read over 4 pages and spelled some.” “Donny read 6 pages and finished his book.” “George, Frank, and Lou started to school.” “Will and Sid began to study; got 5 parts of speech.”<sup>110</sup> But perhaps the journal entry, “All are studying very hard at arithmetic, every leisure hour,” is the most telling statement.<sup>111</sup>

These diary entries were written when the Coray family was homesteading in Mona. Thus they had lost much of the middle-class leisure that Howard's Provo employment had allowed for the children. They had actually regressed in their pursuit of middle-class status. Howard and Martha once again worked side by side with their children to ensure the family's successful acquisition of land. Consequently, education became more of a luxury; the Coray family now studied when they were at leisure to. Even with Martha's unusual dedication to education, most of her references to reading and studying in the 1870s are prefaced with something similar to “Deep snow fell all

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<sup>108</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 171-73.

<sup>109</sup>United States Census Records, Utah, 1850-1880, *passim*.

<sup>110</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 7-15 January 1875, *passim*.

<sup>111</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 6 December 1873.

day.”<sup>112</sup> The fact that studying occurred almost exclusively during times when the family was forced to stay indoors by the weather demonstrates that education was still considered second in importance to daily chores and survival.

Although a tension existed between the demands of daily living and her educational ideals, Martha continued to improve her own mind as well as nurturing her children’s interests. She wrote, “Nellie and George came from the city and brought my books; Walter Scott and Herodotus.”<sup>113</sup> Martha also attended singing school and theological classes. But a prescribed domestic ideology could not have been the sole impetus for her own studies; rather, her desire to continue learning reflected the values taught by Brigham Young and other Latter-day Saint leaders. Brigham Young said, “We should seek substantial information . . . . We should get wisdom by reading and by study. We should introduce the best books into our schools for the education and improvement of our children.”<sup>114</sup> Even though the Corays did not always enjoy the benefits of middle-class financial security, their children also demonstrated a commitment to the ideal of education. Three of Martha and Howard’s children married prominent Utah educators and one, George, became a professor at the University of Utah.<sup>115</sup> Her daughter, Martha Jane Coray Lewis, was lauded for her literary achievements, “having written a great deal.” She

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 16 January 1875.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 9 January 1875.

<sup>114</sup>*JD*, 9:369. A further discussion of education in Utah is found in chapter 3, pgs.

<sup>115</sup> Hattie married Wilson Howard Dusenberry, and both Martha Jane and Eppie married Theodore Beldon Lewis. For more information on these men, see chapter 1 footnote 89.

also assisted her husband, Theodore B. Lewis, with his work as an educator.<sup>116</sup>

In Provo, however, Howard's relative financial success allowed for some playtime for his children. Such non-productive childhoods were clearly part of the middle-class dream, but mothers were expected to use them to prepare their children for their future roles. When mothers in Oneida county asked about toys for their children, they were told to give their sons "hammers and hatchets," while daughters were to receive "dressing dolls" and other toys for the "mimicry of housekeeping."<sup>117</sup>

This directive is reflected in Mary Coray Roberts's memoirs. Mary remembered playing outside during the "first warm days of spring," gathering her playthings and spending "all the day long in placing and and [*sic*] arranging them to suit my childish fancy." She also remembered her bitter disappointment when, after going to bed "tired but Oh! so delighted" with her playthings only to awake in the morning, "and perhaps, find [her] precious store scattered over the yard by a cruel wind, and wet with rain that had fallen during the night." She would tearfully collect whatever she could find, "covered with mud, and [she] thought entirely ruined." Mary remembered how devastating such losses felt as a child writing, "I suppose I could not have felt worse if a fortune I had lost." But playtime didn't always have to imitate future roles. Mary fondly remembered the end of the molasses production each year. Her father would let the children make candy of the last batch and have a "candy pull."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>Poulter, "A Spiritual Life," 366-367.

<sup>117</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 161.

<sup>118</sup>Mary Coray Roberts, *Memoirs*, told to Daphne Hartle.

As the children grew older, there was sleigh riding or skating in the winter.<sup>119</sup> There were many walks and horse rides, but also more unusual activities such as attending a "show of pictures across the continent," a horse race, or the circus.<sup>120</sup> During their time in Provo, Howard and his sisters also spent several evenings playing games with their cousins, the Dusenberrys. Over the years they made a croquet ground, played euchre, old sledge and checkers, but the favorite game appeared to be chess.<sup>121</sup> Howard Knowlton Coray took the game over to his cousins' one evening. Wilson was quite taken with the new game, noting the successful completion of his "1<sup>st</sup> lesson in the intricate game." A few days later he wrote, "My 1<sup>st</sup> attempt at chess. It is a delightful game. Howard spent the day in telling me how to move." Wilson declared, "This chess is the most interesting game I ever saw."<sup>122</sup>

Other favorite activities were going to parties and balls. Mary and her sisters always looked forward to the three wonderful occasions of the year: the Fourth of July, the Twenty-fourth of July and Christmas when they were allowed to attend the ball. Much of Hattie and Wilson's courtship, particularly the misunderstandings, revolved around these dances.

In January 1867, Wilson invited Hattie to a ball; however, her father told her she could not go. Wilson decided to attend on his own and fiddle when he received a note from Hattie stating that "her Pa was only teasing her" and that she accepted the invitation.

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<sup>119</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 22-18 January 1875, *passim*.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 1 March 1876; 17 September 1875; 16 April 1878.

<sup>121</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 3 August 1876, 23 May 1877.

<sup>122</sup>Wilson Howard Dusenberry, Diary, 10-17 March 1867.



Wilson commented in his diary that "Uncle is common to such things."<sup>123</sup>

Whether or not Howard Coray was truly teasing his daughter could be debated. Ever the protective parents, he and Martha did not approve of the relationship between Wilson Dusenberry and Hattie. There was at least one earlier occasion when Hattie was not allowed to accept an invitation from her cousin. She wrote: "Cousin Wilson gave me a kind invitation to a party . . . . Pa said he was not willing for me to go his reasons were good so I submitted to better judgment and staid at home, although the natural inclination would have been to go." And although Wilson told Hattie he was going to be baptized in May, he did not accompany Hattie to any more balls until July 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>124</sup> The following evening he took a walk with Hattie, and the two must have discussed her parents' feelings about their relationship. He recorded in his diary, "Aunt says that I have no moral courage. I always thought differently."<sup>125</sup> Martha and Howard's concern regarding Wilson and Hattie's budding romance might have stemmed from Wilson's cautious decision to be baptized.<sup>126</sup> Just as it was important for middle-class families to ensure their children's marriage partners could maintain their class status, Mormon parents also

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 24 January 1864.

<sup>124</sup>Harriet Virginia Coray, *Diary*, 17 May 1863; Wilson Howard Dusenberry, *Diary*, 4 July 1863, in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, Kate B. Carter, ed. 1 (1957) : 236.

<sup>125</sup>Wilson Dusenberry, *Diary*, 5 July 1863, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 236.

<sup>126</sup>The Dusenberry family had a conflicted view of the church. Aurilla, Wilson's mother and Howard Coray's sister, joined the church, but her husband remained antagonistic towards it. The sons were careful about their choice of religion and were eventually baptized in 1864. Wilson, however, had been critical of Brigham Young and of some sermons delivered by apostles which might have left Howard and Martha wary of his commitment. (See Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young: A School of Destiny* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976], 31-39).

wished for their children to marry a faithful member of their church.

This desired family structure came from a belief held by both Protestant groups and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that emphasized family unity by borrowing the patriarchal order of the Old Testament in the Abrahamic Covenant.<sup>127</sup> Once Eastern Protestant groups adopted this attitude, they focused on maintaining family unity within their church without losing any family members to the various competing religions. Joining the Mormon church, however, often had the opposite effect. Mormon theology frequently aroused volatile reactions from family members of other faiths, which sometimes created permanent rifts in family relationships. Furthermore, because Mormons gathered together, family groups were often separated both ideologically and geographically. Following baptism, however, the converted members of the LDS Church maintained strong family units within their religious community, only marrying others who were members of the LDS faith. Wilson Dusenberry's untried membership in the church might have made Martha and Howard wary of his interest in their daughter.

Wilson eventually won the approval of Martha and Howard and married Hattie. Through a variety of occupations, Wilson was able to provide adequately for his new bride and the children that came to their family.<sup>128</sup> But even as her children married or otherwise struck out on their own, Martha continued to worry over them. After receiving news that her younger sons' horses had either died or broken their legs she wrote,

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<sup>127</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 68. See previous discussion of patriarchy and the Abrahamic Covenant in chapter one, 29-37.

<sup>128</sup>Wilson Howard Dusenberry and his brother, Warren, were always involved in education in Provo. Wilson also ran a general store, the post office, and was a telegraph clerk at various times.

I cannot suppress a feeling of deep regret not so much for horses for I don't love horses affectionately But to think how Will and Don felt when he found his pride Bess –and then one after another till at last Greely must break his confounded legs. I could go to their skeletons now and beat their bones. I am glad they have Mell and Keyser and hope the Boys will be able to keep horses enough with the little lame mare to ride if they want to. What sort of place is that so likely to break all horses legs?<sup>129</sup>

Regarding Howard's wife, Mary, she wrote, "Tell your Mary I am sorry she can't have a garden but she will have 2 in one next year."<sup>130</sup> About her daughter Mary and her husband she wrote, "I am always so happy to get those 3 words 'We are all well.' I am glad too that they have found all they hoped for. . . ."<sup>131</sup> In another letter Martha scolded her children for not writing her. She wrote, "I think you are very much to blame, both you and Sidy for not writing me and telling me how you get along. . . . Why would you keep me in such suspense?" She told them if they are doing a lot they should write; if they are doing a little they should write. "If you have the small Pox and the mare are sick with the Eppizootic still let me know, for when I don't hear from you I cannot help in fearing the worst."<sup>132</sup>

Parenting tactics were the area of greatest common ground between territorial Utah and Eastern patterns of domestic life. In both cases the mother was the nurturer, and the parents worked together to provide the best life possible for their children. Martha's

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<sup>129</sup>Martha Coray to Howard Knowlton Coray, Provo, 21 February 1881, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Martha Coray to Howard Knowlton Coray, date unknown, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>132</sup>Martha Coray to Howard Knowlton Coray, Mona, 7 February 1879, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

diary contains a familiar maternal wish when, upon her return from visiting two of her married, polygamist daughters, she wrote “found the family very despondent. –I left them feeling why Dear Lord cannot a mother have power to help her children to the means of a livelihood [*sic*].”<sup>133</sup> Because mothers invested so much of their lives in their children, they often found themselves more closely connected with their children than with their husbands.<sup>134</sup> This was particularly true of polygamous marriages if the husband were often absent, but traces of this can also be seen in Martha’s relationship with Howard even though the marriage was functionally monogamous. On one occasion Howard sent word each day for three consecutive days that he would return home that day, but he didn’t return until the fourth. Martha noted this in her journal without any apparent concern. Yet when her adult children were a day late returning from a visit to other siblings, she wrote, “Nellie and George did not come home and I shall wonder until they do, and I learn why they did not.”<sup>135</sup> Other entries are similar: “My heart aches –I am lonely for my children.”<sup>136</sup> “George went home this morning. God bless him and give him health, good nature, patience, wisdom and success.”<sup>137</sup> “Nellie and boys are talking of leaving and I am nearly sick over it.”<sup>138</sup> “We sat piously by the stove and wondered how the children were

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<sup>133</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 20 November 1873.

<sup>134</sup>Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 90; Ryan, *Cradle*, 158-60, 175; Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 5.

<sup>135</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 19-22 May 1856, and 8 January 1875, respectively.

<sup>136</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 25 August 1875.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, 24 February 1876.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*, 4 March 1876.



in their various vexatious conditions –till Pa went to feed and I read Job.”<sup>139</sup> On another evening Nellie left to go to her own house and Martha wrote, “How I miss her presence from the home.”<sup>140</sup>

The implications of the Abrahamic Covenant also had other effects on LDS society. Abraham’s promise that he would have posterity as numerous as the sands of the sea was used to emphasize large family units both in monogamous and polygamous marriages. As the number of children per man was decreasing in Oneida County, it was increasing in Utah.<sup>141</sup> Martha had twelve children, of whom one died as an infant, while elsewhere her middle-class counterparts were averaging 3.6.<sup>142</sup>

*Conclusion:*

Martha Coray’s words and the memoirs of her husband and children indicate that she held many ideals in common with her northeastern sisters. A good part of Martha’s life focused on instilling morality and gentility in her children. Although Martha would not have articulated her familial goals in the same terms as Ryan, she clearly strove to achieve a middle-class status for her children, even though her financial situation did not always warrant such a claim on society. But beyond Martha’s manners and morals were the pursuits of domesticity common to women of all classes, that is the “highly significant” acts of sewing, washing clothes, preparing meals, preserving food, and the other tedious

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 21 January 1877.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 19 November 1873.

<sup>141</sup> See Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families*, 33; Ryan 155-7, 249.

<sup>142</sup>Ryan, *Cradle*, 156.

and common events of everyday life. These duties consumed even more of her life when her children were young. And like other frontierswomen, the majority of the domestic duties fell to Martha while the bulk of the heavy, outdoor labor was done by Howard.

Martha's life slipped back and forth between the worlds of a white-collar clerk, teacher, or merchant's wife and a farmer's wife, but this incongruity in Martha's life more aptly demonstrates the complexities of life for women in Utah. Mormons' wealth disappeared through repeated persecutions and moves, and financial stability on the frontier could be as much a matter of luck as industry. Martha lived under frontier conditions, forcing her to occasionally perform tasks that would be associated with the male gender. Furthermore, during years where the family's survival was literally questioned due to plagues, famine, or other conditions, Martha and the children assumed a more pro-active role in acquiring food and other goods through producing and selling candles or scavenging for wild roots.

The Corays' acceptance of and complete adherence to Latter-day Saint theology also impacted their life. Their family structure was altered through polygamy. Howard was involved in the religious instruction of the family to a larger degree than most of his Eastern male counterparts, and Martha enjoyed greater political, economic, and occupational freedom than women in the Eastern United States. Functionally, however, the family unit was not extremely different; Mormon women still held to traditional gender roles. Thus, Martha remained focused on her home and family, but her ability to contribute economically was greatly enhanced by frontier conditions and theological beliefs that elevated women on both an ideological level and through practical necessity. The contradictions of Mormonism did not create radically different social responsibilities

for men and women, but they did alter women's domestic lives in Utah and Mormons' interpretation of their assigned roles.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### GENTILE ENCROACHMENT AND GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN THE MORMON VILLAGE

The conclusion of the Civil War initiated a period of great social change throughout the United States. States rights and the slavery question had consumed the interests of Congress during the greater part of the nineteenth century. The abolitionist movement also engaged the energy of most activists, resulting in the neglect of other social issues, such as woman's rights. But the woman's movement was not to be put off indefinitely. Following the Civil War, women's rights activists asserted that it was now their turn to be liberated from the gender oppression that existed in the United States, and the movement gained momentum from this time forward. Women's suffrage became the focus of the movement, which also advocated education, establishment of political and legal identity, and greater occupational choice for women. The national movement was largely unsuccessful in obtaining its goals during the nineteenth century, yet women in territorial Utah, such as Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, who were generally considered victims of male oppression, were enjoying many of the privileges for which women elsewhere were fighting.

It is important to note, however, that public life was not always the domain of Latter-day Saint women. Although they claimed spiritual gifts from the earliest days of the church and an organization of their own, the Relief Society, women's roles had remained fairly traditional during the first twenty years of life in territorial Utah. It wasn't until the 1870s that Mormon women began to awaken to their potential.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jill Mulvay Derr agreed with Leonard J. Arrington's observation that 1867 marks the beginning of women's transition into public life in "Brigham Young and the Awakening of Mormon Women in the 1870's," in *Lion of the Lord: Essays of the Life*



This expansion of women's roles occurred simultaneously with several changes taking place in Utah. Congress was intensifying its attack upon plural marriage, the federal land office was finally opened in Salt Lake City, forcing new settlement patterns upon the Saints, the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, ending the Saints' isolation, and Protestant churches sent missionaries to Utah to convert the Saints to more acceptable faiths. Each event was perceived as a potential threat to the Kingdom, which Brigham Young and the Saints had been working diligently to establish in the desert.<sup>2</sup>

Anticipating the difficulties to come, the School of the Prophets was reorganized in 1867 to respond to new needs.<sup>3</sup> This group became "a confidential forum of leading high priests who discussed religious doctrines, economic policies, and political

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*and Service of Brigham Young*, eds. Susan Easton Black and Larry Porter (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1995), 313.

<sup>2</sup>James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter Day Saints*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 329; Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958; reprinted Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press co-published with the Tanner Trust Fund, 1993), 244.

<sup>3</sup>The School of the Prophets was originally organized in Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph Smith received the revelation to begin the school December 27, 1832, in which he was commanded to "study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people." (Doctrine and Covenants 90:15) The directive to hold the school in the temple, once it was completed, indicated that the school was to serve as a spiritual preparation for missionaries as well as a temporal preparation. "The School of the Prophets established divisions for secular education as well as theology classes, and participants discussed current issues and signs of the times along with the doctrines of the kingdom." (See Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter Day Saints*, 106-107.) The school in Utah, however, more closely resembled the Council of Fifty, which had been used as an important tool for shaping economic policy during the first decade in territorial Utah. The principal school consisted of more than 900 adult male leaders, while approximately 5000 others belonged to branch schools and were led by the First Presidency and other general authorities. These schools resembled town meetings "of leading high priests in which theology, church government, and problems of church and community were discussed and appropriate action taken." A sort of membership card was required for entrance into the meetings, and the subjects of the meetings were confidential. The school was disbanded in 1872 when the new economic programs had been enacted. (Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 245.)

problems.” During the October General Conference that year church leaders emphasized the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, the Deseret Alphabet and education, women’s learning new skills, men’s improving their farms, building the Salt Lake Temple, and settling southern Utah.<sup>4</sup> Minutes from their meetings also confirm that the priesthood brethren were instructed on the proper procedures to be followed when applying for patents at the land office.<sup>5</sup> At this same conference it was announced that the 1867 reorganization of the Relief Society was to further the saints’ economic independence and cultural isolation.<sup>6</sup>

The Coray family found their lives affected by these changes and responded to the call to arms. Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, who once spent her days combing children’s hair, cooking, and cleaning, found herself with extra time as her adult children began to assume many of her daily chores. She used that time in the battle to preserve the Latter-day Saints’ independence. Once the Utah legislature passed women’s suffrage, Martha became involved in local politics and voted in elections.<sup>7</sup> As women’s legal identity increased in Utah, Martha represented her family and others in legal matters, receiving

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<sup>4</sup>Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter Day Saints*, 338. See also *Journal of Discourses* (hereafter cited as *JD*), 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1855-1886), 12:138-148, 175-179.

<sup>5</sup>See footnote 6 in Lawrence B. Lee, “Homesteading in Zion,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 28 (January 1960) : 30, which lists the following sources, “Minutes of the School of the Prophets,” *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (hereafter *JH*), March 20, 1869, April 24, 1869, May 8, 1869, in Church Historian’s office, Salt Lake City; “Minutes of the School of the Prophets Held in Parowan 1868-1872,” May 29, 1869, September 17, 1870, typescript, in Utah State University Library, Logan; *Millennial Star* 30 (1868) : 91.

<sup>6</sup>*JH*, October 8, 1867 in Leonard J. Arrington, “The Economic Role of Pioneer Women,” *Western Humanities Review* 9 (1955) : 147.

<sup>7</sup>For more information on woman suffrage in Utah, see Carol Cornwall Madsen, ed. *Battle for the Ballot: Essays on Woman Suffrage in Utah, 1870-1896* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University, 1997).

payments for her efforts. When the land office opened, Martha held property in her own name, and her daughter, Nellie, homesteaded. As the Mormon community's economic isolation was threatened by the transcontinental railroad, the Coray family responded by producing liniments, oils, and soap in an effort to preserve Utah's self-sufficiency. When Protestant schools and federal intervention threatened the Mormons' fusion of sacred and secular learning, Martha was asked to participate in the founding of an academy dedicated to the promotion of Mormon educational ideals.

Women's roles have been expanded in the United States during periods of crisis, such as the Great Depression and the World Wars.<sup>8</sup> Essentially the 1860s initiated a period of crisis for the Latter-day Saints. As Jill Mulvay Derr has noted, the Mormons adopted a war-like mentality to protect their way of life, "and the draft was to be without regard for sex."<sup>9</sup>

The Corays were willing foot soldiers in this religious battle; Martha in particular expanded her occupations in response to community and family needs. Her exceptional accomplishments do not represent the average woman in territorial Utah, but they do represent the political, legal, economic, and educational opportunities given to women in Utah.

#### *Federal Intervention:*

During the Civil War the Mormons had been granted a temporary reprieve from governmental intrusion. Although the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act was signed into law in 1862 by President Abraham Lincoln, he indicated that he did not intend to expend any effort enforcing the bill. He responded with an analogy from his childhood on the farm.

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<sup>8</sup>Joan M. Jensen, *Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>9</sup>Derr, "Brigham Young and the Awakening," 322.



While clearing away timber on their farm, his family occasionally came across a log that was “too hard to split, too wet to burn, and too heavy to move,” so they simply plowed around it. That became the essence of his policy toward the Mormons. He said, “You go back and tell Brigham Young that if he will let me alone I will let him alone.”<sup>10</sup>

Lincoln’s good will toward the saints was uncommon among his Republican colleagues. Throughout the latter half of the 1860s several other bills designed to eradicate polygamy were introduced in Congress; the Cullom Bill of 1870 came closest to passing. In addition to the constant threat of new laws being passed, President Ulysses S. Grant adopted a get tough policy towards the Mormons during his term in office and sent new federal appointees to Utah to enforce the laws that the Mormons had been successfully avoiding.

As the Cullom Bill was debated before Congress, the saints began a defensive strategy at home, which included increasing women’s political and legal identity. Congress had entertained the notion that perhaps if the women in Utah were given the right to vote, they would take the lead in ending polygamy. No action was taken at the national level, but the Utah legislature, which held a much different opinion of what Mormon women would do with the vote, passed a bill that gave women the right to vote on February 12, 1870.<sup>11</sup> A newspaper in Missouri noted the irony that “Utah’s social

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<sup>10</sup>As quoted in George U. Hubbard, “Abraham Lincoln as Seen by the Mormons,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1963) : 103.

<sup>11</sup>For a complete text of the bill, see Edward W. Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), 498. The legislature’s motive for granting women’s suffrage has been debated. Even Tullidge is inconsistent with his opinion. On page 498 of *Women of Mormondom* he insisted that the vote was not given to women for the purpose of combating anti-polygamy legislation. Yet in an earlier article written by Tullidge he accused Brigham Young of giving women the vote entirely for his own political purposes. In this same article Tullidge expressed a disappointment that the Mormon women had continued to support polygamy, but noted that woman’s suffrage could only ever be viewed as a good thing. It should also be noted, however, that Tullidge wrote this criticism of Brigham Young when he was a member of a schismatic group named the Godbeites that particularly opposed polygamy. See Edward Wheelock



system [polygamy] seems to have been the lock and key by which women have at last entered into the wider, nobler sphere for which they have prayed and worked.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, as the anti-polygamy crusades heated up at the national level during the 1870s, Mormon women found themselves with political identity.

Suffrage and woman’s rights issues were met with mixed feelings by the women of the LDS community, although they were generally supported. Sarah M. Kimball was enthusiastic about her new right and privilege. She “had waited patiently a long time, and now that [they] were granted the right of suffrage, she would openly declare herself a woman’s rights woman, and called upon those who would do so to back her up, whereupon many manifested their approval.”<sup>13</sup> Mrs. M.T. Smoot was a little more hesitant when she said, “Woman’s rights have been spoken of. I have never had any desire for more rights than I have. I have not considered politics aside from the sphere of woman; but, as things progress, I feel it is right that we should vote, though the path may be fraught with difficulty.”<sup>14</sup> Some women were concerned that woman’s rights did not coincide with Latter-day Saint doctrine and had waited patiently for Brigham Young’s approval to move forward with their political goals. Mrs. Wilmarth East said, “I desire to be on the safe side and sustain those above us; but I cannot agree with Sister Smoot in

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Tullidge, “William H. Hooper, the Utah Delegate and Female Suffrage Advocate,” *The Phrenological Journal and Life Illustrated* 5 (November 1870): 328-333. For more information regarding the Godbeites, see Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998). Carol Cornwall Madsen further explores possible motives for passing woman suffrage in Utah Territory in her “Introduction,” in *Battle for the Ballot*, 6-7; see also T. A. Larson, “Dolls, Vassals, and Drudges—Pioneer Women in the West,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 3 no. 1 (Jan. 1972) : 10-12.

<sup>12</sup>Carol Cornwall Madsen, “‘Sisters at the Bar’: Utah Women in Law,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 61 (Summer 1993) : 219.

<sup>13</sup>Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 502.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 504.

regard to woman's rights. I have never felt that woman had her privileges. I always wanted a voice in the politics of the nation, as well as to rear a family."<sup>15</sup>

Even before women's suffrage passed the territorial legislature, Utah women organized on January 13, 1870, to protest the United States government's intrusion into their religious lives through anti-polygamy legislation. Of particular note are the twin themes of absolute adherence to the LDS church and its religious tenets and the abhorrence at being termed victims of their religion. When Eliza R. Snow spoke to the crowd of approximately six thousand women, she particularly emphasized that she *chose* to believe in the restored gospel and follow the priesthood leadership. She also forcefully asserted that she had a *right* for her feelings and those of other women to be known to the world:

Our enemies pretend that, in Utah, woman is held in a state of vassalage – that she does not act from choice, but by coercion – that we would even prefer life elsewhere, were it possible for us to make our escape. What nonsense! . . . Were we the stupid, degraded, heartbroken beings that we have been represented, silence might better become us; but as women of God, women filling high and responsible positions, performing sacred duties – women who stand not as dictators, but as counselors to their husbands, and who, in the purest, noblest sense of refined womanhood, are truly their helpmates – we not only speak because we have the right, but justice and humanity demand that we should.<sup>16</sup>

Gaining the vote was the beginning of a period of increased awareness of women's rights issues in Utah. Whether obtaining political power initiated, was a consequence of, or merely coincided with this awakening cannot be determined, but the change in acceptable occupations for women is unmistakable. Those advocating education for women and other changes in a gender-stratified world voiced their opinions through the *Woman's Exponent*, a newspaper owned and operated by women from 1872

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 390, 392.

to 1914. Judith Rasmussen Dushku noted the clear feminist voice in the *Exponent* when she wrote, "The *Exponent* exemplified the three defining qualities of feminism in any age: a desire to encourage women to speak for and to women, a sense of injustice and inequality of opportunity, and conviction of the absolute equality of the sexes."<sup>17</sup> In 1877, editor Emmeline B. Wells wrote in the *Exponent*, "Woman feels her servitude, her degradation, and she is determined to assert her rights."<sup>18</sup> But the paper was also careful to promote family values and warned against the "dangerous excesses" in the woman's movement, citing attacks upon "the family circle, filial love, parental care, and fraternal care" as examples of undesirable and radical thought. Other articles continued to extol the virtues of motherhood and the importance of giving domestic duties their proper attention.<sup>19</sup>

Martha Coray shared these women's interest in maintaining her rights both as a Mormon and as a woman. She supported the *Exponent* through a personal subscription and was the newspaper's representative for the Nephi/Mona area, soliciting other subscriptions. Martha also contributed to the *Exponent*, although her articles had little to do with specifically female topics.<sup>20</sup> Martha was aware of female politics, however, as is

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<sup>17</sup>Judith Rasmussen Dushku, "Feminists," in *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, ed. Claudia Bushman, new ed. with a foreword by Anne Firor Scott (Cambridge: Emmeline Press, 1976; Logan Utah: Utah State University Press, 1997), 181.

<sup>18</sup>Emmeline B. Wells, editorial, *Woman's Exponent*, 6 (1 July 1877) : 20.

<sup>19</sup>For further reading on the *Exponent* see Shannon Carr, "The *Woman's Exponent*: A Voice for Woman's Duality" (490 senior seminar paper, Brigham Young University, March 1997, in author's possession.); Sherilyn Cox Bennion, *Equal to the Occasion: Women Editors of the Nineteenth-Century West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1990).

<sup>20</sup>Two articles in the *Woman's Exponent* have been found that can be confidently attributed to Martha Coray. The first, entitled "Matter and Spirit," emphasized the natural laws that control the matter on this earth. Martha extended that known scientific fact to man as well, stating that God also placed laws that guide man's existence that cannot be changed. Thus man can only be saved by living in obedience to laws that God has given him. In the second article entitled, "Education and Occupation," Martha



demonstrated by a diary entry in which she states, “sent article to Cincinnati [*sic*] Commercial on Woman’s Rights. And offering to write for their paper.”<sup>21</sup> She also performed her civic duty regarding elections. On February 9, 1874, she voted in the city election. A few years later she recorded getting “170 election and 500 hand bills,” and again a few months later, “all went to election.”<sup>22</sup>

Political voice and legal rights were both essential to preserving the rights of the Latter-day Saints. Prior to the Mormons’ arrival in Utah they had been forced from their homes on four occasions. Although they had sought legal recourse in response to the persecution they had endured, they were given little aid or justice. Joseph Smith and other followers had been unlawfully imprisoned as well. Such experiences made Brigham Young and other Mormons suspicious of lawyers and courts.

Two specific actions were taken in Utah in order to protect the Mormons in the judicial process. First, probate courts, where judges were elected by the Mormon people, were given greater jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup> Second, in order to protect themselves from attorneys, a statute was passed in Territorial Utah in 1852 regulating attorneys that entitled anyone, man or woman, to represent *himself or herself* in court (emphasis added). Utah citizens were also given the option of choosing anyone of good moral character to represent them.<sup>24</sup> The language of this law, specifically the use of the female pronoun,

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advocated providing the education, skills, and opportunities necessary to the healthy, but indigent, members of society so that they could enjoy the privilege of working for what they consume. She believed that this would increase their morale and rid the community of many unnecessary problems. See M. I. Coray, and M.J.C. in the *Woman’s Exponent*, 5:102 and 9:106, respectively.

<sup>21</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 17 January 1878, Coray Family Papers, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo (hereafter HBLL).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 9 February 1874, 5 August 1876, and 7 November 1876, respectively.

<sup>23</sup>See my discussion of the Utah court system in chapter one, 17-18.

<sup>24</sup>An Act for the Regulation of Attorney, Section 1, February 18, 1852, *1851-1852 Laws of Utah* 55, as discussed in Madsen, “Sisters at the Bar,” 217.



significantly improved women's ability to participate in Utah's legal profession. Women enjoyed an elevated legal status in Utah that was rare for the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Following the Civil War, women were just beginning to officially enter the legal profession, but obstacle after obstacle prevented them from being included in the profession.<sup>26</sup> The first woman was admitted to a state bar in 1869, when an Iowa judge swore in Arabella Mansfield. A year later, Ada Kepley became the first woman to graduate from a law school (the Union College of Law, now Northwestern), but she was not allowed to use her degree. A 1923 letter to the editor of the *American Bar Association Journal* stated, "In no profession have women had more prejudice to overcome than in the greatest of all the learned professions, the law."<sup>27</sup> In Utah, however, the legal identity and political voice came more easily than for women elsewhere. Under Brigham Young's watchful eye, women were allowed, and sometimes encouraged, to enter into a wide range of occupations, including the three "learned professions," of law, medicine, and higher education. Women throughout the United States and her territories were engaging in these learned occupations, frequently in larger numbers than Utah women. The difference, however, lies in the Mormon leadership's willingness to encourage women to enter non-traditional fields.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>It is acknowledged by historians and women attorneys that Western attitudes were generally more liberal towards women lawyers than attitudes held by Easterners. (Kelly D. Weisberg, "Barred from the Bar: Women and Legal Education in the United States, 1870-1890," *Journal of Legal Education* 28 (1977) : 497-98, 501; Madsen, "Sisters at the Bar," 215.)

<sup>26</sup>Prior to 1869, many women had previously worked with their husbands or fathers in legal practices either as clerks or researchers, but none had obtained a license to practice on their own. See Madsen, "Sisters at the Bar," 212.

<sup>27</sup>"Letters of Interest to the Profession: Woman Attorneys," *American Bar Association Journal* 9 (January 1923): 62.

<sup>28</sup>Women held a variety of jobs in the West, many domestic in nature, which were seen as an extension of traditional gender roles. Many women who helped with the family business were unpaid laborers and their occupations were overlooked by census

The first women were admitted to the Utah bar in 1872. According to the minutes taken in court that day, their induction was not a struggle, nor were they un-welcomed by their associates, starkly contrasting with the experiences of other women during this time period trying to gain admittance to the bar. The court recorder wrote the details of the event with Chief Justice James B. McKean presiding and Governor George L. Woods in attendance. After Phoebe W. Couzins' presentation to the court by the governor, the court replied,

It has been said by a learned writer that law is the refinement of reasoning. Perhaps it is natural to infer that those who have the most refinement ought to be very clear, perhaps intuitive reasoners. Certainly no gentleman of this bar would deny that, in social life, woman's influence is refining and elevating. May we not hope that the honorable profession of the law may be made even more honorable by the admission of the women to the bar. It strikes us as a novelty, gentlemen, but everything in the line of progress is, at some time or other, a novelty. I very cheerfully admit Miss Couzins to this bar, and gentlemen, I present to you our sister at the bar."<sup>29</sup>

Immediately following the admission of Phoebe W. Couzins, a motion was made for Miss Georgie Snow to be admitted to the bar also. After the necessary examination was made, Miss Snow was also sworn in as an attorney.<sup>30</sup>

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takers. School teacher and prostitute were also common female occupations in the West. (See Glenda Riley, *A Place to Grow: Women in the American West* [Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992], 164-176; Michael Bargo, "Women's Occupations in the West in 1870," *Journal of the West* 32 no. 3 (1993) : 30-45.

<sup>29</sup>Kate B. Carter, ed., "The Year of 1872: Women Admitted to the Utah Bar," *Our Pioneer Heritage* 16 (1973) : 26. Of course, it should not be assumed that Judge McKean represented the feelings of all men in Utah, particularly since he wasn't Mormon.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 27. Miss Snow was the daughter of the attorney general of the Territory of Utah during this time and had learned the law from him. In the court's enthusiasm to admit another woman to the bar, they almost ignored the required examination. Judge McKean, however, reminded them of the necessity stating, "Some young incompetent gentleman might apply here and plead that as a precedent in his case, and so place the court in the embarrassing position of appearing to have one rule for one sex and another rule for the other sex." (*Ibid.*, 27.) Georgie Snow was probably helping her father with

Kelly Weisberg discussed several reasons why women encountered difficulty entering the legal profession. The most common obstacle women faced was a legal interpretation that nouns and pronouns such as *man, mankind, he, him, and himself* were indeed specifically male and not universal; they therefore restricted women from accessing common law on their own. While these obstacles hampered progress in many states and precluded Belva Ann Lockwood from pleading a case before the Supreme Court, they did not cause the same difficulties in Utah.<sup>31</sup>

As the 1852 Utah statute indicates, regulations regarding legal representation in Utah were much more fluid than elsewhere. This permitted anyone who did not have admittance to the bar to represent himself or herself and others in court. Martha Jane Knowlton Coray took advantage of the language used in the statute. Her diaries and other personal records indicate a knowledge of the law and an active participation in legal pursuits. A letter to Brigham Young discussed the possibility of acquiring patent rights for a specialized method of producing salt.<sup>32</sup> Martha also wrote to a firm in New York to see about patenting some of her homemade liniments and oils.<sup>33</sup> She was assigned to the committee on rules and by-laws as part of her appointment to the board of trustees at Brigham Young Academy. She recorded on the 16 and 18 March 1876, "I saw Wilson about school law," and "Bp. Smoot kindly sent me the law for schools." In addition to

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his law practice at least as far back as 1864 as indicated by Hattie (Martha's daughter): "The Court set [*sic*] today. Georgie Snow did not come with her father, we expected she would." (Harriet Virginia Coray, Diary, 5 March 1864, LDS Church Archives.)

<sup>31</sup>Julia Davis, "Belva Ann Lockwood: Remover of Mountains," *American Bar Association Journal* 65 (June 1979): 927. Women lawyers found less discrimination in general in the West. See Madsen, "Sisters at the Bar," 215, and Weisberg, "Barred From the Bar," 498.

<sup>32</sup>Martha Coray to Brigham Young, January 16, 1876, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>33</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, June 17, 1876 -June 20, 1876.



these interactions with the law, Martha also held power of attorney for others and went to court on their behalf.

One particular court case that occupied a significant portion of her time was recorded by Martha. While the details of the case are unclear, Martha wrote enough to help form an understanding of both the case and her knowledge of the law. In the spring of 1873, Martha prepared for a trip to Provo and wrote of her intention to visit a Mrs. Gorley while there.<sup>34</sup> She and her husband ran a few other errands while they were in town, but the main order of business for Martha appeared to be meeting with Mrs. Gorley. Since Martha and Howard had lived in Provo about fifteen years prior to their 1872 move to Mona, there is every reason to assume that Mrs. Gorley and Martha had a prior acquaintance and that Mrs. Gorley was aware of Martha's interests and abilities in the law. Before coming home from Provo, Martha "contracted" with Mrs. Gorley for her services.<sup>35</sup> Martha wrote in her diary a few days later, "I here make this minute that I have . . . agreed to look into the Gorley case, and if I find it adviseable try for a new— action on Mrs. G.'s dowery and Samuel Ferris's claims in Chicago."<sup>36</sup> Although it is not immediately obvious that Mrs. Gorley's interests are connected with those of Samuel Ferris, it quickly becomes almost certain that they are.

Mrs. Gorley and several members of the Ferris family appeared to be settling an estate that involved both property and dependents. Two boys, George and Jim (James), seemed to be at the center of the controversy; the land issue appeared to be settled with less conflict. In the course of the settlement, Martha went to the courthouse several

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<sup>34</sup>Mrs. Gorley's name was not spelled with any consistency by Martha. In the diary it also appeared as *Gorly* and *Gourly*. I have chosen to use *Gorley* throughout this paper.

<sup>35</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, 23 April 1873 and 26 April 1873. The fact that Martha contracted with Mrs. Gorley also affirms women's legal identity in Territorial Utah.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 28 April 1873.



times. On one trip she found record of 40 acres of property that was most likely located in Utah.<sup>37</sup> But there was also reservoir property to be dispersed in Springfield, Sangamon, Illinois, which was held in common among all the recipients of the estate. Martha wrote to the water commissioner in Springfield and to the Sangamon County Court in order to reaffirm the Gorleys' and Ferrises' claims in Springfield. Her letters were acknowledged by the water secretary, although their contents are unknown.<sup>38</sup> Among the family members, however, Martha was able to negotiate a price that would satisfy them --\$130 per individual for the reservoir land.<sup>39</sup> The diary ends with the sale of the reservoir land still unresolved.

The dependency case, however, was settled in 1874, and involved at least two dependents. It appears that the bishop of the ward was intended to be the guardian of one of the children, George, but he later denied that responsibility. Mrs. Gorley refused to choose a guardian for the second dependent, Jim, so the matter went to court.<sup>40</sup> Martha wrote, "I was in court with Jim Gorly and mother ½ day. I was in court from 2 –till 4 p.m., both Ma and I were disappointed –Thomas [Ferris] is Jim Gorly's guardian."<sup>41</sup> Following the settlement of Jim's guardianship, Martha was responsible for dispersing money to the various parties. Several payments were made to the parties ranging from as little as five or ten dollars to \$233.50.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 16 May 1873.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 23 January 1878, 2 March 1878, and 19 May 1878. It should also be noted that Martha was able to carry on this correspondence as a woman when Illinois was not allowing women in the courtroom. Perhaps she avoided this issue by signing her name M. J. Coray.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 2 January 1875.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 13 September 1873 and 22 February 1874.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 17-18 April 1874.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 20 August 1874 -29 July 1875, passim, 6 May 1876, and 23 October 1877.

During the course of the litigation, Mrs. Gorley several times sent Martha papers, which Martha then forwarded to William H. Hooper. Why Martha did this is uncertain. William H. Hooper was her brother-in-law, having married Martha's younger sister, Mary. Hooper rose to prominence and wealth relatively quickly after arriving in Utah, owning much land around a town that was later named after him. He had a ranch there and appears to have also had connections with the large ranching industry that Martha's and Mary's brothers ran in Skull Valley. Hooper became Utah's delegate to Congress and fought for female suffrage in Utah in the early 1870s. His business interests continued to grow throughout this time, and Martha's journal indicated a frequent correspondence regarding his business as well as Mrs. Gorley's legal queries. It could be that William Hooper and Martha Coray had a mutually beneficial arrangement in which Martha looked after his interests in the southern part of the Territory, and he gave Martha's concerns the weight of a powerful male figure when needed. Such an arrangement would not be surprising; many women lawyers used family connections to aid them in their practice of the law. Certainly women still faced a disadvantage when dealing with business or legal matters that extended beyond their home.<sup>43</sup>

Yet the fact that Martha sent Mrs. Gorley's legal papers to Captain Hooper raises questions regarding her exact participation in the law. It is not clear that Martha actually represented Mrs. Gorley in the courtroom even though she wrote of attending court with Mrs. Gorley on a few occasions. It is possible that men were used for the formal hearings. Martha also wrote of sending papers to Judge Wilson and Attorney Wilson (most likely the same individual) in the Ferris case and even wrote once that she "told Wilson to by no means to incur expense on Ferris case and asked him to hurry Gorly's [*sic*] matters to a settlement," leaving it open to debate what the responsibilities of each

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<sup>43</sup>Weisberg, "Barred from the Bar," 496.

were relative to the settlement of the Gorley estate.<sup>44</sup> Martha did hold power of attorney for Mrs. Gorley; perhaps she merely acted in her behalf, having more knowledge of the law than Mrs. Gorley, but not actually representing her in court. In the only case that Martha discussed in her journal where court records were to be found, Martha was not listed as the defense attorney in the case even though sources outside her journal clearly state that Martha was chosen to research the parties' claims and that she received compensation for her time.<sup>45</sup> This could indicate that Martha felt more comfortable with the role of paralegal than attorney, performing research but not arguing the case before a judge, or perhaps each family member had his or her own representative, and Judge Wilson mediated the matter.<sup>46</sup> Whatever the arrangements, Martha did receive a payment from Mrs. Gorley, thus demonstrating that her services were considered beneficial by Mrs. Gorley.<sup>47</sup>

Although there is no evidence that Martha ever obtained formal training in the field of law, such participation without a degree from a university is also typical of Utah's territorial period and of the United States generally. Those who wished to become lawyers were encouraged to stay in Utah and study in a local office instead of traveling East for their education. Thus, Martha's court appearances without any indication of formal training are not unusual for her time period.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 10 November 1873.

<sup>45</sup>The case referred to here is a lawsuit between the Mona Irrigation District and the Goshen Irrigation District concerning water claims. This suit will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

<sup>46</sup>Most women in the United States who were admitted to the bar were relegated to office work and rarely appeared in the courtroom. Weisberg, "Barred from the Bar," 496.

<sup>47</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 15 September 1873.

<sup>48</sup>Weisberg, "Barred from the Bar," 28, and Madsen, "Sisters at the Bar," 214.

Whether Martha's forays into the field of law were formal or informal, they clearly existed and were even passed on to her daughter, Mary. Martha's granddaughter, Daphne Roberts, went to Provo following her mother's death, speaking with "old timers" who knew Martha and Howard Coray. One woman told Daphne that "Mary was as good a lawyer as a teacher, and that many men went to get her to help them write legal papers." The confused granddaughter sought clarification, asking the woman if she didn't mean Mary's mother, Martha Coray. The woman answered tersely, "I know who I mean; it was that pretty black-eyed girl, Mary."<sup>49</sup>

In the end, the national perception that Mormon women were oppressed and downtrodden along with the federal government's intention to "liberate" them through legislation that threatened their religious rights unintentionally forced woman's issues to the forefront of Mormon consciousness. It cannot be said that anti-polygamy legislation introduced the idea of promoting woman's rights into the territory; certainly there were women in Utah interested in these issues regardless of their religious affiliation or political circumstances. Likewise, it cannot be said that Brigham Young promoted woman's rights because he was a staunch believer in woman's equality with man; he promoted whatever was expedient to accomplishing his goals. But the national attention did cause Mormons to sense the necessity of presenting a picture of strong women through such demonstrations as the Great Indignation Meeting; and it did affect the Utah legislature's decision to give women the vote. It also fostered a desire among the Mormons to protect themselves against outside intrusion, giving women a legal identity that led to an early acceptance of female attorneys as well as an acceptance of greater occupational choice for women.

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<sup>49</sup>Daphne R. Hartle, Jennie N. Weeks, and Margaret Watkins, *Roberts Family: Connecticut to California* (Salt Lake City: published privately, 1965), 64.



*The Land Office:*

The opening of the Salt Lake City land office in 1869 also significantly impacted Utah life. Homesteading for the Mormons, including the Coray family, was a typically communal Mormon effort, particularly during the 1850s and 60s. Robert A. Sauder has noted, "Unity, homogeneity, joint action, and group planning all stamped the Mormon frontier as unique, in contrast to the random, scattered, and rather chaotic frontier found elsewhere in the West."<sup>50</sup> For twenty years the Latter-day Saints had implemented their own pattern of settlement, typically consisting of a small community of farmers, who commuted to outlying farms. But although the Mormons had established a regulated method among themselves for obtaining land in Utah, their land had not been obtained according to the legal requirements set forth by the federal government. Although the Mormons petitioned several times for a federal surveyor to come to Utah and begin the process of granting land titles, the federal government did not wish to engage the Native Americans in another battle over land rights at that time, nor did they wish to allow the Mormons to claim all the land in Utah.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in 1860 surveyor general S. C. Stambaugh recommended that federal surveying in Utah stop and that the government wait to establish a land office in Utah specifically "until a different policy may be devised

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<sup>50</sup>Robert A. Sauder, "State v. Society: Public Land Law and Mormon Settlement in the Sevier Valley, Utah," *Agricultural History* 70, 1 (Winter 1996): 58.

<sup>51</sup>Larson noted, "[In Utah] the Mormon colonial projection had overshot the margin of easy acquisition of land titles into a political vacuum where peculiar circumstances found the federal government indifferent to repeated calls for help. No government stood ready to push the natives one step further by a treaty involving extinction of land titles. . . . Conflicting claims developed, to be resolved between three groups, each viewing the situation through different eyes. There were the United States government extending sovereignty over its recent territorial conquest, the native defending his heritage, and the Mormon moving in to establish squatters' rights through utilitarian occupation." (Gustive O. Larson, "Land Contest in Early Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 29 [October 1961]: 309-310.)

... to induce other than Mormon emigration to the Territory."<sup>52</sup>

But in the 1860s the railroad and coal and mineral discoveries made Utah a desirable location, increasing immigration from all religions groups to the area and changing the nature of Mormon settlements. Now that economic opportunities were luring gentiles to the region, a land office was opened in 1869, and the Latter-day Saints were required to follow the federal government's prescribed regulations for claiming land that had been settled for twenty years.<sup>53</sup>

Prior to the opening of the land office, Mormons had been forming settlements in Utah in a remarkably orderly and methodical fashion centered around a "village." Under this system each family owned two parcels of land, one inside the town's borders with enough property to grow fruit trees and a kitchen garden, and a second, larger piece to which the men would commute outside of town where the market-oriented farming occurred. Brigham Young engineered the colonizing efforts with an intent to promote the social and religious goals of the Latter-day Saint church. Land was dedicated to the Lord's purposes, and property ownership was conditional upon its beneficial use. Furthermore, Latter-day Saints were expected to relinquish, sell, or abandon their land when asked to do so by the church hierarchy. Such attitudes prompted cooperation among the Saints and precluded land speculation.<sup>54</sup> These aims typically emphasized the

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<sup>52</sup>Stambaugh's reports are filed in the Land Office Division of the National Archives; quoted in Larson, "Land Contest in Early Utah," 317. Larson also wrote that "hostility born of misunderstanding and mistrust between Utah Mormons and Gentiles resulted in negation of normal progress towards public surveys and land sales." (Larson, 315.)

<sup>53</sup>The Land Office could not open soon enough to satisfy Mormon landowners. Noted Lee, "Living under conditions of federal governmental harassment from 1857 to 1896, the Mormon community was obsessed with anxiety that Gentile land jumpers would use the federal land office machinery to appropriate land that the Mormons had cultivated since foundation days." (Lawrence B. Lee, "The Homestead Act: Vision and Reality," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 30 [Summer 1962]: 228.)

<sup>54</sup>See Leonard J. Arrington, "Property Among the Mormons," *Rural Sociology* 16 (December 1951): 339-352.

importance of the community rather than the needs of the individual. The Mormon philosophy was such that "If the property was dedicated to the Lord, surely his servants, the prophets, had the ultimate disposal of it . . . ." <sup>55</sup> This system was challenged by the new land office regulations that required Mormon settlers to claim land they thought they already owned.

Two problems immediately presented themselves as early settlers attempted to enter their claims. First, farmers were required to build homes to provide a continuous residence on their property held outside of town, and second, due to limited irrigable acres in an arid region, many of the parcels of land were too small to enter into the land office under the requirements of the Pre-emption Law of 1841. <sup>56</sup> The saints solved this problem through several different routes. Since the probate courts were given jurisdiction for homestead entry papers in March 1877 and probate judges, who were usually Mormon, were inclined to be helpful, some minor violations were simply winked at. Latter-day Saints also occasionally organized themselves into a trusteeship system, in which one man would enter a claim for a large parcel and deed back the property to the others after the patent was approved. The Townsite Act of 1867, "which allowed for the alienation of small irrigated plots within town site limits," also allowed some settlers to obtain patents on their land. <sup>57</sup> But the Homesteading Act was the most popular route to land ownership. <sup>58</sup>

The implications for LDS land claims were long and complicated and do not

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 344.

<sup>56</sup>The Pre-emption Law of 1841 granted one hundred and sixty acres of land upon proof of residency upon that land for fourteen months. See Larson, "Land Contest," 317.

<sup>57</sup>Sauder, "State vs. Society," 68.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 70. For the difficulties involved with each particular law, see George W. Rollins, "Land Policies of the United States as Applied to Utah to 1910," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 20 (July 1952): 239-251.



really apply to the Coray family since they homesteaded in 1872, after the land office opened. However, the perceived threat of outsiders' encroaching on the Saints' "promised land" did affect the Corays' homesteading efforts. Although the Latter-day Saints had previously implemented a policy of beneficial use that strongly discouraged land speculation, Mormons began to preempt all irrigable locations over as wide an area as possible to discourage gentile settlement mingled amongst themselves.<sup>59</sup> The Corays never indicated a deliberate attempt to exclude non-Mormons from their lands with their land claims, but they did claim as much land as possible, even though they could not irrigate all of it.

Although increased efforts to exclude other religious groups from claiming land may appear back-handed, the Saints were encouraged to follow the rules when it came to homesteading.<sup>60</sup> Articles in the *Deseret News*, a church-owned newspaper, reminded Latter-day Saints that, in order to secure their claims, they were required to actually live on the property. They were encouraged to give up their home in town rather than attempt to pacify the land officer by occasionally sleeping on their property.<sup>61</sup> The Coray family

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<sup>59</sup>Sauder, "State vs. Society," 63.

<sup>60</sup>It should also be noted that many "gentiles" were trying to use the opportunity afforded by the unsecured land titles for the purpose of "jumping" claims that had already been improved. In response, Brigham Young warned, "If you undertake to drive a stake in my garden with an intention to jump my claim there will be a fight before you get it. . . ." "If they jump my claims here I shall be very apt to give them a pre-emption right that will last them to the last resurrection . . . . The Latter-day Saints will never again pull up stakes and give their possessions to their enemies." (Brigham Young sermons, August 12, 1866 and December 23, 1866, respectively, *Journal of Discourses* [26 vols., Liverpool, 1854-86], II, 281.)

<sup>61</sup>Sauder, "State vs. Society," 71. Although William Clayton, as an official church liaison between the church and the land office, was known to advise Mormons to take their wagons out to their property for a few days at time for a nominal compliance with land patent regulations, Lee also notes that it was common throughout the United States, not just in Utah, for claimants to fudge residency requirements. (Lawrence B. Lee, "Homesteading in Zion," 32.)



had been living in the town of Provo prior to their move to Mona. Even after their move, they returned to Provo regularly for various business and legal matters, and it is clear from Martha's diary that they maintained a residence there. Yet, owning a residence in town could have complicated their land claim in Mona; owning a home "in town" might have given the appearance that Howard was simply commuting to his farm in Mona, rather than residing there full-time. The Corays may have been trying to avoid any such problems by transferring their Provo property into Martha's name. For several years the tax assessment records list Howard as having various amounts of property. This valuation decreased from \$3605 in 1865 to \$300 in 1872; thereafter Howard disappeared from the Utah County assessment records. In 1872, however, Martha suddenly appeared on the tax assessment records with \$300 worth of property in her name and remained on the tax rolls until 1881, when she died.<sup>62</sup> Howard, as the head of the household, would then have been free to claim land while still enjoying the benefits of property in town.

After moving to Mona, Martha continued to aid her family in acquiring land. She wrote letters to individuals proposing to buy their land and frequently investigated any questions arising about their property. She communicated with the land commissioner and went to the land office to research records and clarify the family's claims.<sup>63</sup> Martha's adult children moved to Mona at the same time that she and Howard arrived, and she assisted two sons and a daughter with their neighboring land claims also.

Martha's daughter, Nellie, took advantage of the provision in the Homestead Act that granted heads of households, and therefore single women, the right to claim public land in the West.<sup>64</sup> As a female, Nellie's claim for land was unusual for the nineteenth

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<sup>62</sup>Tax Assessment Roll of Utah County, 1865, 1872-81.

<sup>63</sup>George W. Rollins remarked that the legal work involved in obtaining patents was often an arduous task. (Rollins, "Land Policies," 246.)

<sup>64</sup>Anne B. Effland, Denise M. Rogers, and Valerie Grim, "Women as Agricultural Landowners: What Do We Know About Them?" *Agricultural History* 71, 2 (Spring 1993) : 253.

century; in the 1880 agricultural census only three women were listed as landowners in Mona.<sup>65</sup> Although historians have been able to document women's claiming land after 1888, when single women begin to receive as many as 12 percent of the land patents granted, claims made by women in the first decade of the Homestead Act appear to be few and far between. Anne B. Efland, Denise M. Rogers, and Valerie Grim have listed several possible reasons why women homesteaded: women's intent to combine their claims with those of their future husbands, their seeking an alternative to a city job, and desiring to make a profit from the future sale of their improved land. Some women simply wanted a rural life for their families, a place for their children or aging relatives to enjoy. Nellie's motives are never clearly stated, although after her marriage the Mona property is listed in her husband's name. Perhaps she was also motivated to help the Mormons claim all the land in the area; perhaps she was excited by the prospect of land ownership, or perhaps she simply decided she might as well enter a claim since the rest of her family had.

Although Nellie, as a single woman, was entitled to enter a claim for land, her claim was challenged by a squatter. In the latter part of May 1873, Martha wrote that a man named Joe Boren had come onto Nellie's quarter section with the intention of "jumping" her land. A few days later Nellie's brothers were plowing her fields and lifted Boren's house off her land. Boren grew angry at the Coray boys and "drew an oak club over Sid's head." Her brother, Howard, scared Boren away, only to have Boren return with the constable. Howard was arrested and tried the next day. Apparently he was

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<sup>65</sup>Nellie had married by 1880 and her husband, William Alexander, is listed as the owner of her property. The other women listed were Edna Kay, Eliza Sommerville, and Jane Burrison. (Tenth Census, agriculture, Utah, 1880.) Furthermore, "A survey of the 3,027 Homestead entries made at the Salt Lake City federal land office between April 1, 1869 and November 8, 1880, disclosed only 166 entries by women. . . ." (Lee, "Homesteading in Zion," 33.) Mona's female homesteaders (not including Nellie) held 6 percent of the land claims for their community which was a little higher than the Utah average of 5.5 percent.

released; Martha did not write of any other details until the constable removed Joe Boren from Nellie's property eleven days later. Oddly enough, however, Martha traveled with Joe Boren to Spanish Fork in the middle of this land dispute, just five days after he drew a club over her son.<sup>66</sup> In the end, however, Nellie's right to the property was secured; she "proved up" in January of 1878.<sup>67</sup>

While Nellie owned the land, she didn't appear to be the main person caring for the land. She did participate in important decisions regarding her property and was a dues-paying member of the irrigation district, but her brothers were the principal caretakers of all Coray family property. Such an arrangement was not unusual for women landowners. They frequently rented out their land to others or had relatives help them run their farms.<sup>68</sup> Nellie's brothers built her house, watered her wheat, and constructed her fence. Nellie, on the other hand, sewed their shirts, washed their laundry, made quilts, prepared food, and cleaned the main house.

Life on the ranch required constant improvements to the property, and the Coray family was not derelict in their efforts. There were pig pens, corrals, and mangers to be built and frequently repaired. Fences needed to be put up, but good lumber for the job was difficult to come by. The Corays once traded five acres of land in exchange "for 100 good rod poles; as good as in North fence."<sup>69</sup> Building homes was also an important family task. Each claim had a house built on it, and Howard Jr., actually built three on his property. "The boys" were often engaged in each project, regardless of whose home it was, but when Howard began his third home in late November, he was the only one dedicated enough to finish painting the house on days when the temperatures were two

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<sup>66</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 30 May -11 June 1873, passim.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 9 January 1878.

<sup>68</sup>Effland, Rogers, and Grim, "Women Landowners," 253.

<sup>69</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 24 Sept 1877.



and ten degrees below zero.<sup>70</sup>

Taking care of the fields and producing a marketable product was, of course, the most important task for the farm's survival. The family had a kitchen garden to provide them with a variety of foods, but the field crops consisted of potatoes, wheat, and hay. Hay was by far the most important item of production. Even in years when Martha and Howard spent most of their time in Provo, they came back to Mona for the haying season. During this season, Martha always wrote in her diary, "all hands at haying;" the work stopped only when the weather would not allow it.<sup>71</sup>

The haying process extended beyond the family and connected the family with the community. The Joneses might help with Howard's haying, and later some of the boys might go to the Stars' farm.<sup>72</sup> Howard Knowlton Coray, his wife Mary, and Nellie all went to Orville Clark Roberts's place to help with his hay.<sup>73</sup> Presumably the women went to help their sister Mary, Clark's wife, because extra hired hands would have been needed during this time, and Clark always kept a few workers around. Those who helped bring in the crop might be paid in kind. Watson Bell received 300 lbs. of hay for providing rope and help during the bailing process.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the hay also became a medium of exchange that bound the community together. Hay was exchanged for poles, flour, bran, and wheat and was used to balance accounts.<sup>75</sup> The obligations and interactions that haying forced between members of the community strengthened ties and provided goods and services in a cash-poor economy. Such communal efforts probably

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 12-13 December 1875.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 14 August 1873 and 17 July 1875, respectively.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 4-5 March 1873.

<sup>73</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 21 August 1873.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 11 April 1873.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 5 April 1873 and 11 April 1873, respectively.



helped Utah to have a lower rate of homestead failures than in other homestead frontiers.<sup>76</sup>

When Howard and his neighbors organized an irrigation district in Mona, Juab County, Utah, all the family members, including the women, were involved. Since Nellie owned her own plot of land, she signed the incorporation document and paid her \$100 share. Later, when the company's water rights were being contested, Martha was

appointed agent for the Co— to collect evidence and employ counsel and transact such business as may be necessary to prevent or meet a suit of law which the Goshen Irrigation District has given notice shall be planted against us, and further that her expenses and the expenses of counsel shall be defrayed by the Co. until the Suit shall be instituted, provided that her Services shall account against the Coray Family's portion of said expenses.<sup>77</sup>

The motion was unanimously passed by the members of the irrigation company, indicating that liberal attitudes towards women and their abilities had pervaded at least one corner of rural Utah.

The irrigation company's beginnings were nondescript. In October 1873 Howard reviewed another irrigation company's constitution, apparently to imitate it when writing his own company's constitution.<sup>78</sup> In late October and early November the company began construction on a dam and surveyed the water lines.<sup>79</sup> Conflict had erupted by 1874, however, when the Goshen Irrigation District complained that their previously

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<sup>76</sup>In Utah, 32 percent of homestead entries failed in the first year the land office was opened. That figure dropped to 20 percent ten years later. In Kansas (an area considered more conducive to farming) the failure rate for the same period was 49 percent. In Kansas from 1879-1904 only 6 percent of homesteaders remained on their land after fifteen years had elapsed, while in Utah land ownership almost always lasted a lifetime. (Lee, "Homesteading in Utah," 36)

<sup>77</sup>Mona Irrigation Company, Inc., Minutes Book, 27 March 1875, Coray Family Papers, Special Collections, HBLL.

<sup>78</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 2 October 1873.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 29 October 1873-24 November 1873, passim.

claimed water was being usurped by the Mona Irrigation District. In response, Howard Coray wrote a refusal to acknowledge the Goshen Irrigation District's jurisdiction. The irrigation districts initially tried to resolve their differences through local ecclesiastical officers, as was the custom, but the matter eventually went to court.<sup>80</sup> In July of 1875, the Mona company received a grant from the court for water. The Goshen district continued its fight, however, and in November of 1877 the court hearings began to intensify. Martha recorded spending "most of the day examining Court papers." She wrote to lawyers and discovered that in 1858 "only two or three families were in Goshen and very little water." The next day she wrote that she was "very busy with papers," and the following day the Canal Company met.<sup>81</sup>

In January of 1879 the matter was finally brought to a close in Utah County court. Judge Philip H. Emerson decided in favor of the Goshen irrigation district. The Mona Irrigation Company was forbidden from diverting any water from the Lower Salt Creek from the first of May through the first of September.<sup>82</sup> Mona was not the only town

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<sup>80</sup>See my discussion of this topic in chapter one, 17-18.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 4 November 1877- 24 November 1875, passim.

<sup>82</sup>Utah County Probate Court records, microfilm, 23 November 1877, 26 December 1878 - 4 January 1879, passim, Family History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The settlement also required the Mona Canal Company to reimburse the Goshen Irrigation Canal Company's court costs of \$359.98. The reasons Judge Emerson denied the Mona irrigation company access to water are not stated, but can be surmised. An 1865 statute allowed irrigation companies to incorporate, which in turn granted the irrigation districts eminent domain. But the same law also entitled "landowners" to water. Historians cite different rulings involving Utah water rights that were based on the same law, which produced two entirely different precedents that could have affected the Corays' court case. The first example was most likely the precedent followed by Judge Emerson. A group of farmers petitioned to bring water out of Brigham Canyon that had already been appropriated by other farmers. Upon investigation, however, it was determined that there was not enough water to meet all the farmer's needs, and the later group was denied access to the water. In this case the earlier irrigation company was granted eminent domain. (Robert G. Dunbar, *Forging New Rights in Western Waters* [Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983], 14.) Dunbar also asserted that this approach was not abandoned until 1880, which resulted in even more conflict over water usage. (Ibid., 16). Robert W. Swenson, however, cites

struggling to solve water problems. Historian Leonard J. Arrington has written that Utah had an overpopulation problem in the 1870s and early 1880s. There were simply too many people to be sustained by the available irrigable land. The church tended to sponsor communal projects, such as irrigation companies, to increase land use.<sup>83</sup> Such projects allowed new areas to be settled, alleviating some of the problems, but water continued to be an important issue for many decades to come in the West generally, and for the Coray family in particular.

The ruling was disastrous for the Coray ranch. Over the next few years Howard and Martha returned to Provo, while their children were either sent on missions or moved to southern Colorado. The Mona ranch was abandoned by the family for several years. In 1880 Howard received a letter regarding some money he had borrowed. Josiah S. Richards wrote that he needed the money back, but if Howard was willing to pay one percent interest, he would extend the note two or three years. Josiah also wrote that he didn't want to distress Howard or his family with the repayment, and that he was not suffering without the money, but he would appreciate as speedy a repayment as possible.<sup>84</sup> Clearly the Corays were having financial problems. Martha would later write to her son about his new homesteading efforts in Colorado, "Yet while I fear all results I do hope it will turn out to be a better selection than the [Mona] enterprise and that if there is any mistake it will not take (9) years to find it out."<sup>85</sup>

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another court case from the late 1860s in which an individual was sued for using water previously appropriated by an irrigation company. In this case, the individual won. Justice Boreman refused to grant the irrigating company power to "control and manage the waters of any part of the Territory." In this case the landowner was guaranteed his right to water. (Robert W. Swenson, "A Primer of Utah Water Law, Part 1," *The Journal of Energy, Law, and Policy* 5 [1984]: 168-169.)

<sup>83</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, *The Great Basin Kingdom*, 354.

<sup>84</sup>Josiah S. Richards to Howard Coray, 1 July 1880, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>85</sup>Martha Coray to Howard Knowlton Coray, 24 January 1880, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.



Even with such a condemning statement, judging the financial success of the Mona experience is difficult to assess overall. Orville Clark Roberts and his wife Mary were the first of the Coray family to move to Mona. They were able to keep hired hands, which indicates some measure of success.<sup>86</sup> They were also able to convince the rest of their family to join them in Mona by 1872. Yet in 1880, with their water supply cut off, Martha declared their farms a failure.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, the year that the family abandoned their farms is the only year for which a census recorded their productivity. Production was low for everyone, but Howard Knowlton Coray still managed to value his farm production at \$1500, due mostly to hay sales. Orville lost 400 of his 500 sheep that year and 30 of his 41 cattle. Howard Sr. fared a little better, losing only 12 out of 30 cattle, but produced little hay. Their farms, however, were valued higher than the average for the Mona community at \$4000 for Orville, \$2000 for Howard Jr., and \$4000 for Howard Sr.<sup>88</sup> But the fact that Howard and Martha spent most of 1874 and 1875 in Provo working at other jobs indicates that a source of income was needed beyond what the farm provided even before the water was turned off.<sup>89</sup> Their younger sons also spent

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<sup>86</sup>Tenth census, agriculture, Utah, 1880, LDS Church Archives.

<sup>87</sup>Martha Coray to Howard Knowlton Coray, 24 January 1880.

<sup>88</sup>Tenth census, agriculture, Utah, 1880. The average farm had 13.2 tilled acres and also averaged \$818 for the value of the buildings, \$101 for the value of the implements, \$306.34 for the value of the livestock. The numbers for the members of the Coray family were as follows: Orville Clark Roberts (Mary's husband) 18 tilled acres, \$4000 in building, \$300 in implements, and \$3000 in livestock. After running the Pony Express for several years, Orville bought all the horses and began breeding horses on his Mona property. Howard Knowlton Coray had 40 acres tilled, \$2000 in buildings, \$400 in implements, and \$100 in livestock. Howard Coray had 45 acres tilled, \$4000 in buildings, \$330 in implements, and \$800 in livestock. William Alexander (Nellie's husband and her former homestead) had 25 acres tilled, \$1000 in buildings, no implements or livestock. Nellie and her husband were on a mission to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) when this census was taken. William Coray had 20 acres tilled, \$500 in buildings, no implements and no livestock.

<sup>89</sup>Howard clerked at a factory, and they both taught school for awhile in early 1875.



time in the hills taking care of cattle, which they seem to have acquired from Martha's brother in Skull Valley.<sup>90</sup> It is not clear if they owned the cattle themselves or if they worked for Martha's brother, but it does appear that they, too, recognized a need to increase their revenues.

The 1869 opening of the land office in Utah changed settlement patterns for the Saints, which resulted in new opportunities for women. The 1862 Homestead Act allowed single women, such as Nellie Coray, to claim land. The Homestead Act also fostered independence as the traditional Mormon village gave way to single large homesteads spread across the landscape. Although the Mormons did maintain some level of cooperation through their irrigation companies, families, and during harvests, there was increased competition for scarce resources. The larger tracts of land claimed under the Homestead Act required more timber for fencing and more water to irrigate than had the smaller plots used in the 1850s. This competition gave Martha Coray the opportunity to represent the Mona Irrigation Company's legal interests, expanding her occupational choices as a woman. The requirements for "proving up" homesteads also thrust Martha into a much more active participation in the families' homesteading efforts.

#### *The Coming of the Railroad:*

Both the Salt Lake City Land Office and the railroad came to Utah in 1869; the railroad particularly threatened the Mormons' ideological, economic, and geographical isolation. Although Brigham Young and other leaders saw the benefits that improved transportation routes would bring to the Mormons, they were also wary of the unwanted consequences as well. As a preemptive measure, the Mormons were asked to retrench themselves firmly in the values and goals of the community, the most important of which

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<sup>90</sup>Skull Valley is close to E.T. City (Ezra Taft City) in Tooele, where Martha and Howard lived for several years.

was an absolute commitment to building the Kingdom of God. Brigham Young particularly emphasized the female roles of consumption and production in protecting the Mormons' economic isolation. Women were asked to refrain from purchasing goods produced outside Utah and to increase their production of cloth and other goods. The United Order was preached with increasing frequency, and the Relief Societies opened and operated cooperative stores to market their homemade items and other local goods.<sup>91</sup> They also participated in a grain storage program intended to focus their attention on saving rather than spending.<sup>92</sup> Historians differ in their opinions about whether or not women really made a significant change in their consumption habits following Brigham Young's admonitions, but efforts were made by women, under the organization of the Relief Society, to solidify the Kingdom's position.<sup>93</sup>

Martha and her family did participate in some aspects of home production and the United Order. The Salt Lake Nineteenth Ward had a soap factory and although many of the details of Martha's connection to the factory remain obscure, particularly because she no longer lived within close proximity to the factory, a letter addressed to Brigham Young clearly illustrates some involvement in the factory's affairs:

I write to ask you if it would be wisdom that a department for manufacturing caustic lye out of Salt Lake salt should be connected with the Factory. Also to make various lyes and acids the materials for which are here in their native state. I suppose there are some chemists who have by your direction worked at parts of this business successfully. What little

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<sup>91</sup>For greater detail about the United Order, see chapter one, 18-21.

<sup>92</sup>Leonard J. Arrington, "Rural Life Among Nineteenth-Century Mormons: The Woman's Experience," *Agricultural History* 58 no.3 (July 1984): 239-246.

<sup>93</sup>Leonard J. Arrington emphasized the importance of women's contribution in his article, "The Economic Role of Pioneer Mormon Women," 145-64, while Maureen Ursenbach Beecher believed that women did not really change their consumption habits during the 1870s and their home production did little to affect the economy in Utah. See Beecher, "Women's Work on the Mormon Frontier," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 49 no.3 (Summer 1981): 276-290.

assistance I could render I would willingly give. I wrote to ask bro Cannon as to patent rights for making the production of salt. Enclosed please find his reply.<sup>94</sup>

Martha also recorded in her journal several other days where she either communicated with others regarding the soap factory or produced soap herself from the lye produced at the factory. She wrote, "Letter from Barfoot about soap, I saw Dunn about soap." "Pa brought 12 boxes of lye from Factory. This is the first lye that I have had from there." "I made 4 gal. of Potash soap with 4 1/2 lb. of grease." She was also careful to keep track of the profitability of her enterprise. She recorded, "We took 111 lbs. of soap to Factory, made from 13 boxes of lye in balls which they had let us have at 20 cents a box. Cost \$2.60 Check received \$15.00." "Boiled over some soap . . . I wrote and asked J. B. Maiben for soap receipt."<sup>95</sup> The Salt Lake City Nineteenth Ward's soap factory was part of the United Order movement intended to strengthen the Saints' economic goals and religious unity. Martha's connection to the factory reflected her commitment to cooperate in addressing community needs in addition to benefits that the extra cash and goods brought into the Coray home.

Martha was most likely connected with the factory due to her general interest in chemistry. Martha also applied her scientific interests to her home chemistry projects. She gave several details of her efforts to produce and market oil, soap, and hair washes in her journal. Beginning in 1876, she wrote about a still that she purchased.<sup>96</sup> She or her

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<sup>94</sup>Martha Coray to Brigham Young, 16 January 1876, Coray Family Papers, HBLL. Martha's connection to the Salt Lake Nineteenth Ward was most likely through her parents, who lived within the ward boundaries until their respective deaths in 1863 and 1881. Martha's father, Sidney Knowlton, was also in the Nineteenth Ward bishopric from 1851-1856, with James Hendricks as bishop and Alonzo H. Raleigh as the other counselor. (Ezra Clark Knowlton, *The Autobiography of Ezra Clark Knowlton* [Provo, Utah: Published Privately by J. Grant Stevenson, 1967], 17.)

<sup>95</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, January 20, 1876-May 18, 1876, passim.

<sup>96</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, June 25, 1876.



sons would pound sage and, through a distilling process, create an oil or a liniment from the sage. This oil was marketed as a medicine.<sup>97</sup> Although few details regarding the sage oil are known, there is a description of a second oil, called Lightening [sic] Cage Oil. Historian Jennie Weeks does not discuss these two oils separately in her brief article on pioneer medicine, and no clear statement exists to clarify whether or not they are the same oil.<sup>98</sup> The descriptions of the two products, however, indicate that they probably came from the same combination of herbs, but that they came from different distillations and, thus, were two different oils. Martha's granddaughter described the Lightening Cage Oil as a weapon. She said it was stronger than Hartshorn and that Martha carried it with her when she walked by herself after dark. She claimed that throwing the oil on an assailant would render him helpless.<sup>99</sup>

The sage oil, however, clearly had medicinal purposes. Martha described using the oil to doctor an animal that had been sick for several days. Martha wrote, "Selim is about the same. I bathed his neck with sage oil."<sup>100</sup> It seems unlikely that the same oil used to render an assailant helpless would be used to bathe the neck of anyone or

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<sup>97</sup>For more information regarding early pioneer medicine and folk remedies, see my discussion in chapter 2; Cecil J. Alter, "Addendas," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 10, 1 (1942) : 37-54; Claudia L. Bushman, "Mystics and Healers," in *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, ed. Claudia L. Bushman (Cambridge, MA: Emmeline Press, 1976), 1-23; Robert T. Divett, "Medicine and the Mormons: A Historical Perspective," *Dialogue* 12 (Fall 1979): 16-25; "Pioneer Medicine," *Heart Throbs of the West* 7 (1946) : 189-228; Richard G. Poulsen, "Some Botanical Cures in Mormon Folk Medicine: An Analysis," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (Fall 1976): 379-388. Most of these articles contain either memoirs of doctors or patients, lists of herbs and their uses, and recipes for home remedies. Another related topic within several of these articles is Mormon preference to use faith healing instead of doctors.

<sup>98</sup>Jennie Weeks, "And They were Healed," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 2 (1959): 124.

<sup>99</sup>Edna Coray Dyer, "Incidents About Martha Coray Related by Grandfather Howard Coray," Coray Family Papers, HBL, 3.

<sup>100</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, January 23, 1877.



anything feeling unwell, indicating that Martha produced two different oils, sage and lightening. Additionally, Martha wrote in her journal, "I wrote to Hendrick and sent specimen of lightening -promised to send oil and herbs and liquid lightening by Cannon."<sup>101</sup> The clear distinction made by mentioning both oil and liquid lightening again suggests that two different oils existed.

Martha soon began an aggressive marketing process for her products, purchasing bottles, corks, and running an advertisement. She took her product personally to Ogden to sell it in drug stores there. She recorded in her journal that she and her husband took her oil to Payson, Salem, Spanish Fork, and Springville.<sup>102</sup> Her son, Howard, headed south with 400 ounces of oil to sell, while the rest of her boys stayed at home, "pressing and stilling."<sup>103</sup> Martha must have felt confident that her 400 ounces of oil would sell if she were producing more, suggesting that her product was successful to some degree. She also recorded writing letters to friends in Salt Lake in which she sought connections for marketing her oil. She also made gifts of oil to such prominent church leaders as John Taylor, Joseph F. Smith, and Wilford Woodruff.<sup>104</sup>

Soon Martha became interested in patenting her product. She recorded in her journal, "I wrote to Mann and Co. New York to ask if oil can be patented." A few days later she wrote, "I saw Capt. Hooper; he wrote for me to the commissioners of Patent office." Two weeks later Martha received a reply from Mann and Co., but unfortunately she did not mention any of the details of the correspondence.<sup>105</sup> The production and marketing of the liniment and oil continued, however. Clearly Martha's "home

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., August 10, 1877.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., September 29, 1876.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., September 12, 1876.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1876.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1876-June 30, 1876, passim.

chemistry” was more than a hobby; she had produced and marketed a viable medical product.

Although sage oil seemed to be the main product of interest to Martha, she later branched out. In May of 1877 she noted in her journal, “Sent to Ogden Hair wash and 15 oz of Lightning Liniment with pressed herbs.”<sup>106</sup> She also mentioned purchasing nitric acid, although it is unclear how she used it in her products.

Martha’s medicinal products and “home chemistry” were encouraged by church leaders. Martha wrote in a letter to Brigham Young, “Thank you for your interest in my home chemistry projects.”<sup>107</sup> Additionally, Brigham Young encouraged parents to use herbal cures in their homes and have a knowledge of medicines. In 1875 he said,

It is God’s mind and will that they [every father and mother] should know just what to do for them [their children] when they are sick. Instead of calling for a doctor you should administer to them by the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, and give them mild food, and herbs, and medicine that you understand.<sup>108</sup>

Although Brigham Young did recognize that doctors were necessary, he did not encourage frequent dependence upon them. Rather, he wanted the Saints to be prepared to deal with most minor illnesses themselves.

*The Deseret News* also published an article advocating the use of herbal medicine, “believing in the goodness of the Creator that He has placed in most lands medicinal plants for the cure of all diseases incident to that climate, and especially to that climate in which we live.”<sup>109</sup> Among the many herbs and “natural medicines” used in Utah medicine were olive oil, which was used both externally and internally; lobelia, a

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid., May 26, 1877.

<sup>107</sup>Martha Coray to Brigham Young, September 16, 1875, Coray Family Papers, HBLL.

<sup>108</sup>J. Cecil Alter, “Addendas,” 42.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 37.

“powerful diffusive stimulant”; cayenne pepper, which promoted health by heating up the insides; and turpentine.<sup>110</sup> Sage is also listed among these medicinal herbs. Thus, Martha did not discover the medicinal values of sage, but merely capitalized on its properties in her oil. Many others were already using sage in their teas during this time period.<sup>111</sup>

*Protestant Missionary Efforts Increase:*

The Protestant missionary movement reached a new fervor following the Civil War. Efforts were focused throughout the West, where missionaries hoped to tame the wild inclinations of the uncivilized settlers.<sup>112</sup> In Utah, the war was not focused against the crudeness and lawlessness found in other less organized communities; rather, the battle was waged against the Mormon faith and specifically against the doctrine of polygamy.<sup>113</sup> The Protestants found the Latter-day Saints a difficult group to conquer, but they did manage to find a weak spot in their unorganized and poorly regulated educational system.

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<sup>110</sup>Robert T. Divett, “Medicine and the Mormons,” 124.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>112</sup>For discussions of the Protestant missionary efforts in Utah, see Charles S. Peterson, “‘A New Community’: Mormon Teachers and the Separation of Church and State in Utah’s Territorial Schools,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48 (Summer 1980): 297; Charles S. Peterson, “The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah,” *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 69; James B. Allen and Glen Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 348; and Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 23-30; James B. Allen, “Everyday Life in Utah’s Elementary Schools, 1847-1870,” in *Nearly Everything Imaginable: The Everyday Life of Utah’s Mormon Pioneers*, eds. Ronald W. Walker and Doris R. Dant (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1999), 379.

<sup>113</sup>Howard Lamar wrote that Utah was unusual in its level of civic organization and its approach to territorial government. Because the Latter-day Saints came to Utah with community already formed, their 1849 constitution was intended to “keep lawlessness and disorder out” rather than establish order. (See Howard Lamar, “Statehood for Utah: A Different Path,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39 [Fall 1971]: 310.)

When the Mormons first arrived in Utah, they brought with them a religious philosophy that emphasized the importance of education and a history of good intentions, but few accomplishments. Joseph Smith had early preached, "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance," adding that "a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge."<sup>114</sup> He even proclaimed that "the glory of God is intelligence."<sup>115</sup> Brigham Young reaffirmed this claim with the statement, "Is there truth? It is ours. Is there knowledge? It is for us."<sup>116</sup> For Latter-day Saints, there was no distinction between secular and sacred education. Both were seen as essential to eternal progression, except when secular teaching conflicted with religious ideals.<sup>117</sup> Thus, attempts to educate the Saints were dutifully made in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois prior to their Western exodus.<sup>118</sup> Unfortunately, two particular obstacles prevented their success. The first was a simple matter of economics. The Saints rebuilt their communities and centers of worship on four different occasions, preventing the accumulation of wealth.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, as much as they believed in the ideal of education, there were few resources available to pay teachers or to purchase necessary supplies. The Book of Mormon and the Bible became the primary texts in many schools simply because there was no money to purchase any other materials. Second, the Mormons removed themselves from the outside world prior to the general acceptance of public school

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<sup>114</sup>*Doctrine and Covenants* 131:6, and Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1902-12), 4:588.

<sup>115</sup>*Doctrine and Covenants* 93:36.

<sup>116</sup>*Journal of Discourses*, 8:83; 16:77; as quoted in Peterson, "Limits of Learning," 66.

<sup>117</sup>Peterson, "A New Community," 295.

<sup>118</sup>See Wilkinson and Skousen, 8-13.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.



systems. Their idea of education was grounded in practical disciplines and trades rather than abstract ideas.<sup>120</sup>

Mormon schools throughout Utah struggled to support themselves, and such financial difficulties also plagued Martha as she attempted to teach school. She wrote on January 7, 1875, "Well! I have seen the sisters of the Relief Society and begged them to help the school, I have also met with the teachers of the Sunday School and seen all that. I have also seen a fine feeling manifested to help in every way to raise money." Running a school required the support of the entire community; Martha's need to "beg" for help indicated that gaining support was often a difficult task. An 1852 statute had provided a tax-supported school in each established town, but due to a shortage of tax funds, these resources were usually inadequate.<sup>121</sup>

Another reason funds were low in Utah was due to the inefficiencies of the federal government's land policies. A particularly generous land grant to Utah was made by Congress on September 9, 1850, for the purpose of funding a public education system. Utah was granted four sections of each town-site for its schools; however, these sections were held in trust for Utah until it became a state, forcing territorial Utah to support its schools without the aid of land income for forty-four years. The federal government did not act as a very conscientious trustee either, allowing some sites to be pre-empted against the wishes of the Utah government.<sup>122</sup>

Protestant schools did not struggle financially as the Mormon-based schools did. Their missionary teachers were supported by funds raised in the East. This method of fundraising only increased tensions between Mormons and their Protestant counterparts. The missionaries usually resorted to dramatic and exaggerated stories of the horrors they

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<sup>120</sup>Peterson, "Limits of Learning," 69.

<sup>121</sup>Allen, "Everyday Life in Utah's Schools," 363.

<sup>122</sup>Rollins, "Land Policies of the United States," 250.

found in Utah in order to increase sympathies for their cause. Since their fundraising tactics were so successful, they were able to charge either very little or nothing at all for students to attend; thus, their schools became ever more attractive to poor settlers. Not only were the schools less expensive, but the teachers were usually much better educated than those found among the ward-sponsored schools.<sup>123</sup>

The level of education among teachers in Utah was so uneven and unregulated that teachers were not the only ones frustrated with the LDS sponsored school system. Utah's teachers were of varying quality and frequently unqualified for their position. Wilson Howard Dusenberry, a prominent educator in early Utah, noted of one teacher, "Came to the conclusion that he would make a better playmate than instructor."<sup>124</sup> Even before the onslaught of Protestant schools to Utah, some communities had resorted to hiring gentile teachers for their church-sponsored schools. This action quickly sparked criticism from church leaders. Brigham Young acknowledged that "once in a while a good man comes along who is a school teacher who is not a 'Mormon' . . .," but he quickly enumerated their many faults, such as seducing female students and teaching untruths in the classroom.<sup>125</sup> Although Martha and Howard Coray taught school several times during their decades in Utah, they were certainly not above reproach as teachers either. Neither Howard or Martha was well educated for the time. Howard did spend one year in a preparatory school and had intended to enroll in college the following year when he was converted to Mormonism and subsequently moved to Nauvoo. There is no indication that Martha ever received formal schooling. This may account for one occasion when Martha "-was publicly informed before the school that [she] did not teach

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<sup>123</sup>Wilkinson and Skousen, 26-27.

<sup>124</sup>Wilson Howard Dusenberry, Diary, 6 February 1863, typescript, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City, 3.

<sup>125</sup>Brigham Young, *JD*, 16:17-18.

grammar right, by the head teacher."<sup>126</sup> A few weeks later Howard "went to the August [sic] Superintendent and School examiner to ascertain how much he knew."<sup>127</sup>

Apparently he performed satisfactorily because he continued teaching school. In 1863, Wilson Howard Dusenberry, Martha's nephew, visited her school, probably in the capacity of superintendent and said, "Visited Aunt's school. Was pleased with part of the performances."<sup>128</sup>

The success of the Protestant schools is debated among historians. Charles S. Peterson used data gathered by C. Merrill Hough to conclude that probably no more than 10 percent of young LDS pupils ever attended gentile schools.<sup>129</sup> Yet their impact could have been greater in specific locales. In 1887, the report of a Presbyterian school located in St. George claimed that 27 out of its 30 pupils were from homes where one or both parents were active members of the LDS church. The other three students came from "apostate" Mormon homes. Ten students had joined the Presbyterian Sunday School, and nine attended regularly.<sup>130</sup> Just thirteen years previously a teacher from St. Mark's Episcopal School had converted to Mormonism and had attempted to start a school in St. George. Although this was initially received well, his financial expectations were so far beyond what the community was able to provide that he gave up.<sup>131</sup> Yet, years later the free Protestant-sponsored school in the same town appeared to have plenty of students.

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<sup>126</sup>Martha Coray, Diary, 23 February 1876.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 4 March 1876.

<sup>128</sup>Wilson Howard Dusenberry, 31 December 1863, typescript, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City, 16.

<sup>129</sup>Peterson, "Limits of Learning," 77, note 36.

<sup>130</sup>James R. Clark, "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" (Ph.D. dissertation, Utah State University, 1958), 151; as quoted in Wilkinson and Skousen, 28.

<sup>131</sup>Peterson, "A New Community," 303.



This story further emphasizes that it was not a lack of interest in education, but rather the financial difficulties that faced Latter-day Saints as they attempted to set up schools that made free schools so tempting to the Mormons. The efforts of the missionary schools to Americanize and educate those in Utah were congratulated by U.S. President Chester A. Arthur in his 1884 presidential message to Congress. He praised them for their efforts over the last fifteen years that had resulted in 79 schools with an average of 6,000 students attending.<sup>132</sup>

Regardless of how truly successful these schools were in converting young Mormon minds to supposedly purer religions and American values, the threat that they presented to the Saints was taken seriously by their leaders. This was coupled with mounting pressure to provide free secular education throughout the territory. Governor Alfred Cummings, who enjoyed a friendly relationship with the Mormons, tried to convince the Saints to conform their educational ideals to those accepted in the East, specifically that the Latter-day Saints needed to provide free education that was also untainted by religious influence.<sup>133</sup> In the 1870s, Brigham Young, sensing the threat that the missionary schools and the federal government presented to his educational ideals, opened two new private schools that bore his name, Brigham Young Academy in Provo and Brigham Young College in Logan, with the idea of protecting the Saints' fusion of sacred and secular learning. The addition of these private institutions, however, did not address the concerns of the federal government and the pressure to create secular schools only increased over the next few decades, culminating with the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, in which Congress decreed that all church property valued over \$50,000 be seized and turned over for the support of the territorial schools. Additionally, supervision of the

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<sup>132</sup>Milton Lynn Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* (Salt Lake City: LDS Department of Education, 1939), 138-39; as quoted in Wilkinson and Skousen, 27.

<sup>133</sup>Wilkinson and Skousen, 25.



schools was transferred from the locally elected official to a Utah Supreme Court-appointed commissioner of education, effectively ending Mormon control of the schools.

It was within this turbulent climate that the Corays participated in Utah's educational system, but financial difficulties and political pressures were not the only concerns of Utah educators. Teachers in early Utah were often frustrated by the lack of stability, tuition collection, ungraded schools, and the general indifference of the public to the necessity of educating their children.<sup>134</sup> The attitudes of parents influenced the minds of their children, who occasionally took their schooling less than seriously. Such obstacles also affected Martha as she taught school. She recorded in her journal for 1876 several days when the students frustrated her: "School is still grinding on. Gave corner set a blast that lifted them, I don't intend to be imposed upon much more by such a set of geese." She continued, "School awful -outrageous girls"; she received a note of apology from the girls committee a few days later.<sup>135</sup>

Although as teachers Martha and Howard valued education, reading Martha's diary leaves the impression that education was still second to survival. Howard and Martha did teach school several times, but they also pursued other, more lucrative, occupations. Yet, even though there were frustrations inherent to her profession, and life presented its own challenges to her ideals, Martha continued to champion education until the end of her life. She not only taught school, but also served as the only woman on the original Board of Trustees at Brigham Young Academy. In that capacity Martha was part of the initial group that determined curriculum, specifically grappling with the essential balance between secular and sacred learning in the church-sponsored academies.

Edna Dyer, Martha's granddaughter, believed that Martha's appointment to the Board of Trustees was intended as an apology from Brigham Young following a

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<sup>134</sup>Peterson, "The Limits of Learning," 68-69.

<sup>135</sup>Martha Coray, *Diary*, February 24, 1876-March 15, 1876, *passim*.

disagreement over Lucy Mack Smith's biography of her son, Joseph, for which Martha acted as scribe.<sup>136</sup> After the Saints arrived in Utah, word reached Brigham Young that the manuscript had been published in England without his approval. Dyer recalled that when Young questioned Martha about the book, Martha was offended by his attitude, and "unpleasant feelings resulted." Young later accused her of having a fanciful mind prone to novel writing which in turn distorted the accuracy of the manuscript.<sup>137</sup> Martha responded with an explanation of how she actually wrote the manuscript. Bishop Edward Hunter sustained Martha, and the disagreement almost became a serious issue, but all questions were resolved. Later documents do not indicate any ill feelings between Martha and Brigham Young.<sup>138</sup>

Regardless of the circumstances attending her appointment, it is clear from Martha's later journal entries that a feeling of respect existed between herself and President Young. Martha's letter to Brigham Young accepting the position on the Board also clarified her feelings towards President Young:

Accept my heart felt thanks -1<sup>st</sup> for the honor conferred in calling me yourself to assist in establishing the B. Y. Academy -2<sup>nd</sup> for the consideration of my poor thought upon our home chemistry -Last but not least for your permission to ask you by letter for instructions pertaining to matters of the Academy -I have only to say that your name being named upon the institution and it being one of your own creation I am mainly desirous to know your will and that shall be my pleasure in everything touching this establishment.

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<sup>136</sup>Dyer, "Incidents About Martha Coray," 1.

<sup>137</sup>Discourse of Brigham Young, 8 May 1865, Wellsville, Utah Territory, Brigham Young Papers, as discussed in Charles D. Tate Jr.'s article, "Howard and Martha Jane Knowlton Coray of Nauvoo," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History*, ed. H. Dean Garrett (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1995), 343.

<sup>138</sup>A letter from Martha explained the circumstances that led to the premature and unauthorized publication of Mother Smith's manuscript. (See Martha Coray to Brigham Young, 13 June 1865, HBLL.) The process of transcription is also described in Tate, "Howard and Martha," 343.

She noted at the end of her letter, "Any correction of my ideas will be gratefully received."<sup>139</sup> Such a response indicated that any ill feelings between Martha and Brigham Young had been resolved and that Martha was eager to follow the counsel of the prophet of the Latter-day Saint Church.

Even before her appointment as trustee, Martha kept Brigham Young informed about the educational needs of the women in the territory. After her own daughter died in childbirth, Martha wrote to President Young about the need for better trained midwives in Utah. A year later it was announced by Bathsheba W. Smith that President Young had requested that three young women from every settlement be trained as a midwife.<sup>140</sup>

As part of her appointment to the Board of Trustees, Martha was specifically assigned to represent the needs of the young women who attended Brigham Young Academy.<sup>141</sup> Brigham Young felt strongly that women should be educated and trained in an occupation. He told the Female Relief Societies:

There are many women who would make excellent mathematicians, as well as any man, and they ought to have the privilege of studying and developing the powers with which they are endowed. Women should not only raise babies and make beds, but study law and physics to benefit society at large.<sup>142</sup>

While it is tempting to view Brigham Young's efforts to encourage women's education as a reflection of the nineteenth-century woman's movement, they must be

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<sup>139</sup>Martha Coray to Brigham Young, 10 April 1876, HBLL.

<sup>140</sup>*Woman's Exponent* 2 (July 15, 1873) : 27. The connection between Martha's letter and Brigham Young's decision to train women to assist in childbirth was also noted in *Women of Covenant*. (Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992], 106.) Bathsheba W. Smith was the general Relief Society president from November 10, 1901-September 20, 1910.

<sup>141</sup>Ernest L. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975-1976), 1:65

<sup>142</sup>Brigham Young, sermon, 18 July 1869, *JD* 13:61.

judged by a different standard. Brigham Young often equated education with gaining a trade, thus emphasizing the practical importance of education.<sup>143</sup> Young truly believed in the importance of constant improvement and development in the individual, but always with the building of the Kingdom of God in mind. The end of Utah's isolation and Young's desire for economic independence required that some women enter non-traditional occupations. Yet, the new possibilities were always within what Young considered appropriate boundaries. Women were to become bookkeepers so that the men would be free to perform more physically demanding labor.

Brigham Young Academy had many female students from its beginning, and Martha was to act as a mouthpiece for their interests. However, Martha's assignments on the Board of Trustees varied and included serving on the executive committee, the auditing committee, and the committee for rules and by-laws. The executive committee was responsible for the physical accommodations necessary to run a school. In the board minutes for December 4, 1875, the executive committee stated that the opening of the Academy would have to be postponed for a few weeks to allow for the completion of a few essential repairs to the buildings, particularly the completion of a fence. In Martha's journal we read that her boys worked on the Academy fence from December 24, 1875, through January 1, 1876, demonstrating Martha's active participation in Academy affairs. Other evidences of her involvement in the Academy include several motions made by Martha during board meetings, including the self-serving motion to hire her nephew, Warren Dusenburry, as the first acting principal of the Academy. The minutes record Martha's frequent participation, making motions as often as any of the male members. Martha was honored for her dedication to Brigham Young Academy by having two wings of the Provo Tabernacle filled with Academy students during her funeral. The pall

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 7 April 1873, *JD* 16:17.



bearers were also selected from among this group.<sup>144</sup> Their attendance at the funeral suggests that Martha was well respected by all connected with the Academy.

During the years following its benefactor's death, Martha championed the cause of Brigham Young Academy as it faced severe financial trials. Martha solicited monetary assistance from several sources. She wrote a letter to George Q. Cannon, a counselor to both Brigham Young and his successor John Taylor, complaining about the lack of support given to the Academy, and Cannon published it as an editorial in the *Juvenile Instructor*. In the letter, Martha stated that Brigham Young Academy was struggling to accomplish the "greatest good with the smallest means" and that the current success of the institution was due mainly to their "unflinching trust in God." She finished with a call to "Israel" to pay more attention to "how close principles of faith, honor and a deep desire for general intelligence cling to the scholar even after leaving Brigham Young Academy."<sup>145</sup>

In this letter to George Q. Cannon, Martha not only sought help for the Academy, but she also reiterated the idea espoused by Church leaders that it was important to combine Mormon theology with secular education. She had held this belief for some time as demonstrated by an earlier letter to Brigham Young describing her philosophy of education: "My principle in education has been –Gods laws of religion first –Man's laws of honor and morality 2<sup>nd</sup> Science of every attainable kind and as much as possible but lastly in forming a permanent base for character and hope of future salvation."<sup>146</sup> Comparing Martha's educational philosophies with the Deed of Trust signed by the Board Members to organize the school demonstrates that Martha's views regarding education paralleled those of Brigham Young. The deed mandates that

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<sup>144</sup>*Territorial Enquirer* (Provo, Utah), December 21, 1881.

<sup>145</sup>"Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor* (Salt Lake City) 15, 5 (March 1, 1880) : 54.

<sup>146</sup>Martha Coray to Brigham Young, April 10, 1876.

Reading, penmanship, orthography, grammar, geography and mathematics together with other useful subjects and Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants, the standard books of the Church, should be read and their doctrine inculcated. No books that speak lightly of the divine mission of Christ or of the prophet Joseph Smith are allowed or ideas antagonistic to the principles of the gospel.<sup>147</sup>

Yet exactly how these two were to be combined had not yet been established.

Martha wrote to Brigham Young regarding the requirements of the deed asking, "Does not the Deed require the sacred book mentioned to be taken up as a study in the same way as the sciences mentioned?" In trying to ascertain to what extent the doctrines of the LDS church were to be formally included in the school curriculum, she recommended that a class in ancient history be taught in conjunction with church doctrines. She believed that this class would particularly benefit young men called on missions. She had even found a chart that simultaneously presented Biblical and profane history that she suggested be purchased for the course.

Furthermore, she suggested that all other classes be imbued with the principles of the gospel as far as the subject matters would allow. This, she believed, would fulfill her understanding of Young's desire to create a strong group of young people who, as Martha said, would "never be lowered before the strongest assaults of infidelity."<sup>148</sup> She also requested that Young respond before the Board's meeting on Saturday. Martha's writings demonstrate how Brigham Young Academy was striving to address the attack upon Latter-day Saint educational philosophies. This, coupled with the normal school at the Academy, which provided many more well-trained Latter-day Saint teachers to the job market, helped to lessen the threat posed by the Protestant missionary schools and the intervention of the federal government.

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<sup>147</sup>B.Y. Academy Board Minutes, June 18, 1877, HBLL.

<sup>148</sup>Martha Coray to Brigham Young, April 10, 1876.

*Conclusion:*

The woman's rights movement and the demands of Utah's religious community had mixed results on Utah women. For some, the changes had little, if any, effect on their daily lives. Even for Martha Coray, the new political and occupational opportunities did little to change her responsibilities as a wife and mother. They did, however, allow greater latitude in what her contributions to the community could be. Martha's legal expertise helped the family acquire land and secure business connections to the market. Although the Mona Irrigation Company eventually lost its water rights in court, Martha was also essential to her family's fight for water rights; her services with the canal company saved the family needed cash as her work replaced the family's dues. Brigham Young's isolationist policies also increased the value of Martha's home produced carpets, soap, and medicinal oils, which also provided extra income for the Coray family. Finally, as Utah's educational system came under increased scrutiny from the federal government, Martha's ideals and experience were used to help create a private institution that has preserved Latter-day Saint educational philosophies for over one hundred and twenty-five years. Rhetoric alone could not have provided such dramatic social changes for women. But rhetoric combined with the Mormon crisis mentality, caused by the coming of the gentiles into Utah, expanded and elevated the significance of the contributions Utah women made to the Kingdom.

## CONCLUSION

The inscription on Martha's tombstone reads: "While a loiter [*sic*] among the poor, She was a teacher of the learned. God and Nature were her preceptors, Humanity was her religion, and Maternal sacrifice her idolatry."<sup>1</sup> The epitaph, while admittedly sentimental, is actually an accurate and efficient description of Martha's life. It homes in on the essential truths of her life. She loved to learn, and though her resources were always limited, she spent much of her life in the pursuit of education for herself, her children, and other members of the community. Her life was guided by the prophets of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who Martha believed were the spokesmen for God. She followed priesthood leadership across the great plains to settle in Utah Territory and cultivate the unbroken soil. Once there, she participated actively in church-sponsored programs intended to build a literal Kingdom of God on the earth. She also raised eleven children in the territory and spent much of her energy educating and preparing them for whatever their future endeavors might be. This brief description includes the three essential elements of Martha's life: faith, femininity, and the frontier.

Using a multi-cultural framework, this thesis has described many "typical" aspects of life for Mormon women. For most of them, their faith was the greatest influence on their lives. Through their conversion process, they came to believe that God had restored His priesthood to the earth and had ordained a prophet to guide his people. These women generally sacrificed whatever was asked of them in order to follow the prophets' counsel. Settlement patterns, marriage practices, and economic ventures were

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<sup>1</sup> Provo City Cemetery, Provo, Utah. Punctuation added.



all guided by church doctrine and the religious community's needs.

In order to follow their faith, many women separated themselves geographically, if not emotionally, from family members. Some were forcibly removed from their homes, while others willingly sold their belongings to cross the plains and settle in the desert. The first women to arrive in Utah lived in wagons and sod homes, moving up to adobe or log homes, and eventually into permanent structures. The Mormon settlers lost crops to grasshoppers and crickets and learned to irrigate their arid farms. While conditions improved as settlements became established, the Mormon frontier was ever expanding to include new colonies. So women again packed their belongings and moved wherever the prophet sent them to raise whatever crops were needed by the Mormon people.

But amidst the dirt and difficulties of their new homes, Mormon women tried their best to make improvements. As soon as possible they were adding small comforts to their homes, planting flowers, and establishing schools. These women did not forget the standards of respectability that existed in the East. They sought to re-establish genteel society and instill good republican values in their children. As Utah Territory became more populated and less economically isolated, fulfilling domestic ideals and achieving a middle-class identity became the goal of most families. Completing the patterns of their Northeastern counterparts, Mormon women were re-organized into a women's organization, the Relief Society. Under the auspices of the Relief Society, Mormon women served the poor, but they also took on new roles requested by Brigham Young. They began to store grain, establish cooperative stores, and raise silk worms. Some went beyond the mission of the Relief Society to enter into learned professions.

This picture, though generally accurate, is not enough to understand Mormon women. Yes, they sacrificed as a whole, but some more than others. Yes, they faithfully

followed their prophet, but some complained more than others. Some had happy marriages, and some did not. This paper has tested the generalities against the details of one woman's life, that of Martha Jane Knowlton Coray. She, of course, fit more easily into some parts of this framework than others. She was committed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; that much is clear, and yet she and Howard were unsuccessful in their attempt to live polygamy. Martha and Howard spent many years farming, and yet Martha loathed returning to the isolation and "gloom of lifeless unfriendly E.T."<sup>2</sup> Martha loved being a mother and grandmother. As her children grew, they contributed to the family's economic well-being. When many of them had reached adulthood and married, Martha began new, rather daring, economic ventures. Although she was interested in woman's rights issues, her pursuits were also aided by the church's emphasis on the United Order, home industries, and Brigham Young's desire to create private religious schools throughout the territory.

Martha's life emphasizes the truth that women create their own experiences somewhere in between the articulated ideals. Just because priesthood leaders encouraged polygamy doesn't mean that every couple rushed out to participate in this radical new religious practice. Just because Brigham Young encouraged women to develop their skills and talents doesn't mean that Mormon women took jobs outside the home and rushed off to universities in large numbers. Although their beliefs were probably the most defining characteristic of most Mormon women, it does not necessarily follow that every precept was followed with exactness or to the logical extreme. Furthermore, many Mormon women came from Europe; a few even came from the South Pacific. These women brought entirely different cultural values with them when they came to Utah, creating unique experiences for them. For this reason, I have sought to study one life

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<sup>2</sup> Martha Coray, Diary, 4 March 1856, HBLL.

within the context of existing historical theories.

This paper, though thorough in its study of several aspects of Martha's life, completely ignores other interesting and essential components. Constrained by space and existing documents, I selectively chose to examine certain areas of both her public and private life. I loved Martha because she allowed me to test a wide range of activities within the parameters established for Mormon women. I was able to look at her family life, economic life, academic life, and religious life finding commonalities with other women and consistencies with prophetic counsel, discovering that much of her life resembled the general picture that historians have painted about Mormon women. But even though Martha was unique in the breadth of activities she engaged in, her life does not exemplify all of the possibilities for women in Utah. In particular the details of the woman's rights movement, suffrage, and political wranglings are absent from Martha's writings, although there is evidence that she was interested in such topics. Martha's diaries hold little information about the Relief Society, one of the major aspects of religious life for Mormon women. Furthermore, I would have liked to have included more of her family and their activities and feelings. I also would have liked to have discussed women's health issues and class issues within territorial Utah that were evident in Martha's life. After studying Martha, I began to think about how status was affected by personal connections, wealth, priesthood callings, and perceived religious devotion.

While there is much to be done, I am glad for what Martha has taught me. As I compared her life to those of other "typical" Mormon women and Northeastern women, I learned that it takes more than a prophetic decree to enlarge one's sphere; it takes self-determination, intelligence, and, often, the support of one's family. I also learned that one's sphere can usually be as large as an individual wants it to be. I hope that she is

happy now that her “warfare in this world ended so that [she] with [her] family and friends would be associated in a peaceful state of Eternal rest.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Martha Coray, Diary, 5 March 1856, HBLL.



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