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THE COVER. Bear River Valley, oil on masonite, 30" x 36", by D. Howell Rosenbaum (1908-82) who taught art for the WPA during the depression. Transparency courtesy of the Utah Arts Council.

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*Retaining Wall,
1934, litho crayon,
11½" x 15½",
by Ranch Kimball
(1894-1980).
Courtesy of the
Utah Arts Council.*

In this issue

In Utah mention of “the arts” quickly brings to mind the state’s rich legacy in the performing arts—music, theater, and, in the twentieth century, dance. Often overlooked or undervalued are the individual expressions of Utah’s literary and visual artists. This issue showcases two major writers, a painter, an arts advocate, and an arts program.

The first article looks at novelist Virginia Sorensen who used her Sanpete County heritage to tell the story of small-town life and the struggle to create oasis villages as well as anyone has thus far told it. The following piece examines the career of Ogden’s wayward prodigy, Bernard DeVoto, who began as a writer of fiction but achieved renown for his seminal work on Mark Twain and three major histories of the West that garnered the Bancroft and Pulitzer prizes and a National Book Award.

The story of painter Mary Teasdel, related in the third article, presents a perfect example of the dedicated artist. Painting was Teasdel’s life and she pursued it in Utah, France, and California with courage and zeal, achieving recognition that included acceptance by the French Salon. A friend and promoter of Teasdel’s work, Alice Merrill Horne, the subject of the next article, was surely one of the most ardent supporters of Utah’s visual artists. She arranged numerous exhibitions locally and during one term in the legislature authored the bill that gave Utah the first state-funded arts organization in the U.S. By the 1930s the conventional subject matter and treatment of the artists Horne admired seemed out of tune with the times. She strongly objected to aspects of the Federal Art Project, a program that put artists to work during the depression. Nevertheless, the FAP, the focus of the final article, made a significant impact on the local visual arts scene with major mural projects, easel paintings, classes, and especially with the establishment of the Utah State Art Center where the public could discover alternative artistic viewpoints and render its own aesthetic judgments.



*Virginia Sorensen, ca. 1960. Photograph by Dorothy Cooper.
USHS collections.*

A “Visitable Past”: Virginia Sorensen’s Sanpete

BY EDWARD A. GEARY

ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH OF July 1922 a fictional expatriate Utahn named Kate Alexander, the protagonist of Virginia Sorensen’s *The Evening and the Morning*, awakens to the ringing bells of the Manti Pioneer Day celebration and expresses the wish, “if only a great poet could be

Dr. Geary is professor of English at Brigham Young University. A version of this paper was presented at the 1989 annual meeting of the Utah State Historical Society.

born here and make the kind of poetry the story of the water deserves!"¹ By "the story of the water" she means the story of rural Utah: the pioneer struggle to harness the mountain streams; the oasis villages with tree-lined streets, "barns . . . clustered at the hearts of the blocks" (*EM*, p. 3), and the ever-present gurgling of the irrigation ditches between their mint-scented banks; the achievement, and the fragility, of an agrarian society in an arid region.

The story of the water is implicit in the title of George Wharton James's guidebook, published in that same Pioneer Jubilee year, 1922: *Utah: The Land of Blossoming Valleys*. James includes a chapter on literature listing, in addition to some polemical Mormon and anti-Mormon books, the works of explorers and geologists such as Howard Stansbury, John Wesley Powell, and Clarence E. Dutton; travelers' accounts by Jules Remy, Richard F. Burton, and Florence A. Merriam; and popular fiction by Joaquin Miller, Captain Marryat, and Zane Grey.² What is most noteworthy about James's list is that with one or two minor exceptions it includes no Utah writers dealing with Utah materials.

When the WPA-sponsored *Utah: A Guide to the State* appeared in 1941, Kate Alexander's wish for a poet equal to the water had to all appearances still not been realized. The *Guide's* discussion of Utah-related literary achievements begins on an apologetic note: "The literature of Utah, like that of other frontier States, is marked rather by volume than by literary distinction, and is valuable chiefly as a part of the historical record of a time and an area."³ Then follows a list quite similar to the one compiled two decades earlier by George Wharton James but with the addition of a group called "native Utah writers," including Bernard DeVoto, Whit Burnett, Harold Ross, Wallace Stegner, George Dixon Snell, Bill Haywood, Brewster Ghiselin, Phyllis McGinley, Olive Woolley Burt, and Charles Kelly. Of these, Haywood's primary importance is hardly literary, Ross and Burnett made their reputation as editors rather than writers, and McGinley made little use of her Utah background in her work. On the other hand, Stegner, Ghiselin, and Kelly were not native Utahns, though they had in their quite different ways an important impact on the Utah literary scene. That leaves only DeVoto, Burt, and perhaps Snell (who had Idaho

¹Virginia Sorensen, *The Evening and the Morning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. 205; hereafter cited parenthetically as *EM*.

²George Wharton James, *Utah: The Land of Blossoming Valleys* (Boston: Page, 1922), pp. 269ff.

³Writers' Program, Works Projects Administration, *Utah: A Guide to the State* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), p. 153.

connections) as Utah-born Utah writers. DeVoto of course was an important figure on the national literary scene, and Burt had a significant regional reputation. Snell is virtually forgotten today, though his novels are not without interest. In addition, Idaho-born Vardis Fisher and St. George's Maurine Whipple are mentioned as writers who were beginning to receive national attention.

Looking back on the period of the *Guide* from the perspective of almost fifty years, one can now make out a different shape to the Utah literary scene. A remarkable group of talented historians, folklorists, and fiction writers had begun their careers in the 1930s (indeed, several of them were involved in producing the *Guide*), and others were to emerge during the 1940s. In his introduction to Juanita Brooks's memoir *Quicksand and Cactus*, Charles S. Peterson speaks of

an exciting intellectual ferment then working among a group of native and adopted Utahns who were approaching regional and Mormon themes from the perspective of new moods and with new methods of study. From diverse backgrounds and with little more than regional attachments to hold them, they were brought together by Depression-sponsored projects and by a common interest in letting the record of the past speak candidly and fully. They never associated closely and have indeed not been recognized as representing a movement. Yet in the richness of their production, in their ties to a place, in their shared access to records, and in their efforts to help each other find publishers, may be seen a meaningful interaction that enhanced the individual value of their writing and gave it added impact.⁴

Once this group of writers began to appear in print they were prolific enough that by 1948 Lawrence Lee began his *New York Times* review of Blanche Cannon's *Nothing Ever Happens Sunday Morning* with the observation that "Mormons and Mormon communities have provided material for a rather large body of contemporary writing, fiction and non-fiction."⁵

In addition to the writers mentioned in the *Guide*, a partial list of those belonging to this non-movement movement would include Juanita Brooks, Dale L. Morgan, A. Russell Mortensen, William Mulder, Fawn M. Brodie, Wayland Hand, Austin E. Fife, Thomas E. Cheney, Hector Lee, Ray B. West, Jr., Samuel W. Taylor, Jonreed Lauritzen, Paul Bailey, and Richard P. Scowcroft. Few if any of them,

⁴*Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1982), pp. xxii-xxiii.

⁵Lawrence Lee, "Tragedies in Meanness," *New York Times Book Review*, June 27, 1948, p. 15.

however, have enjoyed more productive careers than Virginia Sorensen.⁶

Born in Provo on February 17, 1912, the daughter of Claude and Helen Blackett Eggertsen, Virginia spent the years from age five to thirteen—clearly the crucial period in the development of her creative imagination—living in Manti, where her father worked as a telegrapher and express agent for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway. By her own account she was already a writer by the time she graduated from high school. Her studies at Brigham Young University and the University of Missouri and later creative writing courses at Stanford only confirmed her dedication to a novelist's career.⁷



Virginia Eggertsen's 1931
BYU yearbook photograph.

That career began auspiciously with *A Little Lower Than the Angels*, a historical novel set in Mormon Nauvoo, published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1942. In a signed book jacket blurb, Knopf declared, "I have seldom introduced a new novelist with the confidence I feel in the author of this remarkable book. It marks the debut, I believe, of a major American writer." Sorensen based *A Little Lower Than the Angels* in part on her husband's family traditions,⁸ though some incidents were apparently drawn from her own childhood experience, including the one she recasts as "The Darling Lady" in *Where Nothing Is Long Ago*.

With her second novel, *On This Star* (1946), Sorensen turned to the time and place she knew best, Sanpete Valley in the 1920s. The novel is

⁶In addition to the works discussed in this essay, Sorensen's novels include *The Neighbors* (New York: Revival and Hitchcock, 1947), *The Proper Gods* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), *Many Heavens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1954), *Kingdom Come* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), and *The Man with the Key* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), plus seven books for children, two of which, *Plain Girl* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955) and *Miracles on Maple Hill* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1957), were winners of the Child Study Award. For general accounts of her career, see L. L. Lee and Sylvia B. Lee, *Virginia Sorensen*, Boise State University Western Writers Series, No. 31 (Boise: Boise State University, 1978); Mary Lythgoe Bradford, "Virginia Sorensen: A Saving Remnant," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4 (1969): 57-64, and "Virginia Sorensen: An Introduction," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13 (1980): 13-16; and "'If You Are a Writer, You Write!': An Interview with Virginia Sorensen," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13 (1980): 17-36.

⁷"If You Are a Writer, You Write!" pp. 24-26.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 28.

set in a fictional town called Templeton. But though the geography is somewhat skewed, the model is obviously Manti: a Mormon farm town in a mountain-rimmed valley with thick-walled limestone houses, a white temple on a hill, and a heavy Danish component to the population. The events in this novel occupy the period from 1926 to 1928, the years immediately following the Eggertsen's departure from Manti. With a temporal setting less than twenty years earlier than its publication, *On This Star* would hardly meet the usual definition of a historical novel, but it is permeated by a sense of history. It is very much a story of changing times: rural depopulation, the breaking down of the isolation and cohesiveness of the Mormon community, and the intrusion of new ideas and technology. It is also about anachronistic survivals such as polygamous family life and ritualized deer hunts.

The present events in *The Evening and the Morning* (1949) take place in Manti during a single week in July 1922 when Virginia Eggertsen was ten years old—the same age as the fictional Jean Cluff in the novel. Sorensen returns to the early 1920s for most of the stories that make up *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* (1963). In this book she is frankly nostalgic, consciously celebrating a lost way of life. For example, she has declared in an interview that “Manti was as bilingual as you can get,”⁹ and *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* opens with the lament, “soon there won’t be a real Danish accent left in that whole valley.”¹⁰

In a 1953 lecture Sorensen spoke of her feeling for Utah history, her “deep consciousness about the so-immediate and yet so-remote past of town after town, valley after valley. Our history here and our legends are so close to us that it is all but impossible to separate ourselves from them.”¹¹ But though most of her work draws upon historical materials, she resists definition as a historian. When Eugene England recently proposed, in Sorensen’s presence, that *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* is essentially a collection of personal essays rather than short stories, she protested, “But they are *fiction*.”¹² I would characterize her Manti books as historical fiction of a particular kind, rooted in what Henry James calls a “*visitable* past,” a period within memory yet sufficiently remote to allow for some imaginative freedom. This, James declares, is “the past

⁹Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰Virginia Sorensen, *Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963), p. 3; hereafter cited parenthetically as *WN*.

¹¹Virginia Sorensen, “‘Is It True?’: The Novelist and His Materials,” *Western Humanities Review* 7 (1953): 284.

¹²This exchange took place during a symposium on the work of Virginia Sorensen held at Brigham Young University, October 11, 1988.

fragrant of all . . . the poetry of the thing outlived and lost and gone, and yet in which the precious element of closeness . . . remains appreciable."¹³

Sanpete Valley, and Manti in particular, was obviously a good place to grow up for an artist of Virginia Sorensen's temperament. Manti is one of Utah's oldest settlements and has preserved, better than most, significant landscape elements from the pioneer era. However, Manti had also been largely rebuilt on a more expansive scale during the years from 1890 to 1915, the period immediately before the Eggertsen's arrival. Gary B. Peterson and Lowell C. Bennion, in their guidebook *Sanpete Scenes*, identify this period as Sanpete's "golden age."¹⁴ Mount Pleasant, Manti, and Ephraim, the three largest towns, all reached their peak population around the turn of the century, then began a gradual decline that continued through the 1920s. An upward blip in the 1940 census (reflecting a growth that occurred in many rural communities during the Great Depression, probably accounted for by the return of unemployed natives from the cities) was followed by a steep decline that reduced the population of Mount Pleasant by almost half in the twenty years between 1940 and 1960.¹⁵ Ephraim and Manti experienced only slightly less drastic depopulation.

Golden ages, by their nature, are only recognizable as such in retrospect. There is certainly no suggestion of a golden age in sociologist Lowry Nelson's 1925 study of Ephraim. Nelson described the community as having some civic amenities but as far from prosperous. Sixty percent of the farmers owned less than fifty acres of irrigated land, and only 20 percent owned more than seventy-five acres. With such small and typically scattered holdings, plus the perennial shortage of irrigation water, Nelson concluded, "it is difficult to see how Ephraim farmers could operate economically."¹⁶ In fact, agriculture by this time was supplemental to livestock raising, especially sheep, in the town's economy, for both economic and social reasons. Even if the natural resources had been available for a more intensive agriculture, Nelson wrote, Ephraimites "wanted to farm 'on horseback,' and the idea of

¹³Henry James, Preface to *The Aspern Papers*, in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James*, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York: Scribner's, 1934), p. 164.

¹⁴Gary B. Peterson and Lowell C. Bennion, *Sanpete Scenes: A Guide to Utah's Heart* (Eureka, Utah Basin/Plateau Press, 1987), p. 70.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁶Lowry Nelson, *The Mormon Village: A Pattern and Technique of Land Settlement* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952), p. 143.



Celebration in Manti. Such events are evoked in Virginia Sorensen's novels. USHS collections.

getting down on their knees in a truck farm did not appeal to them."¹⁷ Depopulation was already apparent, with the community "exporting practically all of its natural increase" since 1900. As a result, the proportion of elderly people in the population was high and growing. Ephraim had "higher percentages than the state as a whole" in all age groups over forty-four and a death rate almost double that of the state.¹⁸

An even less attractive picture was painted by Alonzo Morley of the town of Moroni in 1924. In a style that shows the influence of H. L. Mencken, Morley describes the community as socially "retarded" as a result of "one-man control" (Morley doesn't name the man, but he is presumably referring to Andrew Anderson, president of the bank and manager of the co-op store);¹⁹ longstanding resentments between the Scandinavian and English segments of the population; and sometimes violent intersectional rivalries among "Duck Springs," "Frog Town," and "Dry Town." He portrays Duck Springs as an especially unsavory neighborhood, "famous for its large families and its unkempt children" and for bootleggers and gamblers.²⁰

¹⁷Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹*Utah State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1924-25*. Salt Lake City: R. L. Polk, 1924, pp. 116-17.

²⁰Alonzo Morley, "Community Psychology of Moroni, Utah" Privately printed, [1924], copy in Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, p. 11.

Peterson and Bennion, however, do not use the term “golden age” to designate a period of exceptional prosperity or social refinement but rather the time when the “uniquely related elements” of Mormon landscape and townscape achieved their peak expression.²¹ This is not to say there was no wealth in Sanpete Valley during the first decades of the century—the fine houses dating from that period tell us otherwise. But more important was the sense of community vitality and sufficiency that Kate Alexander recognizes on revisiting Manti in *The Evening and the Morning*: “She had been unaware until she left this valley, she thought, of how well people lived here” (*EM*, p. 156). It is midsummer, canning time, and the gardens are burgeoning with produce. Lowry Nelson also recognized the self-sufficient character of the Mormon farm village in the 1920s:

Whether the head of the family in Ephraim was classified as farmer, doctor, lawyer, teacher, merchant or laborer, the household was almost certain to have a family garden; one or more dairy cows to provide it with milk; and one or more hogs, and several chickens. Thus the food supply for the village in these respects was produced on the village lots.²²

At the same time, however, Nelson expressed concern about the emergence of a permanent underclass:

Often a house and lot in the village was about all the land they could secure, although some of them had a few acres in the fields. Mostly they herded sheep, worked on the roads or on farms, or did any other jobs that were available in the community. Some of them went to the mines in the winter in Carbon County. Some were working for their relatives, father or father-in-law, and might in time inherit the family farm. Meantime, life was not easy for them. They were on the economic margin of security, not unlike the cottars on the medieval manors.²³

Some of Nelson's observations are reflected imaginatively in Sorensen's fiction. Even though the family head in both *The Evening and the Morning* and *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* is employed by the railroad, the family lives on a big town lot with a barn and some livestock and produces its own fruit and vegetables. Where Lowry Nelson uses the language of social analysis in comparing the landless inhabitants of Ephraim with the medieval cottar class, Virginia Sorensen presents their situation in a more dramatic form. In *On This Star*, the numerous and prosperous Eriksen clan has gathered, as is their custom, in the big

²¹Peterson and Bennion, *Sanpete Scenes*, p. 70.

²²Nelson, *The Mormon Village*, p. 153.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 157.

house of the first wife, Christine, for Sunday dinner, and the conversation turns to a farmer who is selling out:

"By the way, Oley," Ivor said, "Harold Cox is moving out of the valley. He say anything to you?"

"About that field? Yes, I'm taking it. Don't need it, particular, as I told him, and I'd sure not pay what he asked first. It'll be good pasture."

Ivor looked at Erik. "You remember Hal Cox. He never seemed to get on."

"You can't live on that many acres out here," Oley said. "Maybe East, but it takes more than that here."

"Harold Cox," Christine said in a firm tone. "Poor ways."

One of her favorite sayings was, "Poor folks have poor ways."²¹

A few lines further on, Erik, the expatriate half-brother, expresses a kind of elegy for the dispossessed:

"I always wonder where all these people go. They're taught that there's no other place on earth as good as the valleys out here, that the world's coming here. I've always wondered what happens to them when—" He almost said: "—when they find out it isn't true," but stopped in time. (*OTS*, p. 30.)

Virginia Sorensen's Manti books capture the social atmosphere and rhythms of daily life in a substantial and deep-rooted provincial town in the twilight of its golden age. In the summer of 1922, which is perhaps Sorensen's imaginative center, Sanpete County was still feeling the effects of the postwar recession. The *Manti Messenger* reported that the assessed valuation of the county had fallen by \$1.5 million since the previous year, and the salaries of county employees were being cut by 5 percent.²⁵ At the same time, however, it was a period of civic improvement and high expectations (though of course expectations are always high in small-town newspapers). Manti's Main Street was being paved with concrete, and by the end of the summer the pavement would extend to Ephraim and beyond, renewing memories of the prediction attributed to Brigham Young that a time would come when Manti and Ephraim would merge into a single city (July 7).

There was the usual cycle of births and deaths. Twenty-month-old Edna Dennison was drowned in an irrigation ditch in Sterling (June 23). Jessie Anderson Hougaard was buried together with her newborn infant (September 8). (One wonders whether this is the mother-baby burial Sorensen recalls in *Where Nothing Is Long Ago*.) On the other hand,

²¹Virginia Sorensen, *On This Star* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1946), p. 29; hereafter cited parenthetically as *OTS*.

²⁵*Manti Messenger*, August 4, 1922, p. 1; hereafter cited parenthetically by date.

there were "marvelous escapes," such as that of nine-year-old Marvin Hoggan, only slightly injured when he was run over by an automobile in front of Manti Grocery (July 28). The pioneer generation was passing away, including George Smith Rust, "Salt Lake Valley pioneer of 1847 and early settler of Manti" (June 23); Madse Knudson, "old time resident and native of Denmark"; and Andrew Peterson, a stonecutter on the Manti Temple (June 30). An overheated projector in the Ephraim movie theater started a disastrous fire (July 21), and from Fairview, just in time for the Fourth of July, came a report of finding "a curious snake decorated with . . . Red, White, and Blue" (June 23).

A large share of the news columns during the summer were given over to a series of community celebrations. The South Sanpete LDS Stake attracted a crowd reported at three thousand to its annual outing at Gunnison Reservoir Dam with the promise that the event would be "equal to the good old Scandinavian Jubilees held years ago" (July 14), and the annual Sanpete-Emery reunion and rodeo was held at Horse Shoe Flat in August. But the biggest events, in Manti as in many other Utah towns, were the two major holidays in July. The Fourth of July activities were under the direction of civic organizations, while the Twenty-fourth was sponsored by the Mutual Improvement Association of the LDS church. In actual practice, however, it is clear from the newspaper reports that the entire community was extensively involved in both celebrations. For the Fourth, William McFarlane, whose holdings included the Armada dance pavilion as well as the Manti Theatre, obtained "at considerable expense" a group known as "Heric's Six Knights O'Melody" from Salt Lake City: "Six men performing on twelve instruments, presenting the season's most popular hits" (June 30). The Fourth of July parade, with a patriotic theme, included entries by church groups, business houses, and clubs, including the "Hopeless" and "Hopeless Alumni" (perhaps a reference to the "Hopeless Club" of unmarried women that is mentioned in *On This Star* [OTS, p. 16]). In addition, everyone who owned an automobile was instructed to decorate it with crepe paper and join in the parade, under threat of a fine to "be imposed on any car not decorated" (June 30).

Nineteen twenty-two was the Jubilee year, seventy-five years since the coming of the Mormon pioneers to Utah, and therefore the Twenty-fourth of July was an occasion of special celebration throughout the state. The parade was "one of the longest Manti has ever seen," with floats representing "Scouts—Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow, Brigham Young in carriage, Pioneer Amusements, Indians, Crickets, Seagulls,

Old Fashioned School, Mormon Battalion, Hand Carts, Black Hawk, Home Industries, Uncle Sam [presumably left over from the Fourth], Utah, Utah's Best Crop, Segó Lilly, Bee Hive, Boy Scouts, Industrial Floats, Hatchery, Armada and Picture Show, Commercial Club" (July 21). After the parade there was an "open air meeting" at the County Block with tributes and pioneer reminiscences. "Immediately following the meeting Old Chief Black Hawk and his warriors . . . attack[ed] the Pioneer Encampment," after which the fifty-eight surviving pioneers were treated to lunch (July 28).

The Twenty-fourth of July celebration as it appears in *The Evening and the Morning* and again in the "Secret Summer" chapter of *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* captures the spirit of these small-town festivities while varying in some details. In *The Evening and the Morning* the child-protagonist, Jean Cluff, and in "The Secret Summer" the author herself has the privilege of sitting in the segó lily on the "Utah's Best Crop" float. Mormon history and legend are graphically depicted on a series of floats. There are indeed seagulls and crickets and handcarts (including one pulled by the original pioneer himself); and there is an "Indian" raid carried out by the town's boys, but it is portrayed as having



The Sanpete Valley Railroad was another institution Sorensen fondly recalled in her fiction. USHS collections.

happened at the conclusion of an evening pageant. Newspaper reports do not mention a pageant in connection with either the Fourth or the Twenty-fourth celebrations in 1922. Though she locates her novel in the Jubilee year for particular thematic reasons, Sorensen was no doubt drawing upon her recollections of several different celebrations. Such festivities in Utah towns tend to have a generic quality, and it is difficult in retrospect to distinguish clearly the events of one year from those of another.

While Sorensen obviously avails herself of poetic license, her Manti novels are rich with figurations of actual places—County Block, Main Ditch, the canyon, Funk's Lake, the fairgrounds, the long flight of stairs that used to lead up the hill to the temple, the three Mormon meetinghouses, North Ward, South Ward, and the tabernacle, and the little Presbyterian church—and actual persons, some with the actual names, such as W. W. Brown, the druggist (*WN*, p. 139; *EM*, p. 91), and Ellis E. Johnson, the high school principal (*WN*, p. 121), others thinly disguised, such as “Pennant’s” for Tennant’s confectionery (*OTS*, p. 21), “Bill Mackie” for William McFarlane, manager of the Manti Theatre (*OTS*, p. 41), and “Mr. Block” for George Brox, the German musician who operated the power plant (*OTS*, p. 54). Some less clearly identifiable characters may also derive from actual models. For example, Erik Eriksen in *On This Star* is a professional musician who spends most of the year in New York but returns to Templeton each summer to give music lessons and renew his ties to the land. A similar career pattern was actually followed for many years by LaVar Jenson, who was born in Ephraim in 1892, making him almost exactly the same age as Erik.²⁶

Since her father was a railroad man, it is to be expected that trains would have an important place in Virginia Sorensen’s fiction, as indeed they played a vital role in the Sanpete golden age. During the 1920s the D&RGW branch that ran from Thistle to Marysvale was the lifeline of the Sanpete and Sevier valleys. But in addition, the old Sanpete Valley line, originally an independent railroad, was also still in operation between Manti and Nephi, having been taken over by the D&RGW. Sorensen depicts the Sanpete as a colorful institution famed for the slowness of its trains and their distinct personalities: the “Peavine” and “Old Bull o’ the Woods.” The lore of the Sanpete flavors a conversation in *The Evening and the Morning*:

²⁶Albert C. T. Antrei, ed., *The Other Forty-Niners: A Topical History of Sanpete County, Utah, 1849-1983* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1982), pp. 425-26.

"So you came on the Old Bull? What did they stop for this time? Couple of weeks ago Jack Stringham was going to Wales, and he says they stopped so long out in the middle of noplac he got out to ask the engineer if there was trouble he could help with. But they were waiting for a ZCMI salesman who'd wanted to stop and see his girl at Fox's Ranch."

"It is a wonderful road," Peter said, laughing. "But what is time, then? Nobody is in a hurry for coal or for plaster and Salt Creek is good to see in the moonlight. One can get out and walk sometimes and get a look at everything."

Karl said to Verna: "They say the engineer stops to fish from the window."

"But this is not true—he told me so," Peter said. "That is a story from people who are jealous. Unless Bill counts more than a dozen trout jumping in any one mile, he refuses to stop the engine." (*EM*, p. 35.)

Of course Sorensen's fiction is more than mere transcription of Sanpete County history. She has declared, indeed, that she is "not particularly interested" in Mormon regional materials unless they can serve as vehicles for wider themes.²⁷ A good example of her method is the title story of *Where Nothing Is Long Ago*, an account of the killing of a water thief and the killer's vindication by the community. The victim is not only a water thief but one who has "fallen away from the faith" (*WN*, p. 9) and therefore doubly marginal. His killer, Brother Tolsen, is, like the bishop and other respected members of the community, a Dane and a church-going Mormon. The story is told in retrospect by a narrator who as a young child is playing in Bishop Petersen's garden when Brother Tolsen arrives to report his deed to the bishop before going to the sheriff (which was, the narrator says, "entirely proper in all eyes" [*WN*, p. 13]). Later that day, she listens intently as her parents discuss it:

"But why did he hit him like that?" Mother asked my father. "It's not like Brother Tolsen to strike anybody. Such a gentle man!"

"Twice he had turned Brother Tolsen's water off his fields in the night. *Twice!*" My father spoke with the patience of a man obliged to explain violence to a woman. "Brother Tolsen says he had no notion of hitting so hard, but he hit him with a shovel, after all." (*WN*, pp. 7-8.)

Forbidden to attend the funeral or the trial, the narrator—in the tradition of the artist as curious and observant child—tries to piece together an understanding of the events from fragmentary impressions. Some things she misunderstands:

I was absolutely certain for years afterward that two piles of bloody rabbits' ears I saw on the courthouse lawn at the time of Brother Tolsen's trial had

²⁷Sorensen, "Is It True?" p. 284.

something to do with the killing he was being tried for. They hadn't. They were merely tokens of the fact that the annual county rabbit hunt had gone off according to schedule. (*WN*, pp. 3-4.)

But of course the bloody ears *do* have something to do with the killing. Sorensen is using a naive narrator to make key thematic points obliquely. The traditional, competitive rabbit drives, like the killing of the water thief, reflect the ineradicable violence at the root of society.

The narrator as child does not comprehend all of this, but the narrator as adult, looking back, is able to place the events in a larger context. At the beginning of the story, she refers to a newspaper clipping her mother has sent describing another water-thief killing. In this instance, the aggrieved farmer had shot the thief and then turned the gun on himself, and her mother had commented, "Dad and I don't see why he had to shoot himself, too. Do you?" The narrator then reflects:

That's a very Western query. A poem written by Thomas Hornsby Ferril begins: "Here in America nothing is long ago. . . ." and that's very Western, too. People out West remember when important things were settled violently, and they remember the wide, dry wastes before the mountain water was captured and put to use. Even now, the dry spaces. . . are always there, waiting to take over; dryness hugs the green fields, pushing in, only the irrigation ditches keeping it at bay. (*WN*, p. 4.)

But even as a child, the narrator had held herself somewhat aloof from the community's way of looking at things. This had gained her, in her family, a reputation of being "morbid" (*WN*, p. 3). And it enables her to pose the question that brings the story to its conclusion:

One other memory remains. I recall an evening, months after the trial was over, when my parents and I were driving along the road where his fields lay and saw Brother Tolsen working with the little streams that were running among his young corn. Dad and Mother waved and called to him. He lifted an arm to answer, and I saw that he held a shovel in the other hand. "I wonder if he bought a new shovel," I said suddenly.

For a minute, the air seemed to have gone dead about us, in the peculiar way it sometimes can, which is so puzzling to a child. Then Mother turned to me angrily. "Don't you ever let me hear you say a thing like that again!" she said. "Brother Tolsen is a good, kind man!" (*WN*, p. 14.)

"Where Nothing Is Long Ago" stands on its own as a work of fiction. But it also draws meaning from history. Scarcely a community in Utah has not had, somewhere in its past, a violent dispute over water rights. And the institutions of an oasis society are deeply ingrained. The watermaster, as Sorensen observes, was "an official of great importance

in a Utah town" (*WN*, p. 5), and the water turn an important occasion:

We children followed the water like pioneers, finding what dams were in and wading in the ditches where the water was highest. We kept ourselves rosy and crisp with it. Sometimes my grandmother would go with us and put her feet into the water to cool off. I recall her saying many times that Brigham Young must have been a true prophet, because he had said that Utah was The Place right in the middle of July, when nobody would think, to look at it without water, that it would ever grow a respectable bean. (*WN*, pp. 5-6.)

While a scarcity of water afflicts the entire region, it has always been a special problem in Sanpete Valley where there is little storage and much dependence on small creeks that tend to give out in midsummer when the snow has melted from the high plateau. A U.S. Department of Agriculture report in 1890 noted that "The water supply is scanty even for one-half the land" and suggested that the problem had been compounded by the conditions of Mormon settlement, where the first settlers were encouraged to share surplus water rights with those who arrived later:

After a late comer has used the water for several years and has established a home, it becomes a matter of great difficulty, both legally and actually, to deprive him of water, destroying his trees and fields, in order that the older settlers shall have enough, and yet, on the other hand, irrigators holding prior rights feel that it is not just for other men to come in and gradually destroy the value of their farms by acquiring the greater part of the water.²⁸

Thus the report sketches the conditions that laid the groundwork for violent confrontations of the kind described by Sorensen.

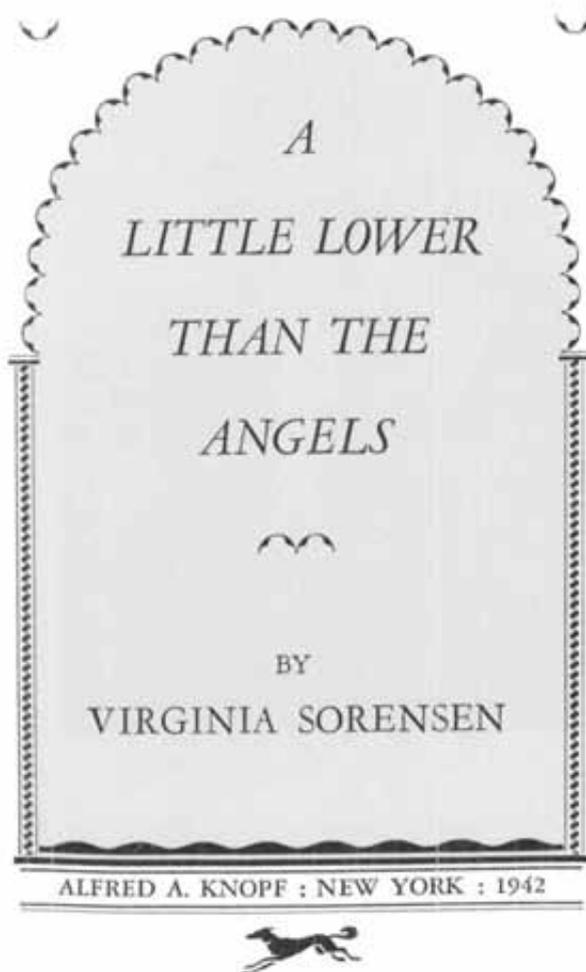
Henry James distinguished the methods of the historical novelist from those of the historian by saying, "The historian, essentially, wants more documents than he can really use; the dramatist only wants more liberties than he can really take."²⁹ Sorensen makes a similar distinction: "I find that I put in whatever suits the story. It doesn't matter whether it happened now or then . . . This makes me realize that I am always busy with fiction and no good at history."³⁰ Or in slightly different terms, from a 1988 lecture, "If you happen to have a novelist's turn of mind, you can't do anything but what it connects."³¹ Virginia Sorensen's Manti

²⁸U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Report on Agriculture by Irrigation in the Western Part of the United States at the Eleventh Census 1890*, quoted in Amrei, *The Other Forty-Niners*, p. 59.

²⁹Henry James, *Preface to The Aspern Papers*, pp. 161-62.

³⁰"If You Are a Writer, You Write," p. 18.

³¹Virginia Sorensen, lecture presented at Brigham Young University, October 11, 1988.



*Title page
of Sorensen's
first novel.*

books are not a substitute for the social history of Sanpete County that remains to be written. But no one has better captured what it was like to be alive in small-town Utah during what was perhaps its period of greatest vitality. Sorensen has acknowledged that Kate Alexander, the character who longs for a poet to match "the story of the water," was closely modeled on her "apostate" grandmother.³² Kate would probably be pleased, then, to think that from her own loins would come the poet who would tell the story of the water as well as it has thus far been told.

³²"If You Are a Writer, You Write!" p. 30.



Bernard DeVoto, 1952. Salt Lake Tribune photograph, USHS collections.

Shooting the Sheriff: A Look at Bernard DeVoto, Historian

BY PETER R. HACKER

CATHERINE DRINKER BOWEN, A FERVENT ADMIRER OF Bernard DeVoto, once wrote him complaining that a history professor had criticized her

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“romantic” addiction to American history. DeVoto hastily replied that American history is

the most romantic of all histories. It began in myth and has developed through three centuries of fairy stories. . . . If the mad, impossible voyage of Columbus or Cartier or La Salle or Coronado or John Ledyard is not romantic, if the stars did not dance in the sky when the Constitutional Convention met, if Atlantis has any landscape stranger or the other side of the moon any lights or colors or shapes more unearthly than the customary homespun of Lincoln and the morning coat of Jackson, well, I don't know what romance is. . . . The simplest truth you can ever write about our history will be charged. . . with romanticism, and if you are afraid of the word you had better start practicing seriously on your. . . fiddle.¹

Reinforced, Bowen pressed on with her romantic conviction, accepting the unshakeable truth of DeVoto's declaration.

Because of his romanticism, some historians were reluctant to accept DeVoto as a colleague. He was, after all, an unsuccessful novelist, a prolific short story writer, a journalist, a literary critic, an editor of several literary publications, a political activist, and a well-known conservationist—not strictly a full-time historian. Furthermore, his histories, riddled with miniscule errors and sometimes lacking in adequate primary sources, were certainly not the work of a “professional,” they insisted. A “professional historian” should at least have a master's degree, something DeVoto did not possess.

Throughout most of his life, in fact, DeVoto would have agreed with them; he frequently denied being a historian. He preferred to call himself a “literary department store” or, using H. G. Wells's self-coined title, “a journalist exploiting history.”² “I can't ever be a historian, DeVoto confided, “for I hate detail and can't spare the time for original research. I'm a journalist. . . a mere literary gent who can be a nice press agent for history.”³ Later he remarked, “I am quite incapable of determining facts, recognizing facts, appraising facts, putting facts in relation to one another, confining myself by facts, or even recording facts,” and he was not going to join his friends “in the pretense” that he had “the kind of mind that can write history.”⁴

Not all “professionals,” however, shared the reluctance to adorn him with the title of “historian.” Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., recognized

¹BDV to Catherine Drinker Bowen, [n.d.], in Wallace Stegner, ed., *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1975), pp. 285–86.

²Gerald W. Johnson, “The Revolving Bookstand,” *American Scholar* 13 (1943–44): 490.

³BDV to Garrett Mattingly, summer 1933, in Stegner, *Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, p. 267.

⁴*Ibid.*, BDV to Mattingly, December 28, 1945, p. 282.

the importance of DeVoto's historical writings. "Too many historians," he declared, "have had their elementary curiosity ground out of them somewhere along the process of graduate training; they tell us everything except what it would have been like to have been there. But DeVoto never forgets this."⁵

Another distinguished historian, Henry Steele Commager, asked DeVoto to write a book on the Far West covering the period from 1830 to 1860. The work would be included in the multi-volume series, *The Rise of the American Nation*, of which Commager was one of the general editors. Feeling unqualified and somewhat intimidated, DeVoto humbly refused the offer. It seems clear, however, that Commager would not have made the offer if DeVoto had indeed been unqualified as a historian.⁶

Whether DeVoto is remembered as a historian or as a "literary department store" is of secondary importance. The primary concern is that his historical works receive the scholarly recognition deserved by their extensive research and wide readership. Although his histories did not include statistical charts, ratio curves, or computer analysis, they were generally accurate and well received; his impact was too great to be brushed aside by envious "professionals."

Born on January 11, 1897, to a Roman Catholic father and a Mormon mother, DeVoto began life in a town also split along religious lines—Ogden, Utah. His upbringing turned him into a skeptical realist, an aggressive opponent of gospels and absolutes. The pressures inflicted on him by two competing and incompatible religions convinced him that both sides were wrong; simple answers and airtight theories were not to be trusted. "I early acquired a notion that all gospels were false, and all my experience since then has confirmed it . . . I distrust absolutes. Rather," he divulged, "I long ago passed from distrust of them to opposition. And with them let me include prophecy, simplification, generalization, abstract logic, and especially the habit of mind which consults theory first and experience only afterward."⁷

DeVoto's first works to incorporate history consisted of several short stories and a few novels about his home state. Filled with the anti-Mormon sentiment that his father had long striven to implant in young Bernard's psyche, these early writings branded DeVoto as Utah's most

⁵Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., review of *The Course of Empire*, *New England Quarterly* 26 (1953): 259.

⁶BDV to Henry Steele Commager, April 29, 1946, in Stegner, *Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, pp. 283-84.

⁷BDV, "My Dear Edmund Wilson," *Saturday Review of Literature* 15 (February 15, 1937): 8.

articulate antagonist—a label he never outgrew.⁸ In “Utah” (1926), for example, he wrote that for most Utahns it was a trial to sign their names and that artistically the state was a desert. They “talk only of the prophet, hogs, and Fords” and “those who have no interest in social or intellectual or artistic life may live there as well as anywhere else.” “Civilized life,” he concluded, “does not exist in Utah. It has never existed there. It will never exist there.”⁹

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s DeVoto wrote not only on Utah but on the West in general. He also evinced an interest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century frontier literature, writing the preface and introduction to *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth*—a volume in the Americana Deserta Series devoted to reviving frontier literature, of which he was the general editor.¹⁰ While it may be true that such contributions were not yet the works of a historian, they did inspire him to conduct historical research and prepared the way for him to compose his landmark biography, *Mark Twain's America* (1932).¹¹

This book, based on ground-breaking research, completely discredited previously accepted interpretations of Twain's life, especially those propounded by the noted eastern scholar Van Wyck Brooks. Considered to be both a history and literary criticism, *Mark Twain's America* was immensely successful. After years of struggle as an unsuccessful novelist, DeVoto suddenly found himself clutching a national reputation. He was gradually beginning to realize that perhaps history could be a more rewarding field than fiction.

Having demolished Brooks, DeVoto set out to destroy the creditability of “literary historians.” Blaming them for most of the problems

⁸Much of DeVoto's antagonism toward Utah probably sprang from his humiliation at, being the only boy enrolled in Ogden's Sisters of the Sacred Heart Catholic Girls School. His father refused to send him to a dreaded Mormon school. The following is a list of DeVoto's most important anti-Utah works: *The Crooked Mile* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1924); *The Charrot of Fire: An American Novel* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1926); *The House of Sin-Goes-Down* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928); “Ogden: The Underwriters of Salvation,” in *The Taming of the Frontier*, ed. Duncan Aikman (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1925), pp. 25-60; “Utah,” *American Mercury* 7 (March 1926): 317-23.

⁹BDV, “Utah,” pp. 322-23. DeVoto also began writing many controversial articles on the American West at this time. His West was the Rocky Mountain West—the area encompassing Montana, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, and Colorado—not the arid Southwest. The West, as he saw it, was overrun by rapacious miners, pillaging cattlemen, self-seeking politicians, and conservative voters, all of whom were encouraged by unscrupulous eastern businessmen. Because it had “assumed the posture,” he maintained, the West had been “raped.” His anger at the exploitation of his adolescent stomping ground made him into one of the most important conservationists in the twentieth century. See his “Footnote on the West,” *Harper's*, November 1927, pp. 713-22; “The West: A Plundered Province,” *Harper's*, August 1934, pp. 353-64 (reprinted as “The Plundered Province,” in BDV, *Forays and Rebuttals* [Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1936], pp. 46-65); “The West Against Itself,” *Harper's*, January 1947, pp. 1-13 (reprinted in BDV, *The Easy Chair* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955], pp. 231-56).

¹⁰*The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931).

¹¹BDV, *Mark Twain's America* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1932).

faced by colleges and universities, DeVoto claimed that freshmen were ignorant of the facts of American history because there had been a concerted effort by "fashionable intellectuals" to "deny the validity of the American experience." By dwelling on issues like Andrew Jackson's poor spelling, Rachel Jackson's habit of chewing tobacco, and the inevitable collapse of capitalism, they had denied students the incentive to study what was actually a glorious past.¹²

He also believed that the literary historians attempted to simplify the past and wrote history without the tools or responsibilities of historians. "Many men are confident that they can sum up a nation and a people in one manuscript page," he wrote, "but I must refuse to try. I have no formula to explain the American past or present, still less the future The fault I find with the literary is precisely that they have such formulas."¹³

From 1933 to 1935 DeVoto supported himself, as always, by selling short stories to popular periodicals. But articles like "Jonathan Dyer, Frontiersman" (1933), "The West: A Plundered Province" (1934), and "Fossil Remnants of the Frontier" (1935) were carefully researched works that exemplified his increasing competence in the field of history.¹⁴ In his 1934 article "How Not to Write History" he insisted that history be written from fact, not intuition, and that to write of a generalized notion like the "American mind" or "the Frontier" was absurd.¹⁵ He was becoming increasingly perceptive and his theories started taking shape.

Some of his most advanced theories concerned the field of literary history. His criticism of literary historians did not reflect his attitudes toward the importance of literary history. After all, DeVoto himself was a literary historian, having written a seminal work in the field—*Mark Twain's America*. At the 1936 meeting of the American Historical Association, DeVoto participated in a session composed of economic, political, social, and literary historians who had been selected to discuss different approaches to the "new" social history. Asked to represent the

¹²BDV, "The Easy Chair," *Harper's*, July 1943, p. 129. DeVoto wrote his first "Easy Chair" column for *Harper's* magazine in November 1935. He wrote one each month until his death in 1955; the last appeared in the January 1956 issue. From January 1943 through September 1949 "The Easy Chair" was the only title on the column in *Harper's*. DeVoto created subtitles for most of his columns in other years.

¹³BDV, "My Dear Edmund Wilson," p. 8.

¹⁴See BDV, "Jonathan Dyer, Frontiersman," *Harper's*, September 1933, pp. 491-501 (reprinted as "The Life of Jonathan Dyer, Frontiersman" in *Forays and Rebuttals*, pp. 3-24); BDV, "The West: A Plundered Province"; BDV, "Fossil Remnants of the Frontier," *Harper's*, April 1935, pp. 590-600 (reprinted in *Forays and Rebuttals*, pp. 25-45).

¹⁵BDV, "How Not to Write History," *Harper's*, January 1934, pp. 199-208.

interests of literary history, he happily expounded on the virtues of his field and recklessly flung his opinions at the spectators. A careful examination of his harangue reveals several themes that appear, without exception, in all of his work—especially his infatuation with the common folk of the past and the conviction that the books they wrote and read best indicate what they were really like.¹⁶

Introducing his purpose, he stated that obviously the student of literature must also be a student of history. But, he hoped to also “establish the reciprocal principle, that the historian must be a student of literature,” not just of politics and economics.¹⁷ To him there was no separation between the fields of literature and history. “Literature is an emulsion which holds in relationship much of the material of social history, and more use should be made of it as such.”¹⁸ It is “a record of social experience, an embodiment of social myths and ideals and aims, and an organization of social beliefs and sanctions.” He maintained that since “literature is affected by all social energies” it is “frequently the best and sometimes the only place where their actual working can be examined. It is the most dependable guide to ethics and morals,” and is “the meeting place of more subjects that are vital to history than any other single meeting place.”¹⁹

One of DeVoto's primary objectives was to popularize history by colorful writing. The historians' obligation, as he saw it, was to conduct exhaustive research and then select colorful, yet depictive, facts to make the material engaging to readers. One must make value judgments in the arrangement and presentation of facts; the text must be engrossing. “You are by God going to tell him [the reader],” he wrote one of his colleagues, “what you think he has to know—that's your end of the bargain.”²⁰

When historians fail to enliven their narrative, DeVoto explained, literary amateurs willing to voice their opinions and draw conclusions assume the professionals' role. He often spoke of himself as one such amateur. Stating that “most good historical writers were academic people,” he lamented that “most academic historians wrote poorly.”

¹⁶DeVoto's contributions to the 1936 AHA meeting at Providence, Rhode Island, were published in essay form as BDV, “Interrelations of History and Literature,” in *Approaches to American Social History*, ed. William E. Lingelbach (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1937), pp. 34-56.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁰BDV to Stegner, July 7, 1952, quoted in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, pp. 322-23.

The professionals ruled out the interesting, “the narrative treatment of events, the study of personality, the resolution of problems and above all, the free and constant expression of judgment.” They also avoided the exploration and synthesis of facts in American history by not making value judgments.²¹

Realize the complexity of history, he growled—its facts, their relationships, and their contradictions. Keep a tentative synthesis open to modification or reversal and “never assume.” Write only “was,” never “must have been.” “When you’ve got a climax,” he continued, “make it a climax. No point in putting a silencer on the gun when you shoot a sheriff.” And most important, “write for the reader, never for yourself.”²²

With theories, opinions, and arguments neatly organized, DeVoto began writing the first of three histories about America’s westward movement. His first effort, *The Year of Decision*, was received amid hails of praise when published in 1943.²³ Using 1846 as a focal point, DeVoto embraced topics such as Manifest Destiny, the Mexican War, the acquisition of Oregon and California along with Texas and other southwestern territories, the Santa Fe Trail, the eviction of the Mormons from Nauvoo the Beautiful on the Mississippi, and the Wilmot Proviso—all in under five hundred pages.

Being extremely detailed where he wanted to be and willing to ignore entirely whatever did not serve his purposes, DeVoto presented a romanticized yet informative interpretation of America’s Manifest Destiny era. Written during the chaos and uncertainty of World War II, *The Year of Decision* recalled America’s period of unification, which, according to DeVoto, occurred before the Civil War. He maintained that events in 1846 established the inevitability of the Civil War and that geopolitical realities before the war assured a Union victory. Expansionism forced Americans to face the slavery question and marked a turning point in America’s destiny. Lured by gold and land, settlers

²¹“The Easy Chair,” *Harper’s*, April 1949, p. 53, and July 1943, p. 132; Orlan Sawey, *Bernard DeVoto* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), pp. 73-74.

²²Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, p. 148; BDV to Stegner, July 7, 1952, in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, pp. 322-23; Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, p. 130. DeVoto always stressed frugality in his writing. He believed 90,000 words to be less effective than 40,000 and tried to squeeze out information from a text that could stand on its own in a scholarly publication. He wrote to minimize adjectives, turn passive verbs into active, and to tighten or compress sentences. “As we grow older, our style becomes simpler, or it should. Age reduces us to the ultimate simplicities. There is not time left for frill and ornament.” See BDV to Dixon Wecter, June 12, 1950, in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, p. 311; Catherine Drinker Bowen, “The Historian,” in *Four Portraits and One Subject: Bernard DeVoto* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), pp. 3-4.

²³BDV, *The Year of Decision: 1846* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1943).

invaded the vast territory stretching to the Pacific, creating an empire that would eventually thwart the divisive intentions of the South.

Several historians were understandably disturbed by DeVoto's uncompromising and sometimes inaccurate judgments of men and events. Some rejected his thesis entirely. Others, like Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., declared the book was not "history," objecting to his calling John C. Fremont a "popinjay" and Zachary Taylor "a lucky fool." Carl Coke Rister disliked his allotting more space to the Donner party ordeal than any other event in 1846 and more narrative to mountain man James Clyman than to Sen. Thomas Hart Benton. He also felt that too many of the book's generalizations were based upon secondary sources. Frederic L. Paxson argued that 1846 was not a year of decision but a year of social reflex, while Henry Nash Smith, with unanimous approval, opposed DeVoto's "inevitabilities."²⁴

Ironically, nearly all of the historians who reviewed *The Year of Decision* ended their critiques with words of admiration. Discounting its flaws, they hailed it as a wonderfully readable and much needed contribution to western history. Although they scorned DeVoto's dogmatic assertions as based on insufficient evidence, they did not necessarily disagree with his conclusions. They were based on a rational evaluation of evidence and, despite some inconsequential factual errors, most agreed that DeVoto's work was not haphazard.

The Year of Decision owed much of its success to DeVoto's literary training. Writing fiction had taught him how to enliven a setting, how to describe the mundane without losing the reader. Utilizing two distinct writing techniques, DeVoto had personalized history. Wallace Stegner, writer, historian, and friend, called the first of these techniques "history by synecdoche."²⁵ By emphasizing one character, one event, or one period of time, DeVoto symbolized an entire movement. His treatment of James Clyman, the Donner tragedy, and the year 1846, are examples of this technique.

Frederick Paxson called the second method "chronological symphony."²⁶ Neither topical nor chronological, the book's form was simultaneous. DeVoto briefly introduced several events of 1846 in the first chapter, then spent the rest of the book darting back and forth among the various scenes. This novelistic style retained the reader's

²⁴Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, p. 239; Carl Coke Rister, review of *The Year of Decision* in *Journal of Southern History*, August 9, 1943, p. 415; Frederic L. Paxson, review of *The Year of Decision* in *American Historical Review* 49 (October 1943): 120.

²⁵Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, p. 240.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 243.

attention because, instead of passively glancing at the words on the page, the reader became involved in the process of unwinding history. To keep the ever-changing characters and events in logical order required concentration, and concentration was rewarding.

The success of *The Year of Decision* prompted DeVoto to set a precedent for both of his later histories. He learned that when history offers drama, one must take advantage of it. "A historian should not stop at second," he advised, "simply because some taboo of his trade said that historians did not hit home runs. Go for the fences."²⁷ It was impossible, he believed, to downplay the Donner party or James Clyman because they symbolized the energy of the pre-Civil War period. As he saw it, devoting space to congressional debates or the private correspondence of Thomas Hart Benton would have been less representative of the country's turmoil, and uninteresting to boot. "The way to understand the persons who were about to fight an unprecedented war and . . . push the nation's boundary to the Pacific," he explained, "is to steep yourself in Stephen Foster's songs." *Across the Wide Missouri*, his next history, confirmed the success of his methods.²⁸

In 1935 about one hundred previously unknown Alfred Jacob Miller watercolors were discovered in Baltimore's Peale Museum. The pieces, painted during an 1837 expedition in which Miller accompanied Scottish adventurer William Drummond Stewart to the Rocky Mountains, depicted scenes of the mountain fur trade as it neared its climax. Mae Reed Porter, the discoverer of the paintings, and Emery Reves, an entrepreneur of sorts who was interested in capitalizing on their worth, sought an interested publishing company. Houghton Mifflin, excited by the Miller pieces, agreed to print them and asked DeVoto to write a 20,000-word introduction to the collection.

Unable to conceal his eagerness, DeVoto agreed almost immediately. Here was an opportunity to write about the intermediate period of western history between Lewis and Clark's expedition and *The Year of Decision*. By writing on the closing of one American era, the fur trade during the 1830s, he could show how it helped make possible another era, the expansionism of 1846. The problem was that the publishers desired only a 20,000-word explication. After much pleading and coercion, DeVoto convinced them that the collection could best be used to illustrate a history of the fur trade from 1833 to 1839.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸BDV, *The Year of Decision*, p. 139; BDV, *Across the Wide Missouri* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947).

In *Across the Wide Missouri* (1947), DeVoto wrote, "I have tried to describe the mountain fur trade as a business and as a way of life, . . . what its characteristic experiences were, what conditions governed them, how it helped to shape our heritage, what its relation was to the Westward expansion of the United States, and most of all how the mountain men lived."²⁹ Although the book contained some factual errors—far fewer than in *The Year of Decision*—he was pleased to learn he had accomplished far more than he had attempted.

Not only had he once again succeeded in personalizing history, but he won the Bancroft and Pulitzer prizes of 1947 as well. Searching for faults, critics could only say that he did not fully understand Native Americans.³⁰ Perhaps the most important result of the book, was that it gave him the confidence to tell his friend, Garrett Mattingly, "by God I admit it now. I'm a historian."³¹ These were all notable achievements for what he later called the easiest book he had ever written.

With the 1830s taken care of, DeVoto was ready to write about the Lewis and Clark expedition, completing his western trilogy. As he researched his topic, he gradually realized that, unlike his previous histories, his new book could easily incorporate over six hundred years of history and still remain unfinished. The Lewis and Clark expedition, as he saw it, was a turning point in world history; to establish the background of such a momentous episode could require spending the rest of his life in European archives alone. The range of the book was, therefore, reduced to 278 years. Uncomfortable with the still lengthy time span, DeVoto became intimidated by his work. In a fit of frustration, he confessed to Mattingly, "I wouldn't be so scared of history if I had a mind, maybe." Rhetorical questions like "What book am I aiming at?" "How the hell do I learn historical geography?" and "What the hell do I know about world history?" revealed the confusion that plagued DeVoto until completion of the book.³² As a result, he produced the least effective volume of his trilogy, often complaining that it was the most difficult book he ever wrote.

²⁹BDV, *Across the Wide Missouri*, pp. xi-xii.

³⁰Stanley Vestal, review of *Across the Wide Missouri* in *American Historical Review* 53 (April 1948): 560.

³¹BDV to Mattingly, July 11, 1947, in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, p. 290.

³²BDV to Mattingly, November 16, 1948, in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, p. 303; Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, p. 321. Unsure where to begin his text, DeVoto asked Commager for advice. He claimed that Commager had to help him because "You've got a stern obligation to your profession and if amateurs insist on trying to practice it, you've got to do what you can to keep the resulting damage at a minimum." Unfortunately, even Commager could not have foreseen the difficulties encountered in completing the project. See BDV to Commager, April 30, 1944, quoted in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, p. 272.

Completed in 1952, *The Course of Empire* covered the period from Cortes and Cartier to Lewis and Clark.³³ Emphasizing the opening of Mexico, Canada, and America to European exploitation, DeVoto propounded his geopolitical view of Manifest Destiny. Because he abhorred the isolationist sentiment of the Midwest before World War II, he discussed in detail the impact various European powers had had on America's western experience. The result was, as usual, readable, entertaining, and informative. The book was argumentative as well, for DeVoto had learned to defend his controversial positions effectively. He demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the period's geography and answered one critic's complaint about *Across the Wide Missouri* with extensive research on American Indians. *The Course of Empire* sold well, appealed to the general public, and won the National Book Award in 1953. It was not, however, a critical success.

Reviewers again criticized his occasional inaccuracies and lopsided emphasis on selected constituents. Now that he was considered a "historian," more was expected of him. The Herbert Bolton school did not care for his overemphasizing the importance of Lewis and Clark. Other pathfinders, they argued, like Anza, Kino, Serra, and Portola, had made equally important contributions to the exploration of the American West, yet DeVoto referred only vaguely to them. Richard Glover of the University of Manitoba observed several misconceptions about Canadian history, while one reviewer in the *Catholic Historical Review* claimed that the work was "sadly marred by the jibes of a blatant liberal, whose needless animadversions on things Christian and Catholic" were "not only unhistorical (i.e. untrue) but . . . in the worst possible taste as well." He added the "his anti-Spanish bias, evident in such phrases as the 'Spanish genius for treachery,' was inexcusable."³⁴

The Course of Empire also failed to win the approval of the leading Manifest Destiny historian, Frederick Merk.³⁵ DeVoto staunchly adhered to his own geopolitical view of Manifest Destiny. He believed that Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory and sent Lewis and Clark to the Pacific to bolster the American claim to the territory.

In a letter to Merk, DeVoto insisted that the geographic influence in shaping American history simply could not be overemphasized. The

³³BDV, *The Course of Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952).

³⁴Richard Glover, review of *The Course of Empire* in *Canadian Historical Review* 34 (September 1953): 297; *Catholic Historical Review* 39 (October 1953): 348.

³⁵"I'd rather have your approval than anyone else writing American history," DeVoto once said to Merk. He was even "willing to forego the word 'history'" and say that he was not writing history to gain Merk's approval. See BDV to Merk, July 30, 1951, in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, 517.

U.S. occupies the territory it does, he proclaimed, because of geopolitical forces. "Geographical determinism" explains why the Union Pacific went over Bridger's Pass, and the Oregon Trail over South Pass and why the North had a distinct advantage in the Civil War.³⁶

Convinced that "geographical factors adding up to a very powerful force indeed had their part in determining the size, shape, and government of the United States," he had devoted over two hundred pages to geopolitical influences on American history. Merk, however, remained unconvinced that geographic factors were as important as DeVoto assumed and refused to give *The Course of Empire* the approval he so desperately sought.³⁷

Following *The Course of Empire*, DeVoto published his last historical work, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*.³⁸ A much-needed contribution, it condensed the voluminous journals, making them appealing to lay readers. It was simply an effort, by the man who knew them better than anyone else, to make the journals more readable and increase their accessibility.

Having completed *The Journals* in 1953, DeVoto abandoned history. After a lifetime of writing fact and fiction about the West, he felt that he had run out of things to say about its past.³⁹ By proving to laymen that real people and events are often more fascinating than fiction, DeVoto contributed more to the popularity of history than most of his "professional" peers. Proudly reflecting on his histories, he believed they provided an important "description of the part the West played as *one* of the forces that made the nation what it is." Whether or not academics recognized them as histories he did not "know or care." He only wanted credit for being one of the few to recognize that "history is not only knowledge and wisdom . . . but is also art."⁴⁰

³⁶DeVoto once said that "the Civil War is the best single lens through which to look at American history" and that a book about it would say at the center what he was trying to say at the periphery. He believed that continental expansion was "the next best lens." A book using the war to understand the American experience would require a lifetime, so he chose to write about the continental expansion that took place before the war. This is not to say that he ignored the war, for he often voiced his opinions about it. He claimed that it was not the "war between the states" but the "Civil War" and that it was fought over slavery and secessionism. The right side won and he despised southerners who disagreed. See BDV to William Sloane, December 5, 1948, in Stegner, *The Letters of Bernard DeVoto*, pp. 306-8; *ibid.*, BDV to Madeline McQuown, January 3, 1947, p. 289.

³⁷BDV to Merk, July 30, 1951.

³⁸*The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, ed. BDV (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953).

³⁹Keeping busy as the humpious writer of "The Easy Chair" editorial column in *Harper's*, a post he held for twenty years, he continued to fight against the unfairness and hypocrisy evident in American society. He became a leader of the anti-McCarthy movement, an important political campaigner for Adlai E. Stevenson, and one of the most influential conservationists of the twentieth century. His efforts to prevent the further desecration of the American West gained international approval and continuously employed his energies until his fatal heart attack in 1955.

⁴⁰BDV to McQuown, January 3, 1947.



Mary Teasel. USHS collections.

Mary Teasel, Yet Another American in Paris

BY MARTHA S. BRADLEY

DURING THE WINTER OF 1864 ELIZABETH JANE GARDNER traveled to Paris to study art. Upon her arrival she was taken aback by how different reality was from her dream:

It was the audacity and ignorance of youth . . . I never dreamed on quitting America that all Paris had not a studio nor a master who would receive me.

Mrs. Bradley, Salt Lake City, presented a version of this paper at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the Utah State Historical Society.

. . . I had forgotten, if I ever knew, that the few French and European women then familiar to the Salon . . . like the women painters who had preceded them were the wives, sisters or daughters of painters, and it was in the ateliers of their kinfolk they lived and worked.

But Elizabeth was not willing to leave it at that. Determined to infiltrate the academies where one could learn the magic behind great art, but unable to enter a drawing atelier as her female self, she resorted to subterfuge—bobbing her hair and donning the clothes of a schoolboy, which required special permission from the chief of police. Finally a Parisian art education stretched out before her at a government school of drawing and modeling. A decade later, when the private Academie Julian opened its classes to women, she drew for the first time from live models under the tutelage of the prodigious Bougereau. More than the lively Miss Gardner's drawing technique caught her instructor's eye, and soon Elizabeth Jane Gardner Bougereau, like so many female artists before, mastered her technique under the instruction of her husband. She would later remark, "I would rather be known as the best imitator of Bougereau than not be known at all."¹

The same winter that Elizabeth Jane Gardner first traveled to Paris a girl was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, who would grow up to share her dream. There is little in the story of Mary Teasdel's early life to distinguish her from hundreds of other Utah Mormon girls and provide a clue as to why she chose such a new frontier. During her lifetime, many doors would open to women who wanted a career in art, but the obstacles were still great.

Perhaps the single most important factor of Mary's youth that allowed her to develop her talent in art was the relative wealth of her family and her father's willingness to lavish it on his daughter. S. P. Teasdel was a merchant, the equivalent of a present-day real estate developer, and an entrepreneur. As a girl Mary lived in a beautiful, spacious home. Her family traveled extensively and enjoyed every cultural experience afforded in this western state's capital city. Hers was a liberal, generous home environment where she was taught the value of work, thrift, education, and the importance of planning for the future. She grew up believing she was indeed gifted and uniquely talented.

The Teasdels insisted that Mary's education include what Alice Merrill Horne called the "accomplishments": music, both instrumental and vocal, fine stitching, and drawing and painting. Although her

¹Linda Rose McCage, "Mme. Bougereau, Pathfinder," *New York Times Book Review and Magazine*, February 19, 1922, p. 16.

education was for the most part traditional and designed more to create an interesting woman than a scholar, Mary pushed it as far as she could and graduated from the University of Deseret in 1886 as an art and music major.

As one of the territory's first generation of college-educated women, Mary looked toward a career fully believing that the world was at her command. Within the context of her age, she chose one of the few "respectable" occupations open to single or impoverished genteel women who needed a means of support. After she finally made a commitment to the serious study of art, she proposed to "go abroad and study art from the foundation."² Her father "reposed full confidence in his own powers to provide for his gifted daughter," which simply meant that money would not stand in her way.

Typical of his generation, S. P. Teasdel was proud of Mary's artistic talent but ultimately did not approve of professions for women. According to Horne, he believed that girls should be supported by their fathers and saw no reason why a woman should even desire to be independent in financial matters when she had parents or brothers to "gladly furnish her means."

Mary Teasdel would eventually leave Utah to study art, but it would not be as simple as it had once seemed. S. P. Teasdel was one of thousands who lost their fortunes during the depression of the mid-1890s. Explanations of his misfortune vary but generally attribute it to a series of bad investments and internal fraud. He was frequently portrayed as the victim of unscrupulous men who took advantage of his generosity. Whatever the cause of his financial difficulties, Teasdel found it impossible to make good on his promise to support Mary's proposed art studies abroad.

Within a few months of her father's financial downfall Mary's two older brothers died. A month later her only sister died in childbirth. Surely it must have seemed that the world was tumbling around her. But in the midst of all the rubble she saw a glimmer of hope—one of her dead brothers, Harry, having no wife or children of his own, had left his savings to her. This sum, added to her own savings, was enough to fund three years in art school. At that moment, her commitment to a future career as an artist was tested most dearly. As she chose to leave her grieving parents and her last living brother, she must have believed that

²Alice Merrill Horne, *Devotees and Their Shrines: A Handbook of Utah Art* (Salt Lake City, 1914), p. 58.

what she was about to do was important. A career in art was not for Mary a frivolous pursuit—simply a lady's accomplishment—but a way she could contribute something of worth to the world and in particular to Utah. Later in life, as she tried to express her feelings about the social role of the artist to an audience of young adults, she would begin with the words of Robert Browning:

For—don't you mark we're made so that we love first when we see them painted—things we have passed perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see; and so they are better, painted, better to us which is the same thing. Art was given for that—God uses us to help each other so, leading our minds out.³



J. T. Harwood,
USHS collections.

Mary Teasdel had studied art in Utah with the best the state had to offer—J. T. Harwood. No other Utah artist possessed such natural gifts in painting. One art historian described Harwood's strength as "a fine sense of structure, a deeply rooted feeling for professionalism and craftsmanship, and a good control of muted color."⁴ Harwood's students, including Teasdel, "prospered under his tutelage. He made us draw constantly and only the best work from a student was accepted. We would spend a whole week preparing a drawing of a ball."⁵

³Mary Teasdel, "True Art," *Young Woman's Journal*, January 1904, p. 14.

⁴James Haselrine, *100 Years of Utah Art* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, 1965), p. 19.

⁵*Ibid.*

Harwood had advised Mary to spend at least one year studying at an American academy of art to become as proficient as possible in the rudiments of art before venturing abroad for more expensive training. Harwood himself had spent a number of years during the early 1890s in Paris at the Academie Julian, the first Utahn to do so, and the first to exhibit at the French Salon. Teasdel would be the third. After Harwood's studies in Paris he returned to Utah to open a studio and teach art using the same methods as the French schools.⁶

In the 1890s a number of prestigious art academies in the eastern United States offered classes for women. The Pennsylvania Academy of Art, founded in 1805, permitted women to exhibit in the salon but did not admit female students until 1844. In those first female drawing classes women could draw from plaster casts of the Apollo Belvedere or Laocoon, but not before the instructor descreetly placed a close-fitting but conspicuous fig leaf over the "offending members." In 1868 the first life drawing classes with nude models opened to women, and by 1877 some schools allowed an occasional male nude model. In one instance this unprecedented action created a scandal in polite Philadelphia society. A letter written in 1882 to the director of the prestigious Pennsylvania Academy of Art epitomized public opinion:

Does it pay for a young lady of a refined, godly household to be urged as the only way of obtaining knowledge of true art, to enter a class where every feeling of maidenly delicacy is violated, where she becomes . . . so familiar with the persons of degraded women and sight of nude males, that no possible art can restore her lost treasure of chaste and delicate thoughts. . . . The stifling heat of the room adds to the excitement, and what could be a cool impassioned study in a room at 35 degrees, at 85 degrees or even higher, is dreadful.⁷

This prejudicial view of the supposed adverse effects of life drawing classes on the morals of women was not an aberration that appeared in Pennsylvania and nowhere else. It was a belief perpetuated throughout the art world. May Alcott, the younger sister of Louisa May Alcott, angrily wrote while studying at the Academie Julian:

The lower school as it is called, or male class, no longer opens its doors to women, for the price, being but one half of the upper (womans') school, attracted too many, also, with better models, and a higher standard of

⁶James Taylor Harwood, *A Basket of Chips: An Autobiography by James Taylor Harwood* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1985), p. 45.

⁷Christine Jones Huber, *The Pennsylvania Academy and Its Women* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1973), p. 21.

work, it was found impossible that women should paint from the living nude models of both sexes, side by side with the Frenchmen.⁸

Women were excluded from drawing from nude models except in extraordinary circumstances until the early twentieth century.

Mary Teasel entered this world so full of restrictions on what a good woman could do in 1897—her thirty-fourth year—when she and her friend and fellow artist Cora Hooper boarded a train for New York City and the National Academy of Art. The National Academy had begun admitting women students after 1871 but did not open anatomy classes to them until 1914. For the most part women were limited to drawing from plaster casts in the “antiques” class.

Two years later, in 1899, Teasdel and another Utah artist, May Farlow, traveled to Paris to study at the Academie Julian, following not only her teacher, J. T. Harwood, but the Mormon art “missionaries” John Hafen, John Fairbanks, Lorus Pratt, and Edwin Evans.

The academic tradition can be traced back to Plato and Athens in the fourth century B.C. During the Middle Ages painters joined guilds to protect their rights as craftsmen rather than as creative artists. The origin of the modern academy of art is associated with Leonardo Da Vinci who, at the end of the fifteenth century, hoped to elevate the status of the artist as a practitioner of the liberal rather than the practical arts. The academy in the modern sense really began in the seventeenth century when academies of arts and sciences surfaced throughout Europe. The French government established the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1648, and the Ecole dominated French art until the mid of the nineteenth century. An artist’s survival often depended on his acceptance at the biennial salons sponsored by the Ecole. Indeed, it is difficult to find a eighteenth-century painter or sculptor still recognized today who was not an academician exhibited at the salons.

During the nineteenth century the salon occupied the absolute center of power in the art community. It functioned as the official arbiter of taste, passing judgment on the work of artists from around the world. Salons became vast affairs in which thousands of paintings covered every inch of wall space from ground level to the ceiling, paintings accepted by juries composed of presumably competent and occasionally distinguished representatives of the art community.⁹

⁸May Alcott, *Studying Art Abroad and How to Do It Cheaply* (Boston, 1879), p. 48.

⁹Bernard Denvir, ed., *The Impressionists at First Hand* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p.

Women were not permitted to study at the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts until the end of the nineteenth century when a group of French women artists, organized as the Union of Women Painters and Sculptors, stormed the Ecole in 1896. The less prestigious Julian and Colarossi academies had opened their doors to female students a decade earlier.

From its inception the Academie Julian had expressed a more democratic attitude than the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Its founder, Rudolph Julian, was a bookseller before 1868 when he opened a painting school in the Passage des Panamas. By 1877 it had become fashionable for young female artists to frequent the studios and ateliers of the Academie Julian. That same year a young Russian artist, Marie Bashkirtseff, first studied at Julian. She noted in her journal the courtship of Julian and his future wife, Amelie Baury-Sorel: "The spanish girl is at least 25 years old but gives herself 22. It could be thought that she is paid to wait upon everybody and to take care of the studio. She trembles when Robert-Fleury or Julian pay attention to any of the students."¹⁰ In reality Madame Julian was not Spanish but simply eccentric, dressing in a wildly exotic manner with wide belts, enormous bows tied beneath her chin, and bold, vibrant colors. She took charge of the women's atelier at 51 Rue de Vivienne, founded in 1880, and later directed the school at Rue de Dragon which still bears the name Julian.

Teasdel and the other women students worked freely under the instruction of such salon-approved masters of the day as Robert-Fluery, Benjamin Constant, Jules Simon, and Bougereau. Although Madame Julian directed the female division, there were no women instructors.

Three study periods—morning, afternoon, and evening—divided the day. Classes were held from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 5 p.m. Julian took care to allow students time to enjoy Parisian night life by creating the option of taking evening classes between 8 and 10 p.m., as elsewhere, or from 5 to 7 p.m. Serious students attended more than one class each day. Teasdel took four hours in the morning and three hours—from 7 to 10 p.m.—in the evening, not being one to frequent the Parisian cabarets.

Each week students positioned themselves around a live model, cast, or still life that they would draw for the next few days. Twice during the week, usually on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, the teacher

¹⁰Marie Bashkirtseff, quoted in Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979), p. 317.

would stage a critique, passing from student to student, commenting on each piece of work, giving a "short but telling criticism."¹¹ The student would patiently wait beside her work. John Hafen described the scene: "When the teacher comes to give his verdict, it is the custom for all to rise and listen with bated breath to the words that fall from this wonderful person. It is purely a one-sided affair for the student has nothing to say. All that he is or knows is drawn or painted on his canvas or paper. To be so presumptuous as to say 'The model moved' or 'The light was duller yesterday,' would bring the student in disgrace."¹² One student remarked, "It is truly wonderful how well these master minds understand the needs and failings of each student, and how readily they grasp the individual aim of each soul, thus encouraging individuality in each. Although the professors spend only two or three minutes on each student's work twice a week, they can readily discern the earnest, diligent workers and the aimless or idle ones. To the latter they are very severe in their criticism."¹³

One morning Benjamin Constant criticized the work of a young English girl in Mary's class. In a very general way he described to her the type of corrections she needed to make in her drawing. Perhaps overwhelmed by what he had said, she responded, "That is easy to say but hard to do." Constant, astounded that she would have dared to speak so impetuously, stormed out of the room and gave no more criticisms that day. He let it be known that no further criticism would be heard until the young Englishwoman left the class. Eventually the woman deferred to his superior status and begged his pardon to be allowed to stay.¹⁴

This type of drama helped to create the atmosphere instructors seemed to thrive on in the classroom. The American artist Cecilia Beaux described Robert-Fluery as if he were the key figure in a romantic novel. He was, according to Beaux, a "young middle-aged and very handsome man . . . his eyes, grey and deeply-set, smoldered with burnt-out fires. . . . The class, although accustomed to him, was in a flutter." Robert-Fluery drifted into class to criticize the women's work once a week, for which they were pathetically grateful. Once when Beaux was working on a full-length figure drawing, Robert-Fluery bent over her and began speaking in French, which she could not understand. (He was quoting Corneille.)

¹¹John Hafen, "Art Student in Paris," *Contributor* (Salt Lake City) 15 (1893-94): 487.

¹²Horne, *Devotees*, p. 60.

¹³Hafen, "Art Student," p. 487.

¹⁴Horne, *Devotees*, pp. 60-61.

"He rose not having given me any advice, but bent his cavernous eyes on me with a penetrating but very reserved smile and turned to the next."¹⁵

Classes were so crowded and instruction so brief and limited that the best students could expect at Julian was access to live models and plenty of time for practice. Painting in the studios was even more difficult than drawing and was often made impossible by the crowds of students that filled the ateliers.

At one time Teasel studied under Jules Simon, considered by Alice Merrill Horne to be one of the greatest living artists. It was necessary to apply three months in advance for entrance into this very prestigious class which limited enrollment to the very best students. Among them were women who were associate members of the Champs de Mars, an important student organization.

Female students from the Academie Julian competed alongside their male counterparts for prizes from annual competitions staged by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. There were also competitions within the Academie Julian itself, and the best female students often were rewarded alongside the men. Prizes were handsome enough to tempt even the more wealthy students. Among those offered in an 1899 competition were a motorized three-wheeler with sidecar, first place; 100 francs, second place; 50 francs, third place; 25 francs, fourth place; and 15 bottles of champagne to be shared among six honorable mentions.¹⁶

In 1899 the American expatriate artist James MacNeil Whistler came to Paris after painting in England. He set up a studio in a quaint old house that he carefully decorated. After painting the walls in rich, warm colors, he chose draperies and furnishing described by Teasel as both tasteful and refined. Whistler's studio was elegant, but even more important to Mary, disgusted by the filth of the Academie Julian, it was kept scrupulously clean. She would remember her days under Whistler as among her most pleasant in Europe.

Whistler, fully conscious of the awe he inspired among his students, dressed for effect. Immaculately assembled, smartly attired, and easily as elegant as his home, he lent a different formality to the routine of criticisms he gave to Mary's class while decked out in a dress suit with black kid gloves. She remembered being particularly careful that no spot of paint would splatter his suit or mar his perfection.

¹⁵Cecilia Beaux, *Background with Figures* (Boston, 1939), pp. 13-27.

¹⁶Martine Herold, *The Academie Julian Is One Hundred Years Old* (n.p., n.d.).

Whistler's studio could not have been more different from the ateliers of the French academies. Unlike other teachers he would often paint directly on a student's work to illustrate a point, insisting that his students paint with a pallet of colors exactly like his own so that his work would blend into theirs. Rather than having his students draw for months on end, he started them working with color immediately, learning from the first to model as in nature with hue rather than the more limiting (in his way of thinking) black and white. Whistler would remark that sculptors had an advantage because they were immediately given the medium they were expected to use. Teasdel remembered him rubbing a finger over part of a drawing and saying: "Why do you put that all (extraneous detail) in when you can come closer to nature by leaving it out?"¹⁷

Teasdel often felt dizzy by the confusing diversity of personalities and cultures she confronted for the first time in the ateliers of Paris. In her classes women from around the world mixed and struggled with the same design or color problems. Women from every station in life filled those sunlit rooms "from the lady who comes with an equipage and footman, to the poor girl whose hard savings have brought her to the studio for a limited time. Yet it is the most democratic place in the whole world. The nobility are those who can draw and paint. Money, caste, education, and clothes, count for naught."¹⁸

The studios were often dirty, plain, and barren, with little if any furniture beyond a stool or easel. The stools were as plain and bare as the rooms themselves and ranged in height from six inches to three feet. In the center of the room a platform for the model was raised about two feet off the floor. The students formed a half-circle around this platform in three or four rows; the inside row of easels and stools was shorter than the outside ones so every student could see the model. The female studios looked the same as those for men but rented for twice the fee. The proprietors insisted that the extra fee was used to keep the women's studios cleaner, but Teasdel found them to be just as dirty.

Mary easily fit into the routine of work at the Academie Julian. Classes began early Monday morning and continued until Saturday evening. What might have been a monotonous parade of male and female models was for Mary, at last, the chance to master drawing the human form. Hafen described his life drawing class:

¹⁷Horne, *Devotees*, p. 61.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

Each Monday morning from three to ten professional male and female models are loitering about the ateliers waiting for a job. A few minutes before eight o'clock they mount the platform and show the contour of their figure and ability for posing. A vote is called, and the winning candidate engaged for the week. The manner of pose is also decided by a vote. Generally, but not always, there is a change in sex every other week. The model poses forty-five minutes and rests fifteen; repeating this from eight to twelve am, and from one to five pm every day in the week. When the school is full, . . . generally the case during the winter months, there is a model posing in each room and students are at liberty to work in any of them; but when a location is . . . chosen and the owner's name chalked on the floor under the easel, he holds a right to that spot . . . the entire week.¹⁹

Despite the fact that life drawing classes were open to women, and in some places even included nude male models, during the first decade of the twentieth century it was more typical to find a partially clothed model, usually one so young that he would pose no threat to the morality of the female artists. One atelier specified that male models wear "ordinary bathing drawers and a cloth of light material 9 feet long by 3 feet wide, which shall be wound round the loins over the drawers, passed between the legs and tucked in over the waistband; and finally a thin leather strap shall be fastened round the loins in order to insure that the cloth keep its place."²⁰ At a time when accurate rendering of the human body was central to art, one can appreciate how crippling these restrictions were. The widening of opportunities for women nevertheless led to an admirable flowering of fine craftsmanship, and at the turn of the century several American women artists were hailed by leading critics of the period as equals of men.

For the most part the instructors that Teasdel studied under at the Academie Julian were academicians whose traditional approach to work deviated little from the centuries before. In contrast to the more experimental light- and color-filled work of the impressionists, they taught an aesthetic based on smooth surfaced, carefully modeled, detailed renderings of historical, biblical, and classical subject matter. The results were often standardized, stereotypical, idealized, sentimental renderings that resisted and at all times stifled the expression of individual personalities or ideas.

Later in life Teasdel would remember this time when impressionism was officially rejected by the salon but increasingly popular among painters themselves:

¹⁹Hafen, "Art Student," p. 487.

²⁰Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 52.

It has been said that the critics never were the first to discover a genius, but in every case they have been understood and appreciated by their fellow-workers, a long time before being accepted by those who always measure the present by past traditions. The French landscape school of Eighteen Thirty is an example of that fact. What is now acknowledged to have been a great epoch, was, during the greater part of the life time of the painters, one long disheartening, sad struggle for recognition.

Because their manner was a new one, and their ideas different from past periods; they were denied their true and just rewards until the public became more familiar with their works, the strangeness wore away and their eyes were opened to the appreciation of beauty unlike any other period.²¹

At the same time, Mary was most certainly aware of the new democratic, realistic spirit that entered European painting with Jean Francois Millet and others who began painting directly from nature, using scenes from peasant and farm life that elevated humble laborers into subjects of nobility and quiet dignity. These artists of the Barbizon school who lived and painted in the French countryside, studying the effect of outdoor light, inspired in Teasdel a broader, looser technique. The tradition of open-air painting was possibly the most important lesson Teasdel learned in France and one that would become central to her artistic career as she painted beneath the skies of Normandy, at the base of the Wasatch Mountains, and on the rocky crags overlooking the sea at Carmel, California.

During her three years in France, Teasdel spent the months of the school year in Paris pursuing a rigorous schedule of class and studio work but spent her summers sketching and painting in Normandy. Paintings done during these sun-filled summers show that she was utterly charmed by the picturesque farm buildings, flower gardens, and sweeping expanse of sky-filled landscapes.

Mary and three other female students rented rooms in an old stone farmhouse surrounded by a lovely traditional French flower garden. Each afternoon the women would walk a mile and a half, stop for a picnic, and then walk another mile and a half, reveling in the changes evening brought. The three-mile hike back in the quiet twilight provided ample material for a series of memory sketches that Teasdel would execute upon her return. She set a goal for her summer work of at least one twilight and one evening color sketch each day.

During her stay in Paris, Teasdel won her share of laurels. In 1901 she became the first Utah woman and third Utahn to exhibit at the

²¹Teasdel, "True Art," p. 16.

French Salon when the jury accepted a group of her ivory miniatures. The next salon admitted a portrait entitled *Dutch Woman Knitting*, and that same summer Mary entered two other ivory miniatures in the International French Exposition—the only Utah artist to do so.

Almost as soon as Teasdel arrived home from Paris she became somewhat of a celebrity. Gov. Heber M. Wells appointed her to the board of the Utah Institute of Fine Arts, and within the year she was elected president of that body. The Institute (present Utah Arts Council) was the brainchild of Alice Merrill Horne who wrote the bill and lobbied for its creation in 1899. This legislation created the first state-supported arts organization in the U.S. and called for an annual art exhibition, a state art collection, and public lectures on art.²²

In 1908 Teasdel entered her impressionist painting, *A View up City Creek Canyon*, in the annual exhibition sponsored by the Institute of Fine Arts and won the top prize of \$300. Edwin Evans described the painting as “one of the good things that have been done in Utah.” J. T. Harwood also complimented the work of his former student, which won over his own submission, by saying, “The awards were just, and I think you show some great qualities in your work that none of the men have as yet exhibited.” In the 1908 show Teasdel also won the award for the best watercolor landscape as well as the best figure watercolor, which again received Evans’s accolades.²³ Teasdel was easily as proficient a watercolorist as an oil painter. Her watercolors have a spontaneous free spirit that recognizes the difference between the two mediums while allowing the peculiar beauties of each one to come forward. However spontaneous her work became, she was ever aware of plan, of composition, of design. “In great works of art every inch is the result of an intention by the master,” she wrote. “Nothing happens by accident. Every line, every form, every color, every object is placed in a perfect balance and harmony with every other part. Nothing can be taken away or added without the picture suffering.” It was the role of the artist, Mary Teasdel would say, to “seize the imagination, and hold it captive.” She continued, “Imitation is not the principal aim in art, as many people think; selection, arrangement, and other qualities are even more important.”²⁴

Teasdel combined her career as a fine artist with that of teacher. All Utah artists of this generation mixed their painting careers with

²²Horne, *Decorates*, p. 64.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 65.

²⁴Teasdel, “True Art,” p. 16.



Dutch Woman Knitting. *Courtesy Utah Arts Council.*

teaching, photography, or some other venture to make a living to finance their art. Teasdel found it necessary to support herself after her return to Utah and did so happily as a teacher. Her students included Mabel Frazer and Florence Ware, both of whom would become not only well-known artists in their own right but teachers on the university level. Teasdel encouraged her students to become familiar with the work of the masters. “There must be some standard to which one can appeal, and this can best be found in those which are everywhere acknowledged to be greats.”²⁵

While one must judge Teasdel’s work on the basis of contemporary standards, it is also important to place it in a historical context. Her work received the enthusiastic praise of her fellow artists. Alice Merrill Horne

²⁵Ibid.

placed Teasdel alongside Harwood, Hafen, Fairbanks, and Evans as the best to come out of the local art scene. At the 1908 Utah exhibition a visiting artist, identified only as Mr. Potter, spoke highly of her work. Another critic described her lifetime work as "brilliant," and perhaps within the context of her culture it was. Horne saluted her success: "Often even men are not given credit for excellence in the field of art. Women painters are apt to be considered as only 'females.' It has been a great shock to this simple class of the dear public to see a woman given so many honors as Miss Teasdel has won both at home and in art centers abroad."²⁶

Teasdel was a versatile artist, producing works in oil, watercolor, and pastel. Her works show her to be as accomplished with portraits and figure studies as with flowers and landscapes. But the bulk of her oeuvre was in landscape and reveals a great love of and intuitive emotional reaction to natural design. "It is not the province of the landscape painter, merely to represent trees, hills and houses—so much topography—but to express an emotion and this he must do by art," she wrote.²⁷

Primarily a "fine artist," Teasdel also periodically played a role in the design process of large architectural projects, assisting in the planning, building, and decorating of several local homes. She believed that every object in the home should be carefully chosen because of its aesthetic possibilities since "true art always considers the uses of an object first, and constructs it so that it shall fill its part perfectly. Any decoration or ornamentation will be to beautify the fundamental form, but never to destroy it, or make it less useful." Furthermore, she stated, "There is always a certain simplicity in fine things, and perfection of the whole is greater and more difficult to obtain than elaboration of parts."²⁸

She treasured the private, intimate dimensions of art, insisting that, "True art is the personal expression of an idea in an artistic way. To be able to do this one must understand the language of art, its intentions and limitations." She continued, emphasizing what she saw as the three central tenets of all true art: "Art is infinite in its various expressions and should enter every part of our lives because art means harmony, beauty, and the eternal fitness of things."²⁹

²⁶Horne, *Devotees*, p. 63.

²⁷Teasdel, "True Art," pp. 14-15.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁹*Ibid.*

At one time or another Mary Teasdel won all of the main prizes offered by the Utah Institute of Fine Arts. She spent the last two decades of her life painting and traveling between her homes in Utah and on the West Coast. As was true throughout her life, the paintings from this period formed a visual record of her travels, of the places she found so rich with beauty and intrigue. Her paintings of the California shoreline illustrate how far she had moved from her tight academic training in Paris to a more impressionistic, spontaneous, and spirited use of both color and textured brushstroke. She seemed to have finally come into her own.

Alice Merrill Horne spoke to the issue of style, describing it as the "golden fleece" with which the ambitious artist should wrap his canvas. And yet, she continued, an artist's individual, unique center will come through, for "not even a genius can construct a style for his use—rather he cannot get away from what he is—individuality is persistent."³⁰

The central problem for all artists is that of finding one's own authenticity, of speaking in a language or imagery that is essentially his or her own. If one's self-image is dictated by one's station in life—by one's connections to others—it is impossible to find that individual voice. It is nothing short of remarkable that a woman like Mary Teasdel whose career and good fortune as a young woman often depended on her relationships with others was able to do this. The obituary honoring Teasdel upon her death attributed her success to study, travel, natural gifts, and indefatigable work.³¹

Her paintings honor her best. They speak to the issue of process, of a maturing of style and technique, of the many places she lived and painted. The student studies painted in France, particularly in Normandy, are tight, determinedly academic, traditional in both outlook and style. Brightly colored and textured, they are obviously the work of an amateur or at least of a student learning her art.

Her later work, particularly her paintings of the northern California coastline, are much more self-confident and expressive of a free and unreigned spirit. Interestingly enough, they speak to the influence of the impressionists. While in France, her work was devoid of impressionistic detailing and more in line with the traditional training she received at the Academie Julian. Thirty years later she, like artists across the world, found herself drawn to the attention paid to light and color by the impressionists. Much of her Utah work, like the wonderful

³⁰Horne, *Discovers*, p. 47.

³¹*Desert News*, April 12, 1937.

painting *Mother and Child* in the state art collection, is as much about color or light as it is about the more obvious subject of the two figures. It is reminiscent of the work of Mary Cassatt in its soft pastel palette and tender, quiet ambiance.

Utah has a few Teasdel works in its state art collection: *Mother and Child*, *Dutch Woman Knitting*, and a watercolor, *Monday Washday*, attributed to her. Outside of the few paintings from her California period that are housed at the Springville Art Museum the most extraordinary collection of Mary Teasdel's work is in a most unlikely place—the public library in Smithfield, Utah. In 1929 the Smithfield Town Council purchased 32 of her paintings for the paltry sum of \$120.00. Only about eighteen to twenty of these paintings are on display at any one time. Although a few are large in scale, these paintings are for the most part small—usually between eighteen and twenty-four inches wide. Many are student studies done during her summers in Normandy. They remind us of her energy, her vision, and the great adventure her stay in France must have been.

Mary Teasdel was most certainly converted to her art. She sacrificed enormously to spend time in the galleries and classrooms of Paris. Though she was one of hundreds of American women who traveled to Europe at the turn of the century to study art, she was certainly not typical. But she did believe in the importance of her work and labored incessantly to make her dream become a reality.



Mother and Child. Courtesy
Utah Arts Council.



Alice Merrill Horne, USHS collections.

Alice Merrill Horne, Art Promoter and Early Utah Legislator

BY HARRIET HORNE ARRINGTON

Mrs. Arrington, Salt Lake City, presented a version of this paper at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the Utah State Historical Society.

ALICE SMITH MERRILL HORNE, THE SECOND WOMAN elected to the Utah House of Representatives, was born in a log cabin in Fillmore, Utah, on January 2, 1868.¹ Her father was Clarence Merrill, a pioneer farmer and operator of the Cove Creek and Fillmore telegraph stations. Her mother was Bathsheba Smith Merrill, daughter of George A. and Bathsheba Smith, mother of fourteen and active in Millard County theatrical circles. Alice was the third daughter and fourth child in the large family. Her father had two other wives by whom he had children, one he married shortly before Alice's birth and the other when Alice was eleven.

Alice was always proud of being born in Fillmore, once the territorial capital of Utah. In the Old State House there, a portrait of Alice Horne by artist Florence E. Ware is on display. In her adult years Alice recalled that during the family's occasional five-day wagon trips from Fillmore to Salt Lake City, a round-trip distance of three hundred miles, her father introduced her to the beauties of flowers, trees, and the bounties of nature as well as of the wild things—snakes, lizards, chipmunks, and a buck or a doe with her fawn.² He pointed out the colors in the sunset and sang in his fine bass voice "Roll on Silver Moon" as night settled in. All the while, her mother would be bedding them down in the wagon and entertaining them with favorite stories from the Bible, LDS history, and the Arabian Nights. Alice recalled lying on her back in the wagon watching the stars appear one by one, awaiting, anticipating, and naming—the Great Bear (Big Dipper), Little Bear, and Lady in the Chair. These outdoor experiences were heightened by summers spent on one of her father's farms.

Alice's mother was manually dexterous, creative and talented with the needle and at drafting patterns and sewing. Alice profited from her mother's instruction and became skilled and proficient in designing and crafting clothes.

Alice, called Allie when she was young, started school after her sixth birthday, in a rock schoolhouse in Fillmore which is still standing.

¹Brief biographical sketches of Alice Merrill Horne include: Robert S. Olpin, *Dictionary of Utah Art* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, 1980), pp. 126-28; Zorah H. Jeppson, "A Brief Biography of Alice Merrill Horne by Her Daughter," typescript in possession of the writer; Rave Price, "Utah's Leading Ladies of the Arts," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38 (Winter 1970): 65-85; Jill C. Mulvay, "Three Mormon Women in the Cultural Arts," *Sunstone* 1 (Spring 1976): 29-39; Leah D. Widstoe, "The Story of a Gifted Lady," *Relief Society Magazine* 32 (March 1945): 150-55; and Harriet Horne Arrington and Leonard J. Arrington, "Alice Merrill Horne, Cultural Entrepreneur," in Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen, eds., *A Heritage of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1988), pp. 121-36.

²Alice Merrill Horne, "Child of the Frontier," typescript in possession of the writer. This recollection of her early years in Fillmore was written in 1947-48.

Well into her later years she could still recite poems she learned there: "Woodman Spare that Tree," "Tolling of the Bells," "The Village Smithy," and others that they practiced in resounding tones in her classes. Twice a year leaders of the LDS church held stake conference in Fillmore. Alice remembered the long walk out to the main road to greet the incoming officials. Her grandfather, George A. Smith, a cousin of the Prophet Joseph Smith, an apostle and first counselor to Brigham Young, and official historian of the LDS church, would be one of the visiting authorities. Her grandmother, Bathsheba Bigler Smith, accompanied him. The welcoming songs and hurrahs of the community provided a cheerful reception for these leaders. Well aware of the esteem afforded her grandparents, Allie remembered the exciting ride back into town in their carriage.³ In 1871, when Allie was three, her family spent nearly a year with George A. and Bathsheba Smith while their new brick home in Fillmore was being constructed. At times like these the Merrills savored the well-furnished home and headquarters of the church historian's office, the library, and the more formal activities of Salt Lake City.

In 1875, when Alice was seven, Clarence Merrill hastened to his home with the telegraph news that Bathsheba Merrill's father, George A. Smith, had died at his Salt Lake home in his wife Bathsheba's arms. The following year, after a visit to Fillmore by her widowed grandmother, Allie was taken to Salt Lake City to live with her. Bathsheba Smith, a close friend of Emma and Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois, and a member of the original group of eighteen that formed the LDS Relief Society in Nauvoo, was a leader of LDS women in Salt Lake City. She had made the motion that led eventually to the legislative proposal to grant women the right to vote in Utah in 1870.⁴ Bathsheba was an officiator in the Salt Lake Endowment House and later in the Salt Lake Temple. Named a counselor to Zina D. H. Young, general president of the Relief Society, when it was formally reestablished in 1880, Bathsheba Smith was assigned the position of general president of the Relief Society in 1901 after the death of Zina Young.

As her grandmother's companion, Allie was reared in a home and environment where the important LDS women of the territory—Eliza R. Snow, Zina D. H. Young, Sarah M. Kimball, Emmeline B. Wells, Susa Young Gates, Emily Tanner Richards, and others—often met and

³Ibid.

⁴Lola Van Wagenen, "A Matter for Astonishment: Woman Suffrage in Territorial Utah," paper for Ph.D. seminar, May 11, 1988, p. 33, copy in possession of the writer.

discussed the religious, political, business, literary, artistic, and educational affairs of Utah Territory. Bathsheba's large hand-carpeted "keeping room" became their unofficial meetinghouse. In these groups Allie formed early alliances with the elite of the territory. She absorbed the art of leadership, independent action, and organizational ability while developing a taste for usefulness and competence in social, political, and cultural affairs.

In addition to her regular association with her grandmother and the intermittent visits of her mother and sisters, Allie also visited persons her own age in Brigham Young's Lion House and Beehive House, just across the street from her grandmother's home, and in the nearby homes of various church and territorial leaders.

Allie's grandfather, having been church historian and Speaker of the House of Representatives of the territory, had made his home a repository for LDS church historical and territorial archival materials. Thus, Allie's new home was replete with books, magazines, and manuscripts that interested her.

Another positive element in this site change for Alice was exposure to art. Interested in painting, Grandmother Bathsheba had taken drawing and painting lessons from William W. Majors, a prominent Nauvoo artist and teacher, when she lived in Nauvoo in the 1840s. She often showed Alice her sketchbook—one still in existence in private hands—with her exquisitely rendered copies of classical subjects and some original creations. She encouraged Allie in her own artistic endeavors, allowing her to use her paints, which were imported from England, as well as giving her access to the pictures George A. Smith had brought back from Europe and the Near East illustrating the architecture and works of art in those regions. All of these sources helped provide the "seedtime" of development in art appreciation for Alice as she studied these pictures and also advanced her reading skills from the printing on the cards as well.

Her training in the Thirteenth Ward School, perhaps the finest elementary school in Salt Lake City, also advanced her scholastic training and understanding. When fourteen years old, having graduated from the ward school, Allie enrolled in the University of Deseret for what can best be regarded as high school and college training. She completed work for a teaching certificate and degree in pedagogy in 1887. Her literary talent and theatrical interest are indicated by the fact that she had organized a Shakespearean Society at the university and read an essay on Ophelia and Lady Macbeth at the commencement

exercises. At the university she had also studied art with George M. Ottinger, a Mormon convert from Pennsylvania and a versatile and well-trained artist. Alice continued her association and friendship with Ottinger in the years that followed, and he encouraged her to make the promotion of art one of her principal lifetime commitments.

Allie, by now more formally called Alice, taught at the Washington School in Salt Lake City. In 1890 she married George Henry Horne, a local banker and son of pioneer leader Joseph and Mary Shepherd Horne. George had been a member of the Shakespearean Society Alice had organized in 1885. Within a year of their marriage, George and Alice became the parents of a daughter, Mary.

In 1893 George and Alice traveled to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and then went on to New York City to visit with George's brother, Albert. Alice represented Utah on the Liberal Arts Committee of the world fair and published a book of Utah art and poetry to illustrate Utah's developing culture. This trip was a catalyst to many programs developed by Alice over her lifetime.

In 1894, soon after their return to Utah, George was called to serve as a missionary for the LDS church. Alice realized George had decided to accept the call when she saw him chopping a two years' supply of wood for her. While he labored in the southern states for two years, Alice supported him and their young daughter by resuming her teaching at the Washington School. She also studied art and painting under J. T. Harwood, Mary Teasdel, and John Hafen, all prominent Utah artists, and was an enthusiastic member of Utah's vibrant art colony. One of her closest friends was Harriet ("Hattie") Richards Harwood, the wife of J. T. Harwood and an artist almost as prominent as her husband.

Alice's political career began in 1894 while she was teaching at Washington School and her husband was on his mission.⁵ The twenty-six-year-old Alice was indignant that the Salt Lake City public school system had instigated a new art program from the beginning grades through high school called the Augsburg system of drawing. The text used was *Drawing Simplified* by D. R. Augsburg, a member of the art staff at the University of Utah during 1892-94 and art supervisor of the Salt

⁵Alice Merrill Horne's recollections of her political experiences form several chapters in her typewritten autobiographical history, prepared in 1947-48, copies in the hands of this writer and other family members. The chapters relevant to this paper are entitled "Art Study Ends in Politics," "I Discover the True Meaning of Politics," "Utah the First in the Union to Organize an Art Collection and an Annual Art Exhibition," and "More Bills—Grand Larceny." The following paragraphs are based on "Art Study Ends in Politics," pp. 1-7.

Lake City schools.⁶ The Augsburg system spelled out a mechanical form of art instruction, dividing the subject into three branches: representative drawing, constructive drawing, and decorative drawing. It neglected the essential development of aesthetic principles acquired by artists as they study art.⁷ Alice regarded the system as foolish—not at all what the practicing artists she knew had used when they studied art. She challenged Professor Augsburg, and after some prodding from her he finally said, “Mrs. Horne, if you can fool the public, fool ’em.” She next attempted to persuade Jesse F. Millspaugh, superintendent of the Salt Lake City schools, to replace the Augsburg system, but he just laughed at her. Deciding that political action offered the only remedy, she persuaded her friend Oscar W. Moyle, a former classmate at the University of Deseret and a respected attorney, to run for the Salt Lake City Board of Education. He agreed to run but told her, “I shan’t do a thing to secure the nomination.” So it was up to Alice. Each day after school she called at three homes in the neighborhood urging voters to attend the upcoming primary and to vote for Moyle. She also arranged for attractive ballots to be printed which the citizens could use in voting for her candidate. At the crowded primary convention everything went according to Alice’s plan with nominating and seconding speeches for Moyle. Although a popular person was nominated to oppose him, Moyle was elected by a large majority. True to his promise to Alice, he engineered the demise of the Augsburg system and provided in its stead a good course in drawing with J. Leo Fairbanks as art supervisor.

In the meantime, George Horne had returned from his mission, taken a business course at the newly established LDS Business College, and after a year of study secured a position as cashier of the State Bank of Utah, to which he was connected for most of the rest of his business life.

In 1898, two years after Utah was granted statehood, the thirty-year-old Alice was determined to do something to encourage greater production of good art and greater use of art in the schools and in the community. One way to do this was to create a state program. “Poverty is a poor excuse for ugliness,” she wrote, “and wealth can never get rich enough to purchase good taste. But God has created gifts, and men work so that we are not without poets, painters, sculptors, architects, craftsmen, gardeners and homemakers. So long as talent and industry

⁶Robert S. Olpin, *Dictionary of Utah Art* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, 1980), p. 8.

⁷“A Brief Biography of Alice Merrill Horne.”

unite there will be art—original, spontaneous, inspirational—the kind that lives.”⁸ In another writing she quoted a statement by Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Art of America will come out of the West, amidst the feet of a brave and earnest people,” and speculated that Emerson meant the Mormon pioneers and their posterity. “I had seen enough of large cities,” Alice wrote, “to know that art could not go along with people who did not live with it.”⁹

Spurred on by the success of Sarah Anderson, who had been elected to the first Utah House of Representatives,¹⁰ Alice agreed to allow the Democratic party to nominate her for representative of Salt Lake’s Eighth District. She was elected by a comfortable plurality and served one term, 1898-1900. The birth of her third child, Virginia, in 1900 negated her applying for a second term of office.

Here is Alice’s own account of her election in 1898 as Utah’s second woman legislator:

About this time, the Democratic Party decided to put a woman on the legislative ticket of Salt Lake County. Some highly intelligent women sought the prized position. When things were at white heat, Mr. David C. Dunbar arose, saying “Gentlemen, I know a good looking young woman who works like hell, who will run like a deer, and her name is Alice Merrill Horne!”

The highest vote for a legislator gave me the nomination in the convention. All of the mining towns gave me their entire support. So much, I reflected with beating heart, for hand-made clothes!

Some of the women called me “the doll!” They were intelligent; I knew I was not so smart. There was Dr. Ellen Ferguson, so brilliant, but down-at-the heel.¹¹ I should like to dress her in the Victorian style! Aah, I reflected, if I could only sew myself brains. But I set myself to think what could be accomplished at the legislature

However, the Salt Lake *Tribune* (the Republican sheet) sizing up its Democratic opponents said, “Mrs. Alice Merrill Horne is a woman of attainments but not the kind to be made a legislator. Should the Democrats be elected, in the midst of her compeers she would shine like a white diamond on the bosom of an African Princess.”

When the votes were counted, this woman candidate for the legislature led the ticket with a thousand votes to spare!¹²

⁸Alice Merrill Horne, *Decorates and Their Shines* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), p. 8.

⁹Horne, “Utah the First State in the Union,” p. 1.

¹⁰See Delila M. Abbott, comp., “Women Legislators of Utah, 1896-1976,” typescript, Utah State Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City.

¹¹See Ann Gardner Stone, “Dr. Ellen Brooke Ferguson: Nineteenth-century Renaissance Woman,” in Vicky Burgess-Olson, ed., *Sister Saints* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), pp. 325-39. A talented seamstress, Horne had made herself a beautiful “picture hat” and an Irish linen and lace gown. Evidently she wished to see Ferguson attractively attired as well.

¹²Alice Merrill Horne, “Art Study Ends in Politics,” pp. 6-7.

Alice's principal object in running for the legislature was to establish a state agency that would hold an annual art exhibition and make annual purchases of paintings to begin a permanent collection of art. With the assistance of George Ottinger, she had prepared a bill to accomplish this purpose even before she decided to run for the House. After taking the oath of office, she went to the Speaker of the House, William M. Roylance of Provo, and asked him to assign her to the Education, Art, and Public Health committees. The Education Committee was already filled, he told her, but she was prepared to argue a little: "Mr. Speaker, I am the only woman in the House. Surely a woman should be on the Education Committee. And besides I am a teacher." Finally, she agreed to an appointment to the Rules Committee, and at her request he also appointed her to the Public Health and Art committees.

The Rules Committee met first, as Alice knew it would, to adopt the rules under which House business would be conducted. As that meeting got underway, Alice arose to say that she had an art measure to present and proposed that because of their close alliance, Education and Art be made one and the same committee. There was a second and the motion passed unanimously. She was now on the Education and Art Committee. Her first goal achieved, she went on to say that one important matter to be brought up during this session was the use of the land grant offered by the federal government for the establishment of the University of Utah. Alice moved that the House establish a University Land-Site Committee. A second was forthcoming and the motion prevailed. Alice was named chairman of that committee. She now offered a third motion that no smoking be permitted in the House or cloak room. The men agreed only grudgingly. After a little campaigning by Alice, the Senate adopted the same rules.

Alice had said nothing about her scheming via the Rules Committee, but someone else talked and the next morning's paper had a note on the back page under the heading "Her Little Game," reciting how she had been at first denied and then had won a place on the Education Committee, now called Education and Art.¹³

One of the controversies in Salt Lake City during her tenure in the legislature was whether tubercular teachers should be employed in the public school system, especially in the lower grades. Alice had spoken at a school mass meeting in favor of requiring the Board of Health to insist

¹³*Ibid.*

that only teachers who were “safe” be employed. The morning paper carried a cartoon, “Mrs. Horne Sweeping the Microbes from the School Room,” in which she looked very ladylike but was active with a broom.¹⁴ Her proposed measure was not popular with everyone, but the richest man in her district, W. S. McCornick, a leading banker in the state and prominent non-Mormon, supported her. McCornick’s comment was: “You are right, Mrs. Horne. Don’t fear criticism but stand by your guns. I see you are elected to the State Legislature. Get your law going and keep only one thing in mind—the good and the welfare of the people.”¹⁵ Alice’s husband had great respect for McCornick and told his wife that she need not fear if such sound men as McCornick approved of her efforts. So, in her words, “I stuck to my guns.” She wrote to the Salt Lake Medical Association asking if they considered tuberculosis infectious. They answered that opinion on the subject was divided. Alice’s equivalent in the Senate, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, the only woman in the upper house, prepared and introduced a measure providing the first rules and regulations for contagious diseases. Alice sponsored the bill in the House.

At a public reception held shortly after the legislature had begun its deliberations, Gov. Heber M. Wells, whose wife had died, invited Mrs. Horne to stand by him in the receiving line. Officers from Fort Douglas attended this reception. Alice’s memoir describes one episode:

A very clever young officer, groomed snappily and rather handsome, stepped up to me and addressed me, speaking so clearly that all could hear. “Mrs. Horne, you would be surprised to know how little I care for your noble efforts to ban those teachers who have lung trouble from earning a living by teaching in your public schools.”

I kept smiling and everyone stopped, awaiting my reply. I did not hesitate, but took my turn. I replied, “You might be even more astonished to know how little other person’s opinions matter to me on such questions as Public Health.”

There was a general laugh. “Serves you right,” said his fellow officers. “This should teach you to be good.”¹⁶

Some opposition to Dr. Cannon’s public health bill surfaced in the legislature, but the two women shepherded the measure through their respective houses.¹⁷ Alice wrote:

¹⁴See also *Salt Lake Tribune*.

¹⁵Horne, “Utah the First in the Union,” pp. 4-5.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷The personalities in the Utah legislature at the time, including Mrs. Horne, are described in S. A. Kenner, *Utah As It Is* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904). See also *House Journal of the Third Session of the Legislature of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Job Printing Co., 1899).

As the Public Health Measure lay before the Senate waiting the final vote, Mrs. Cannon and I went about scattering flowers on the desks of the senators, press, messengers, and employees of the Upper House. This gave David O. Rideout a fine opportunity to recite poetry; he quoted from Longfellow: "The hand that scatters flowers." Soon there was the roll call in the Senate Chamber. The Bill passed! Up we went to the Lower House on the third floor and repeated the work of distributing our flowers with the same results. Then the Governor promptly signed. How happy Mrs. Cannon was with that great accomplishment!

Alice waited until the University Land-Site bill was signed by the governor before bringing up her art bill. Four persons expressed opposition. She described her critical maneuvers. On the bill's third reading, "Representative Albert A. Law moved to strike out the Enacting Clause. I rushed to my desk, picked up a bunch of yellow Jonquils—the Woman's Suffrage colors—and tossed them on his desk. The men recognized the portent of the yellow flowers and laughed." No one seconded Law's motion. Horne and Cannon "repeated the little act we put on for her Public Health Bill. Lovely flowers were laid on each desk." Then John Fisher from Davis County told her ". . . if it will make no financial difference, I shall not vote for your bill. Would you care greatly?" She replied, "I should die." He changed his mind and voted for the bill. Nathan Tanner, a representative from Weber County whose main interest was bridges, also proposed to vote against the art bill. "Representative Tanner, this is just a bridge I am asking for. Here we are on the desert side—if we can get a bridge over that stream to that green meadow—there are starving flocks," she told him. He, too, was swayed and changed his vote. When the final objector to her measure cited the greater need to control the grasshopper "menace," she asked him: "If I were to tell you how to kill off the grasshoppers, will you vote for it?" She told him of her interest in zoology at the university and how Professor Orson Howard had told her "to gather up the eggs [grasshopper or cricket] and boil them." He also voted for the measure.¹⁸

Cannon and Horne had agreed that they would not speak a word on the floor of the House and Senate but, instead, would speak to each member individually. Inevitably, they had missed their contacts with one or two men. Alice was interrupted in the House by "that raw-boned, wall-eyed Doc King who came to her whispering."

Mrs. Horne, you are needed in the Senate Chamber. They are ready to vote on the Art Bill and Senator [Aquilla] Nebeker says you have not spoken

¹⁸Horne, "Utah the First in the Union," pp.5-6.



Alan L. Lowey cartoon, Salt Lake Herald, March 17, 1899.

to him about it. He declares he will kill it. You will have to come down and tell Senator Nebeker that you sent him the roses—a \$15 bunch. Every other senator knows that Senator [David H.] Peery was the donor, and there is danger that Quill will find out.

Alice went quickly to the Senate chamber and stood in front of Senator Nebeker, on whose desk was a large vase of roses. “Do you like the roses?” she asked. When he wanted to know if she had sent them, she replied, “You must answer my question first. Roses purchased in the dead of winter. Can’t you say you like them?” He confessed sulkily, “I’m bought.”

Alice returned to her own desk just in time to hear the voting start in the House. A note dropped on her desk stated, “The Art Bill passed the Senate unanimously.” In the House, four representatives voted against it, but the remainder, either to please Alice or “to bring a more beautiful life to the people of Utah,” as she expressed it, voted for it. Governor Wells, once again, signed it quickly, with the declaration: “This Art Bill assures that Utah is the first state in the Union to provide a state institution for the encouragement of the fine arts. So far as we

know, it is the direct result of equal suffrage: I congratulate you, Mrs. Horne." He handed Alice the pen.¹⁹

The bill that Alice had written out in her own hand and sent to the printer at her own expense to provide copies for both houses was now the law of Utah.²⁰ Her recollections express thanks to the many who "did a service to Utah worthy of remembrance."

Horne and Cannon had initially decided that they would concentrate their efforts on passage of their three bills—Public Health, Art, and University Land-Site selection—and would not give speeches on other bills that were brought up for consideration. But three other measures introduced near the end of the session induced Alice to "take the floor." The first bill was designed to make theft of one sheep or one cow or steer an act of grand larceny instead of petty larceny. Alice recalled this episode in her personal history. Marcus Shepherd, "a rather brilliant speaker, . . . joked about turning a five-dollar sheep theft into grand larceny instead of petty larceny and moved to strike out the Enacting Clause. The whole assembly was laughing at . . . [his] quips . . ." When Alice took the floor she told of growing up in Fillmore. Starting out in a log cabin with a small acreage, her father built a two-story brick house, planted an orchard, and grew fruits and vegetables that he sold in Pioche, Nevada. Eventually he sold the house and orchard, bought a "band of horses and cows," and moved to a ranch near Marysville, Piute County. The ranch had wide meadows and long timothy grass on which the cattle grew fat. To raise oats for his horses, he bought a sulky plow, hitched up old Bally, and with the Merrill children following after like seagulls, opened up a long furrow in what he had considered to be virgin soil. She continued:

But what greeted our eyes? What was planted there? A steer's skull? Yes, verily! We children gathered up what had been sown of bleached bones, cows' horns, short horns, long horns . . . All afternoon we gathered horned skulls from that vast cemetery of unmarked, unsung graves!

Gentlemen, when it is such an easy thing to cover in a shallow grave the evidence that would convict a cattle rustler or a sheep stealer, don't you think that when one sheep's skull, or one steer's head is found as proof of theft, that such proof is sufficient to establish more than a suspicion that somewhere that cattle thief has a whole graveyard of heads of horned stock?²¹

The legislators grinned, nodded, and proceeded to pass the bill. The

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²⁰The family still has Alice's copy of the original bill with her marginal comments.

²¹Taken from Horne, "More Bills—Grand Larceny," pp. 1-3.

daily paper the next day referred to the incident with the headline: "Mrs. Alice Merrill Horne Makes her Maiden Speech on Sheep-Stealing."²²

A second bill that prompted Alice to conduct an unanticipated campaign in its favor was a Fish and Game bill introduced by Salt Lake Rep. John Sharp. With some nostalgia for her childhood in Millard and Piute counties, Alice retained a lifelong interest in the streams and wildlife of Utah and favored regulations that would protect them. As debate on the Sharp bill progressed, she became furious. Rep. Heber Bennion said he could see no reason why deer should be protected; they ate his sheep's grass and the grass of other men's sheep. James Betts of Payson even objected to robins—they ate up his cherries. Instead of being protected they should be shot. Alice described her response:

I took the floor, declaring that I had been elected to protect the fish and game. As fast as proposed sections of the measure were voted down, I straightway introduced substitute motions that repaired the damage or restored what was lost. Some Representatives who were at first indifferent soon enthusiastically joined those fighting for Utah's wildlife. We had to work fast. When the smoke of the battle cleared, a fairly good measure had been salvaged. Mr. Sharp came to me and said, "Mrs. Horne, I thank you for your fine work. You know more about fish and game than two-thirds of the men here. Had I known your interest before, I should have put the proposed measure in your hands before its introduction in the House."²³

The day before the introduction of new bills was prohibited, Professor William M. Stewart of the Normal School at the University of Utah approached Alice about introducing a free scholarship bill he had prepared. It provided for 200 tuition-free scholarships to be given for four years of college training. Stewart told her, "I have noticed that you women stick to your pet measure, and I believe if you will undertake this free scholarship bill you will somehow coax it through." She took up Professor Stewart's measure and soon had it through the House. That evening, when she thought her legislative work was finished, she learned that the Senate, angered by the House's refusal to pass forty Senate bills, had stricken the enacting clauses from forty House bills, among them the free scholarship bill. She quickly went into action, demanding of Senate President Aquilla Nebeker:

Have the Alfalfas [rural representatives] killed my Free Scholarship Bill, Mr. President? This is a great error which must be rectified before it is

²²Newspaper.

²³Horne, "More Bills—Grand Larceny," p. 3.

too late. The Utah schools are forced to import, every year, many teachers for lack of Utah instructors. The two-year free scholarship courses do not allow aspiring teachers sufficient time to fill college requirements. It would be better statesmanship to give our own young people the opportunity to take four-year courses. I tell you our teachers need a sounder foundation. You alfalfas should remember that your own bright young people could be shining in lights in the far-off settlements if these four-year free scholarships were made available. We would not only stop importing teachers, but could furnish teachers for surrounding states.

Swayed by her words, Nebeker said that if Abel John Evans, the senator from Lehi, reintroduced the bill he would not object. Alice approached Evans at once, saying, "You know me as an Alfalfa, bred and born. Why should I, why should my measure, be treated as an enemy of the cow-counties when it was drawn in their interest?" Evans chuckled, "Mrs. Horne, you are good-looking and I will bring it up." The bill was soon passed and sent on to Governor Wells who remarked, "I am signing this Four-year Free Scholarship Bill, remembering the gifts of our young people as well as recognizing what women's suffrage has done and is doing for education, also to preserve the culture of Utah." The entire episode took "just thirty-six minutes," Alice remembered.²⁴

In 1900, pregnant with her third child, she chose not to run for reelection. She never again held any statewide elective office, although she did serve as Salt Lake County chairman of the Democratic party, helped organize and served as second president of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, helped organize and served as regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and was chair of the Utah Peace Society. She also served as a member of the General Board of the LDS Relief Society during 1902-16 and was invited to give two addresses at the 1904 International Congress of Women in Berlin—one on her service as a legislator and the other on art in Utah. She also found time to author two books: *Devotees and Their Shrines* (1912) and *Columbus, Westward Ho* (1921).

Alice continued her own career as a creative artist until she decided that it was interfering with her career as the mother of six children. Nevertheless, she devoted much energy to exhibiting and promoting Utah art and artists. She sponsored more than thirty-five permanent exhibits in Utah's schools, each dedicated to a Utah artist. Many of these paintings were paid for by the contributions of children as their legacy to the schools. Her concept was that "Utah has always kept the art's finer

²⁴Ibid., pp. 3-5. See also Ralph V. Chamberlin, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850-1950* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1960), pp. 184-85.

ideals . . . and [Utahns] are an art-loving people."²⁵ Alice Merrill Horne died in Salt Lake City, at the age of eighty, on October 7, 1948.

When the Salt Lake Council of Women established their Hall of Fame in 1934, Horne was one of the first to be inducted. Posthumously, in 1954, one of the Heritage Halls at Brigham Young University was named for her.²⁶ Perhaps the greatest tribute to her, however, was given at her funeral by Minerva Teichert, one of the many local artists she had encouraged. Teichert mentioned the dozens of artists that Alice had helped: "Always was this great woman looking after the welfare of the artists, hoping they would be able to 'make a go of it' financially and still grow in spirit. Few people are so forgetful of self. Sometimes she'd lose patience with those she thought worldly Sometimes she forgot on what a pinnacle she stood. We couldn't crane our necks high enough to get her lofty viewpoint. I have eaten with her, wept and prayed with her. I have . . . dreamed with her. How great were her dreams!"²⁷

Whatever her other successes, Alice was always proud of her work as a legislator. The Utah Institute of Fine Arts created by her bill held state-sponsored art exhibitions and acquired prize-winning paintings to begin a state-owned collection, called the Alice Art Collection. It contains at present some 1,200 paintings valued at more than \$2 million. Since the art bill's preamble stipulated an intention to "advance the interests of the fine arts, including literature and music," the act was later used to establish the Utah Symphony. The University Land-Site Selection Committee, under her chairmanship, selected and located the University of Utah at its present site on the hill overlooking Salt Lake City, and Alice was always regarded as a special friend of the university. In 1921, twenty-two years after the adjournment of the Third Legislature, she asked Elbert D. Thomas, then a professor of political science and secretary of the University of Utah, how many students had received free scholarships under her bill. By then, he told her, more than 8,000 students had used the scholarships and Utah was sending teachers to several adjoining states and the program had been discontinued.

That Alice's spunk didn't desert her after her service as legislator could be demonstrated in many incidents, of which two will suffice here.

²⁵Alice Merrill Horne, "What Utah Offers the Artists," *The Utah* (Salt Lake City), August 1936. Biographical information is taken from the sources mentioned in Note 1.

²⁶Brigham Young University, "Alice Merrill Horne," *Dedication of Buildings* (Provo 1954), pp. 50-51.

²⁷Minerva K. Teichert, Remarks at Funeral of Alice Merrill Horne, October 10, 1948, typescript in possession of the writer.

The first relates to her campaign to clear Salt Lake City's air of smoke coming from coal and wood fires, smelters, railroads, and assorted backyard bonfires. She organized the Smokeless Fuel Federation and the Women's Chamber of Commerce, but she and her friends received no support from the Salt Lake newspapers, which refused to publish reports of their activities. Determined to *make* them carry a story, she and two friends set up a coal cookstove on the corner of Main Street and South Temple, near the Brigham Young Monument, and proceeded to bake rolls and pies, attracting a considerable crowd and disrupting traffic. The women used smokeless coal—coal from which the oil and gas had been removed. Alice reported: "My friends and I wore white dresses and white gloves. We would pick up lumps of coal and I even wiped off the inside of a stove lid with a lace handkerchief with nary a smudge. Needless to say we got columns of publicity that next day."²⁸

In 1936 she entered another campaign when the mayor, city council, and planning commission of Salt Lake City announced their plan to widen State Street. This would have required the razing of Eagle Gate, a famous landmark that Alice and some friends in the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers thought deserved to be preserved. The women held their protest meeting and determined to stand as a solid phalanx to prevent anyone from tearing down the celebrated archway. A cordon of women surrounded each of the pillars. Said Alice, "We simply must prevent the continued despoilation by politicians of our pioneer atmosphere in Salt Lake City. We must save our landmarks."²⁹ Deluged with appeals from many prominent individuals and organizations the State Road Commission abandoned its plans. Indeed, the chairman of the Utah Highway Commission insisted that they had never intended to destroy the landmark.³⁰

A daughter of early pioneers, Alice Merrill Horne fought to bring health, beauty, and culture to Utah's urban and rural communities. As an art connoisseur, artist, teacher, writer, organizer, preservationist, and legislator, she was determined, even aggressive, in pursuing worthwhile educational, artistic, and humanitarian goals. She was refined but could be militant, kind but also forceful, gentle but always determined.

²⁸*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 30, 1947.

²⁹*Ibid.*, September 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 1936.

³⁰*Deseret News*, September 22, 25, 1936.



A staff artist drew free portraits of Salt Lakers during an Art Center membership drive. The Federal Art Project created considerable local interest in the visual and other arts in Utah. WPA collection, Utah State Historical Society.

The Federal Art Project in Utah: Out of Oblivion or More of the Same?

BY WILL SOUTH

IN A LETTER TO EDWARD CROFUT, THEN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF exhibitions for the Federal Art Project, western regional director Donald Bear made a plea for what he considered to be one of the more problematic

Mr. South is a doctoral candidate in art history at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York. He expresses appreciation to Dr. Marlene Park for her assistance.

states struggling during the 1930s: "... Utah is isolated and desperately needs a new standard of some kind."¹ His words reveal a perception of Utah's depression era artistic climate as static and mundane at best. On another occasion he called the easel project in the Beehive State "nothing short of miserable."²

Evaluations of cultural affairs in present-day Utah still lead many observers, especially and perhaps significantly its own citizens, to lament an on-going lag "behind the times" and to conclude that Salt Lake City has from its inception suffered from a self-imposed isolation from mainstream national trends. The Federal Art Project (FAP) under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was, however, while certainly not the first federal intrusion into the social activities of Utah, a major investment in money and effort on the part of the United States government to develop and nurture artistic production as well as to provide economic relief. The FAP perhaps fell short of realizing Bear's wish for a "new standard," but it did provide artists with the opportunity to paint full time and to create outside the context of community expectations. The very presence of the project fueled the minority opinion that art could and should be something more than decorative or didactic and validated the artist as a professional. The FAP in Salt Lake City encountered internal administrative problems and elements of public opposition as it operated cautiously alongside established state agencies and entities, yet it managed to contribute to a growing artistic awareness that was neither homogeneous nor isolated.

Barbara Rose, who called the WPA a "crucial chapter in American art," noted that one of its primary successes was to "arouse a consciousness of art in the far reaches of the country, where many people had never before seen an original work of art."³ Utah has always qualified as part of the "far reaches of the country," but original works of art had been plentiful since the late nineteenth century when an active art colony evolved in Salt Lake City. Although no art market per se developed until well into this century, regional painters found work doing portraits and occasional mural decoration and several survived as teachers. The Society of Utah Artists was formed in 1893 to promote exhibits, encourage sales, and enhance opportunities generally for

¹ Donald Bear to Edward F. Croft, August 6, 1937, American Archives of Art (AAA), Record Group 69 (RG69), Roll DC106, National Archives, Washington D.C.

² Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 76.

³ Barbara Rose, *American Art Since 1900*, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1975), pp. 105-6.

painters working in the territory. Utah entered the Union three years later, and in 1899 the first state art collection in America was created, sponsored by legislator and arts enthusiast Alice Merrill Horne (1868-1948). Still, an adequate support base was slow in developing, prompting most later artists to leave the state in order to fulfill their artistic ambitions. This drained Utah of talented natives before and after the turn of the century, including such figures as John Held, Jr. (1889-1958), creator of the 1920s flapper girl, and noted realist painter and sculptor Mahonri Young (1877-1957). Artists rightly perceived the local community as reluctant to change and ill-equipped to offer recognition or financial reward. New York City became a mecca for these younger artists not only for training but as a place to live out their careers. Those who remained or returned home found Utah's small population and cultural limitations discouraging. Even more disadvantageous for painters of the 1930s was the narrow, focused aesthetic they and their public had inherited from their predecessors.

Brigham Young, an enthusiastic supporter of the performing arts, perceived the importance of the visual arts more in terms of practical applications, e.g., the decoration of the Salt Lake Theatre or panoramic scrolls used to disseminate Latter-day Saint history and theology.⁴ In an essay attempting to characterize the Mormon personality, social anthropologist John L. Sorenson made these observations:

[Mormons] like to organize and do things as a group. They make good organization people, whether in large corporations or in local neighborhood clubs. Harking back to their past, in other words, they prefer to act cooperatively. Thus, they are strong in the performing arts where numbers of people are involved, but their institutional life has not given the same encouragement to the private arts: painting, sculpture, and creative literature. . . .

The emphasis on authority and obedience accords with their own desire for predictability and order.⁵

The strongly ordered and communal character of early Utah culture is reflected in the work of such artists as John Hafen (1854-1911) or even the non-Mormon James T. Harwood (1860-1940) who were trained in the European academy tradition. Each clung tenaciously to well ordered and logical space, with an emphasis on nature's more democratic narratives. Stylistically, their painting was a response to the

⁴For background on panoramic scrolls, see Richard L. Jensen and Richard D. Oman, *C.C.A. Christensen* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1984).

⁵Quoted in Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 309.

past, derived from a blend of post-Barbizon and Impressionist impulses. In content, Harwood and Hafen consistently stressed themes of order, calm, and contentment. Along with their peers in Utah Territory, they expressed either an unshakable optimism in the stability of the world or an equally unshakable faith in a world to come. While the solitary activity of painting would always be somewhat antithetical to the group-oriented Mormons, both the methodology and spiritual perspective of these artists were acceptable to a community desirous of "predictability and order." Landscape painting in this mode continued to dominate Utah art history. Realism, as practiced by the Ash Can School in New York, could embrace the gritty urban scene with a no-holds-barred objectivity. Subjects such as workers, prostitutes, and prize fighters as well as the manmade city skyline recognized the matter-of-factness of daily life. Such an orientation would have been abrasive to the established spirituality of Utah art. The generation of Utah painters who gravitated towards this brand of realism did so necessarily within the New York environment. Local manifestations of either an Ash Can sensibility or modernist inclinations were rare in the teens and twenties in Utah and lacked the power and conviction displayed by eastern artists. The all's-well-with-the-world quality of Utah art was first questioned at home in artistic responses to the depression.

In 1929 the stock market crash quickly and seriously affected Utah. Per capita income had fallen to 71.5 percent of the national average by 1931. According to one study, "At the depth of the depression, 61,500 persons—35.8 percent of Utah's work force—were unemployed, while comparable thousands on farms and ranches faced foreclosures and market prices that did not recover production costs." The initial response to the crisis was characteristically optimistic. Gov. George H. Dern informed President Hoover that the economic future of the state looked good and that the legislature could deal with any specific problems. Like Hoover, Dern believed that the depression would last only a short time and that private charitable activity could provide sufficient relief in the meantime. While hundreds walked the streets of Salt Lake City looking for work, the Communist party organized a march of 1,500 people on January 31, 1931, to demand unemployment insurance.⁶ The legislature responded with a statement opposing any form of dole. Private charities began to exhaust their limited resources, and growing unrest was evidenced as crowds of protestors

⁶John F. Bluth and Wayne K. Hinson, "The Great Depression," in *Utah's History*, ed. Richard D. Poll et al. (Provo, Ut.: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), pp. 482, 484.

disrupted sheriff's sales in urbanized Wasatch Front areas and were repelled with tear gas. Following a Democratic sweep in the 1932 elections a new approach to the depression evolved.

Gov. Henry H. Blood determined that Utah would now look to Washington for assistance and direction. At first the legislature attempted to pursue its previous course of conservatism, but the onslaught of Roosevelt's New Deal measures upset their collective sense of restraint. Despite the predominant attitude that relief was a private and not a public responsibility, support for work relief grew. The first federal relief programs generated were the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA). Under the auspices of the Women's Division of the CWA the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was implemented in Utah.

The brainchild of Edward Bruce, PWAP was administered under the Treasury Department, surviving only four and a half months during the winter of 1933-34.

Bruce encouraged the notion that the artist was like any other artisan who paid rent, ate, and had a family — not a remote aesthete who lived in an attic and existed on inspiration. The fact that the government had taken such a realistic position [that of supporting visual artists], Bruce contended, made the PWAP more than an employment program; it could not help but stimulate the creative juices of grateful American artists.⁷

In Utah artists were no doubt grateful to find themselves the recipients of federal patronage, but juices were far from stimulated. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that "Pictorial interpretations of life as it is in Utah today, shunning the allegorical, are suggested as subjects for the artists."⁸ Of the ten projects initially assigned, only one dealt with the present, Ranch Kimball's (1894-1980) task of documenting in drawings the activities of the Civilian Conservation Corps. All of the others fell back on romantic interpretations of Utah history. Carlos Anderson (1904-78) rendered a series of twenty-four drawings of Salt Lake City as it was in the 1860s, and the well-established Harwood, then seventy-five years old, painted two idyllic scenes of pioneers entering the valley nearly a century earlier. Other projects involved re-creating aspects of early Indian life. The largest assignment was given to Lee Greene Richards (1875-1950) to design and execute murals for the Utah State Capitol rotunda. Richards supervised three other artists in covering 4,500 square feet of canvas with historical narrative involving 100 ten-

⁷ McKinzie, *The New Deal*, p. 12.

⁸ Quoted in Dan Burke, *Utah Art of the Depression* (Salt Lake City: Utah Arts Council, 1986), p. 3.



Carlos J.
Anderson
drawing of
the Lion
House.
USHS
collections.

foot figures, including the Catholic missionary Father Escalante and the ubiquitous Brigham Young complete with an ox-drawn covered wagon. The PWAP work, with the exception of Kimball's, did not reflect any aspects of the depression or contemporary Utah. Rather, it celebrated in prosaic terms a simpler and more secure way of life that had disappeared. It appealed to the conservative ethos of the community and reflected the general feeling that art should be either instructional, like the Capitol murals, or spiritually uplifting, like the easel work.

PWAP soon gave way nationally to the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Prior to the establishment of the Federal Art Project in Utah under the WPA, however, a few projects were completed with FERA funds, the most notable being the Capitol rotunda murals. Under FERA Utah initiated a state Public Art Project on August 14, 1934, that employed twenty-two artists doing mostly easel work for \$3,131.63 in wages.

When the Capitol murals were finally dedicated in 1935 the *Deseret News* reported:

One thing will be conceded by all who see the murals. They do add color and life to the building. They are in keeping with the spirit of the structure. They do bring warmth, and banish the bareness and coldness of the vast, open, white spaces. These paintings in years to come will bear testimony to the value of the Public Works of Art Project, financed by the

federal government, which has given so many artists an opportunity to do worthwhile work for society.⁹

The WPA was organized in Utah in 1935 with Darrel J. Greenwell as state administrator. On October 14 of that year regional director Donald Bear received a memorandum from Holger Cahill, WPA director, authorizing Bear "to approve or disapprove on the basis of their artistic integrity and social desirability, projects calling for the employment of artists, craftsmen, etc., as outlined in Supplement 1 of Bulletin 29, in the State of Utah, which will employ 90 percent relief personnel."¹⁰ By February 1936 Bear was able to report to Cahill:

The attitude of the Utah people is extremely gratifying. Both the public and the artists are very pleased with the art projects, not so much from the point of view of what money it brings them, but because it seems to offer them a chance to develop the art of their own locale. They are most enthusiastic.¹¹

The enthusiasm described by Bear contrasts with the initial disorganization of Salt Lake's FAP ranks. Under FERA Judy F. Lund had acted as a supervisor for the state's Public Art Project. In April 1936 Cahill received letters indicating Lund was state director of the FAP. When he questioned Bear about her appointment, he discovered that Bear thought Cahill's office had appointed her.¹² A small bureaucratic nightmare ensued, and not until March 3, 1937, was Lund officially appointed by Cahill as state director of the FAP.¹³ The significant point is that officials of the Utah WPA *wanted* a state director, even though Bear had advised them to keep administrative costs low and simply use a supervisor.¹⁴ An early plea for a director was made to Cahill in 1935 from a representative of the Utah WPA:

From the standpoint of the present program and the development of interest in art which will make for the establishment of a permanent art movement in the State of Utah, it seems highly desirable that we have a State Director of Art Projects appointed who would be in a position to make the maximum use of our available talent and lay a foundation for a true art consciousness on the part of the general public in the state.¹⁵

⁹Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁰Holger Cahill to Donald Bear, October 14, 1935, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

¹¹Donald Bear to Holger Cahill, February 15, 1936, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

¹²Holger Cahill to Donald Bear, April 1, 1936; Donald Bear to Holger Cahill, April 4, 1936, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

¹³Holger Cahill to Judy Lund, March 3, 1937, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

¹⁴Office of Donald Bear to Thomas Parker, February 25, 1937, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

¹⁵Mack Nicolaysen to Holger Cahill, November 12, 1935, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

Two months after Lund's official appointment, the Salt Lake FAP joined forces with the Utah State Institute of Fine Arts (IFA) in organizing the annual state exhibit. The IFA (now the Utah Arts Council) was and is a branch of state government created in 1899. Governor Blood attended the exhibit opening and heard speakers identify three main goals of art in the community: "Art as a cultural stimulus, Art as an emotional outlet and inspirational outlet [and] Art as a means of employing the nations and the States artists in great educational and recreational projects."¹⁶ The progress of the FAP was outlined and the results highly praised. The governor was presented with a hand-painted silk state flag, a large bronze tray for his reception room, and a bronze wastebasket, all made by FAP enrollees. The value of the FAP was thus confirmed in a very public fashion, and the nod of state approval was given to the project. Blood's early 1932 strategy of looking to Washington for guidance was applied directly to the FAP.

Perhaps the major difficulty confronting the Salt Lake FAP in 1937 was an on-going problem within its administration. Only one month after the successful annual state exhibit opening, Bear notified Thomas C. Parker, assistant director of the FAP in Washington, that internal discord "had come to the point where the Women's and Professional Division, the Finance Department and the State Administrator's office felt that the art project was almost more trouble than all the other projects that they had to handle." A shake-up in personnel followed in which Judy Lund was dismissed and Elzy J. "Bill" Bird (1911-) appointed as the new FAP director on August 1, 1937. Bear called the personnel change a "delicate" situation, and the result in a city as small and close-knit as Salt Lake was the formation of a group forever after opposed to the activities of the FAP.¹⁷

When Bird took over, no important mural projects or exhibition programs had yet been launched. With both Mormon and non-Mormon artists enrolled, the project consisted mainly of easel painting and poster making, and artists were also working on the Index of American Design. Predictably, many of the easel works reflected the tendency toward "art as an inspirational outlet" advocated by the Institute of Fine Arts. While some artists were grinding out more formula landscapes, elements of the era's emptiness and despair made their way into the studio in such paintings as Howell Rosenbaum's

¹⁶"Utah Art Goals Outlined as Annual Exhibit Opens," *Deseret News*, May 17, 1937.

¹⁷Donald Bear to Thomas Parker, July 21, 1937. AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

(1908-82) *March Day in the City* and *Bleak Countryside*. Similar impulses also appeared in the work of Henry Rasmussen (1909-) and Roy Butcher (1909-), but none dealt with the more complex themes of the 1930s as directly and effectively as LeConte Stewart (1891-1990).

Stewart never signed up with the project. He taught throughout the 1930s in Ogden. Once exclusively a landscapist, he turned his attention during the depression to scenes of gas stations, viaducts, and rail yards. "It is not that I love the lyrical in nature any less," he said in 1935, "but I feel that in modern life there is not time or inclination for it. In these new pictures I am not striving to represent beauty according to the traditional standards; I am trying to cut a slice of contemporary life, life as it is . . . as I have found it. For years, I have felt it most strongly, yet have turned aside and sought the solitude and peace of nature."¹⁸ *The Smiths', the Jones', and Browns'* of 1936 is a quiet evocation of depression-era hopelessness, and *Signs of Spring* an understated acknowledgement of the encroachment of the modern world. *Ogden Alley* and *Finale (Mormon Graveyard)* look at life's grim realities.

A prolific artist, Stewart exhibited at the Art Barn¹⁹ in 1934 and at the University of Utah in 1935. At that time there was no institution in the state designed to bring art to the public on a regular and democratic basis. Alice Merrill Horne had organized commercial exhibits as early as 1921 inside of Utah's largest retail department store, ZCMI, and in other locations under her tight personal control. This situation changed in 1938 with the single most important project of the FAP, the establishment of the Utah State Art Center.

The Salt Lake FAP had found a strong ally in the Institute of Fine Arts, especially its chairman, Gail Martin, who was also art critic for the *Deseret News*. On March 5, 1938, the IFA held a conference in which 150 delegates resolved that government support of art was "commendable," that the "Federal Art, Music, and Writer's Projects in Utah should be continued," and "that a Federal Art Center to house and display art objects of the past and the present is urgently needed in Utah, both as a means of encouragement to artists who may exhibit there and as a means of educating and inspiring the people."²⁰ Martin sent a copy of

¹⁸James Haseltine, *LeConte Stewart*, exhibition catalog (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, 1962), p. 6.

¹⁹A small gallery in Salt Lake City, the Art Barn both predates and postdates the Utah State Art Center and warrants further study. Incorporated in 1931, it sponsored exhibits, readings, performances, and classes. For a recent overview see *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 8, 1987, p. E7. Political and aesthetic differences among Utah artists prevented the pooling of resources.

²⁰Resolutions Adopted by the Utah Institute of Fine Arts, March 5, 1938, copy in AAA RG69, DC106.



Utah State Art Center gallery in the old Elks Building, 59 South State. WPA collection, Utah State Historical Society.

the resolutions to Harry Hopkins, head of the WPA in Washington, along with a letter stating that the FAP "will do more to advance the arts and provide a livelihood in Utah for professional artists than any other one agency." It also would "decentralize the arts by keeping Utah artists at home to brighten and enrich life within the State."²¹

Martin worked closely with Elzy Bird and the regional advisor for the FAP, Daniel Defenbacher, in attempting to find a local sponsor for an art center. Private sources, the county, and the city were solicited to no avail. Prior to 1938 the IFA had received only \$100 per year to carry on the annual state exhibit, but Governor Blood was persuaded to transfer \$2,500 to the IFA to fund the center, making the state partners with the FAP. By July 9 a lease to occupy the old Elks Building at 59 South State Street had been signed. The plans that Defenbacher, Martin, and Bird had for a center met with some opposition. Judy Lund, former director of the project and a member of the board of the Institute of Fine Arts, fought against aspects of the program, causing "considerable dissension," according to one contemporary account. Bear wrote to Parker that "Mr. Bird is going to meet terrific opposition from the

²¹Gail Martin to Harry Hopkins, March 14, 1938, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.



Above: Traditional Indian arts and crafts were exhibited at the Art Center.
Below: An exhibit of Mahonri Young's works. Both from the WPA collection, USHS.



enemies of the project, that is to say, the friends of Miss Lund, and if Dan [Defenbacher] or someone else qualified could be there to back him up, I have every reason to believe that we would be very proud of the results to be accomplished during the coming year."²²

The Art Center had its official opening on November 25, 1938, and although no one from Washington made it out to "back up" Bird, the event was a success. Governor and Mrs. Blood attended, and those who had "bitterly opposed the whole scheme" found themselves praising the facilities.²³ Donald B. Goodall, chosen by Defenbacher to run the center, reported to Thomas Parker that the opening of the Art Center "was attended by a host of local dignitaries . . . [and] one and all agreed that the Art Center would be an 'excellent thing for the community,' and have hinted strongly at cooperation." Noting that the LDS church "was unofficially represented by several . . . officials," Goodall opined that "their support, of great value to the Center, will be one of the first important objectives."²⁴

Indeed, the center's relationship with the Mormon church, while not ideal, was far from inoperative. Bill Bird recalled:

Everyone, I think, had good words for the FAP. We had a lot of material from the Mormon Church Relief Society Relic Halls that we reproduced for the Index of American Design. I worked with the sisters of St. George in setting up exhibitions in their new Relic Hall. I gave several talks here in Salt Lake to the Relief Society on Early Utah Crafts, etc. Some of the ladies from the Lion House, . . . came over and took classes at the Center. We had a good relationship with the Church.²⁵

The arts stood on firmer ground perhaps than ever before in Utah history. Scheduled classes were instantly successful. Although the Art Barn and the University of Utah both offered courses, the Art Barn was limited in size and scope and the university charged tuition. The Art Center classes were free, a cause of some concern for the other institutions. Still, the public eagerly enrolled in the new programs. In a 1940 report to the community the Center boasted that in the first year of its existence it had been "host to 75,000 persons, over 200 visitors a day or more than half the total population of Salt Lake City."²⁶ In addition,

²²E. J. Bird to Daniel S. Defenbacher and Donald Bear to Thomas Parker, July 22, 1938, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

²³Gail Martin to Daniel S. Defenbacher, November 26, 1938, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

²⁴Donald Goodall to Thomas Parker, November 30, 1938, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

²⁵E. J. Bird to author, October 14, 1988.

²⁶"Utah State Art Center Report to the Community," March 8, 1940, AAA RG69, Roll DC107.

2,200 people had enrolled in Art Center classes since its inception, of which a third were children. Beyond the visual arts, the center held musical events, lectures, and plays. Before long, branches of the Art Center established in Provo, Helper, and Price were bringing traveling exhibitions to these more rural areas.

One of the first artists Bill Bird approached in 1938 concerning an FAP-sponsored traveling show was LeConte Stewart.²⁷ An extremely sensitive painter, Stewart had nonetheless felt modernism to be a “disease” ever since he had seen the Armory Show in New York when he was studying at the Art Students League.²⁸ He disdained cubism or any form of abstraction. Along with a number of other representational painters, Stewart contested the legitimacy of “modernism” with a growing group of progressive Utah painters. One of these, George Dibble (1904-), had also studied at the Art Students League but came away from New York a cubist. The ideological gulf between these factions became a heated issue, and the serene interpretations of Harwood and Hafen seemed suddenly dated.

The Utah State Art Center gave the Utah moderns their first showing in January 1942, although Dibble’s work had already been shown there earlier. Don Goodall, the center’s director, identified himself with the moderns, as did Henry Rasmussen, Leone Eitel, and Millard Malin (1891-1974), who were on the art faculty of the center. The artists issued a small manifesto on the occasion of their exhibit in which they declared that “The Modern Artist does not attempt to reproduce the photographic or surface appearance of things but . . . uses emotional and intellectual freedom in organizing the subject into unified form.”²⁹ Although this may sound tame—and it was compared to East Coast issues of the same time—the idea of intellectual freedom, which gave rise to these abstract images, was wholly antithetical to the long dominant local impulse toward “predictability and order.” Artistic pluralism was more evident than ever before in the state, and the Art Center greatly facilitated its appearance.

“We had exhibitions from all over America,” Bird recalled. “We even brought in some stuff from the Mellon Collection out of Washington.”³⁰ Other exhibits included paintings from the 1939

²⁷E. J. Bird to Mildred Helzhauer, October 24, 1938, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

²⁸Robert Davis, *LeConte Stewart: The Spirit of Landscape* (Salt Lake City: LDS Museum of Church History and Art, 1985), p. 23.

²⁹Burke, *Utah Art of the Depression*, pp. 19, 20.

³⁰E. J. Bird to author, October 14, 1988.



The Federal Art Project's free painting classes attracted a diverse group of participants. Some classes were held at the Art Center, others "on location," WPA collection, USHS.

World's Fair, prints by Kathe Kollowitz, "Directions in American Painting" from the Carnegie Institute, and a history of murals consisting of reproductions of the work of Orozco and Rivera.

Politically, Utah participants in the project were largely non-demonstrative. In 1936 a group of artists had met to discuss forming a local chapter of the American Artists Congress.³¹ No documentation has surfaced to identify who these artists were or to prove that a chapter was ever established. That such a meeting was even held, however, suggests elements of the political left among Utah artists. The following year, artist Henry Rasmussen wrote to Washington that "... we here in Utah are very interested in gaining full rights and privileges for the Aliens on WPA Projects, especially on the Art Project."³² Such an issue must have been controversial within the context of local politics.

³¹Judy Lund to Holger Cahill, November 25, 1936, AAA RG69, Roll DC106.

³²Henry Rasmussen to Ellen S. Woodward, August 13, 1937, AAA RG69, DC106.

In the 1932 elections in Utah 4,000 votes had been cast for Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas and 1,000 votes for a Communist gubernatorial candidate.⁵³ Regarding leftist politics and the FAP artists, Bird recalled:

“Communists”—the word was very new then. No one in the [Utah] Art world thought much about them or gave a damn. Les Wire, with the S.L. Police Force, had a list of “Pinkos.” Some of the artists had the honor of being on this list: Ranch Kimball, Donald Goodall, E. J. Bird, Gordon Cope [and] there were others . . .⁵⁴

Project artists may have made this list simply because they were artists, still a questionable activity in the minds of many, and because they were in support of and receiving government aid. Yet another reason may have been continued concern on the part of conservatives over how many votes Communists had garnered in recent elections. In any case, Communist or Socialist themes did not appear overtly in Utah art.



Florence Ware's murals in Kingsbury Hall placed highly stylized figures in a spatially complex design. USHS collections.

Murals became a strong part of the project during Bird's tenure. Florence Ware (1891-1971) and Lee Greene Richards (1878-1950) executed murals for the University of Utah. While Richards's work

⁵³Bluth and Hinton, "The Great Depression," p. 485.

⁵⁴E. J. Bird to author, November 4, 1988.



"Coke Ovens at Sunnyside 1917," one of Lynn Fausett's mural subjects in the Price City Hall. USHS Preservation Office photograph.

continued in a traditional vein, Ware's murals in Kingsbury Hall incorporated highly stylized figures into a spatially complex design. Lynn Fausett (1894-1977), who had returned from New York, where he had served as president of the Art Students League from 1932 to 1936, completed four murals under the project. The best known of these, produced for the Price City Hall, was again a depiction of pioneer history but one in which the realities of life were fully realized. Indeed, the representation of a mother nursing her child caused considerable concern, and, although Fausett did not want to make changes, the mayor's wife convinced him to paint a lace jabot frill over the area in question.³⁵ This was perhaps an unavoidable concession at that time, but the vigorous realism Fausett brought to his work was an impulse that could not be as easily painted over. By way of contrast, Everett Thorpe's (1907-) 1942 work, *Early and Modern Provo*, done for the Federal Building in that city and sponsored by the Section of Fine Arts out of Washington and not the local project, continued to assuage local tastes with a historical mishmash in the tradition of Richards's State Capitol

³⁵Robert S. Olpin, *Dictionary of Utah Art* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Art Center, 1976), p. 81.

rotunda scenes. Efforts at censoring project art and activities continued until the center closed during World War II.

In the small town of Springville, Utah, WPA funds had helped to construct an art gallery in 1937. Known as the Springville Museum of Art, it housed a small collection of local art. Don Bear had hoped to take advantage of this modest institution to begin a strong exhibition program for the state, but Springville proved too small and too far from Salt Lake where chances were best to establish such a center. The new building provided a mural opportunity, though, and Bird was quick to assign the task to Gordon Cope. Bird remembered that only a few days after Cope completed the mural, citizens of Springville painted over it. It disappeared so fast, according to Bird, that "I can't even remember the theme of the mural."⁵⁶

Art remained controversial in the Utah capital, too. Alice Merrill Horne, author of the 1899 art bill and of the first book dedicated to Utah art and artists, *Devotees and Their Shrines* (1915), staged a crusade against the Art Center after it opened. Still a powerful figure in the arts, she enjoyed a considerable following, but her rhetoric, full of fire and brimstone, seemed outmoded to the much younger generation of artists working for the FAP. In a 1940 edition of *Art Strands*, published by Horne, she attacked the center as a "barbarian invasion." In her view, "Religion is Art and Art is Religion," and she called the center teachers, who smoked while they worked, "vandals."⁵⁷ The issue of nudity also greatly concerned Horne. The intensity of her campaign is revealed in a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

We have a valuable collection but through the appointment of (mainly Jewish) over our fine Utah artists, great damage has come to our culture . . .

Has some one set their hand to destroy us? This present decadent art is pitiful. I can only continue as I have for 50 years seeking to elevate the culture of our people. Why is the government interested in destroying, making a shambles of our early art?⁵⁸

Horne's efforts to undermine community interest in the Art Center proved futile largely because she represented the older artists and their aesthetic almost exclusively, leaving no room to accommodate the interests of a new generation. A painting by Minerva Teichert (1889-1976), one of the few younger artists belonging to Horne's "Academy of

⁵⁶Interview with E. J. Bird, November 23, 1988.

⁵⁷Alice Merrill Horne, *Art Strands* (Salt Lake City), April 6, 1940, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁸Horne to Roosevelt, May 1940, AAA RG69, DC106. Parenthetical comment is Horne's.

Western Culture," was reproduced by Horne in her *Strands* attack to illustrate the concept of traditional beauty in art.³⁹ Yet, Teichert's *Jewish Refugees*, with dispossessed emigrants crowded together in the foreground and the Manhattan skyline in the background, was itself a painting addressed to a shifting sense of values. Another painter trained at the Art Students League, Teichert worked throughout the 1930s in the isolation of Cokeville, Wyoming, producing both large-scale paintings of Mormon history and highly personal interpretations of western life.

Recalling the activities of Horne in regard to the center, Bird, a professed non-Mormon, noted:

I think she had set herself up as the *keeper* of the mores and morals of the State of Utah. Also, she was THE AUTHORITY ON ART and let no . . . [one] dispute it. To her, looking through the frame of a painting, she wanted to see all the beauty that God had created, reproduced as envisioned by the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and Alice Merrill Horne. . . . I know she didn't like our Art Center, and I personally didn't care or do anything to change her mind. Things were moving forward.⁴⁰

Indeed, things were moving forward and styles were changing. Project artist Rasmussen, described by Bird as a "dyed in the wool Mormon,"⁴¹ produced crudely painted yet forceful visions of church history such as *Mormon Crickets* and *Temple Builders* of 1940. The artist's *Scorched Earth* of 1941 is a harsh evocation of the Second World War.

Bird, himself a student of J. T. Harwood, had painted in the manner of his teacher until the late 1930s. His work gradually took on a more regional flavor as he dropped the impressionist idiom and adopted figural subject matter. Bird's strongest painting, *The Gossips*—done in 1940, the year of Harwood's death and Horne's vituperative attacks—shows three ample women, dressed alike, in front of a rural mailbox with their bodies hunched over to whisper. It was rejected for exhibition at the Springville Museum of Art, no doubt because of the graphic and unflattering portrayal of the women, whose bodies were barely contained by thin clothing. The real content, of course, was an indictment of petty and conformist thinking. Though rejected by Springville, *The Gossips* debuted in an exhibit organized by Donald Bear called "Artists West of the Mississippi" where it hung between a Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton's *Susanna and the Elders*. According to

³⁹Horne, *Strands*, p. 18.

⁴⁰E. J. Bird to author, November 4, 1988.

⁴¹Bird interview.



Children's class at the Utah State Art Center. WPA collection, USHS.

Bird: "Maybe, if the War hadn't interceded, I could have been a good painter. I like to think so, because I had a pretty good start."⁴²

The war did intercede, however, and led to the demise of the Art Center. On July 15, 1942, the WPA Federal Art Program became part of the War Services Program, and the Utah State Art Center was renamed the War Services Center. In 1943 WPA support was discontinued altogether, Bird was drafted, and a final blow was struck in July of that year when the Elks Building was sold and the Art Center forced to vacate.

In retrospect, the activities of the FAP in Salt Lake City were certainly not necessary in promoting the continuation of traditional painting, nor did they give rise to the Utah moderns. The projects did, however, especially with the establishment of the Art Center, make art and the responsibility for its continuation a very public issue. The center acted as a conduit for otherwise inaccessible exhibits and as an advocate for alternative artistic viewpoints. The greatest single virtue of the center was its pluralism. Open to diversity and controversy, the center found an audience in Salt Lake City. In the postwar years, the Salt Lake Art Center and the Utah Museum of Fine Arts were established along with other visual arts institutions in the state, and the Mormon church opened its own museum. The legacy of the FAP in Salt Lake extended beyond merely setting a precedent for government responsibility in the arts; it was the first organization in the Intermountain West to provide and disseminate democratically a wide range of visual material, and it demonstrated the need for and value of such institutions.

⁴²E. J. Bird to author, November 4, 1988.



A Good Time Coming: Mormon Letters to Scotland. Edited by FREDERICK STEWART BUCHANAN (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988. xxiv + 319 pp. \$24.95.)

When I picked up *A Good Time Coming* for the first time, I was skeptical that a collection of more than a hundred letters would hold my interest for very long. But I was quickly taken with the letters, especially for what they revealed about nineteenth-century Utah and the human nature of their writers. The book drew me back again and again. When I finished the volume, I knew that the MacNeil family and the three principal letter writers—John MacNeil, his brother James, and half brother John Thompson—would remain unforgettable figures in my consciousness.

The letters, written between 1853 and 1904 to David and Ann MacNeil and their children in Scotland, were discovered by Ruari MacNeil in 1964 in the attic of his father's home in Ayr, Scotland. They were deposited in the archives of the University of St. Andrews and brought to the attention of University of Utah Professor Fred Buchanan. A native of Scotland and a long-time student of the British experience in Utah, Buchanan will be known by most *Quarterly* readers for his "Imperial Zion: The British Occupation of Utah," published in *The Peoples of Utah*, edited by Helen Z. Papanikolas. Professor Buchanan has edited the letters, arranged them by chapters, provided an excellent historical context for the period in a general introduction, and penned concise chapter introduc-

tions that keep the reader informed of family developments and what to look for in the letters.

The MacNeil family is representative, if not typical, of the thousands of Old World families who struggled with the issues of Mormonism and immigration to Utah. For example, the religious experience in America for each of the three principal letter writers was different. James MacNeil remained a true and committed Mormon while his older brother John was hostile toward Mormons from the time he set foot in Utah until his death in 1904. Half brother George Thompson never completed the journey to Utah but stopped off in Illinois and, after his military service in the Union Army, joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and remained a faithful member until his death in 1875.

Coming to America as veterans of the Lanarkshire coal mines, all three followed mining careers here and all three died violent deaths—John in a Park City silver mine, John Thompson in an Illinois coal mine, and James MacNeil in the flood-swept Gila River in Arizona.

Their letters help illuminate the complex and tenuous life of miners in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The MacNeils bounced from one mining camp to another and back again—Evanston, Wyoming; Alta and

Little Cottonwood Canyon, Mammoth and Silver City in the Tintic Mining District, Scofield, and Silver Reef, Utah; and Globe, Arizona. Their experience was typical of many miners as they followed rumor and friends from one camp to another looking for elusive steady work—all the while hoping to earn enough money to bring family members from Scotland to Utah and to take up farming or ranching. For these three the good times never came financially, although each man considered himself much better off in America than in Scotland.

There is a disquieting element to the letters, perhaps because the human frailties of their authors are so evident—the self-righteousness of James, the anger and contempt for everyone of John MacNeil, and the disappointment of John Thompson when his mother and stepfather did not immigrate to the United States after he sent money for them and their children. A sense of unfulfilled family life marks the letters. James never married, though he thought and wrote about it often. John, whose marriage like life, left him unfulfilled, blamed his brother James for quarreling and pushing him into a marriage he regretted: “My Selection of a Partner wasnt very good . . . My wife has pulled at the opposite End of the

rope Ever Since we was Married and throw Cold water on My Enterprise Every chance . . . She is a Staunch Mormon. I have No use for religion whatever. My troubles Have Made Me as grey as a rat. . .” (p. 287). John considered his sons lazy, unhelpful, and unappreciative. John Thompson, despite his own poverty, seemed to be the only one to recognize and appreciate that the good times did come for him though not in a financial way. After his death, his wife wrote to her parents-in-law, “I had 10 years of a happy married life. He went to the greave [without] ever giving me [an] angry word. He verry often said to me ‘I wonder if thear is a man and woman as happy as we are’” (p. 213).

Published as volume four in the Utah Centennial Series edited by Charles S. Peterson, *A Good Time Coming* reveals the forces that acted on a nineteenth-century family in the Old and New Worlds. The published letters bring spirit back to the lives of ordinary individuals long deceased, illuminate the humanness of miner immigrants, and allow the reader to ponder his own life in the mirror of someone else's past.

ALLAN KENT POWELL
Utah State Historical Society

Under God's Spell: Frontier Evangelists, 1772-1915. By CATHY LUCHETTI (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989. xxviii + 244 pp. \$27.95.)

“This book seeks to capture the spirit of frontier Christian life as lived by ministers, missionaries, pious women and circuit riders” (p. xxi). The key word in this commentary by the author on her objective in the preparation of his fine book is “spirit.” It was obviously not her intent to develop a pro-

found theological discourse on America's religious history during 1772-1915. On the contrary, she has wisely elected to let the assorted churchmen and churchwomen speak for themselves. By using this approach, she gives the reader not only a provocative glimpse of the role of frontier evangelists in

America but also an opportunity to view the broader spectrum of frontier society as these dedicated workers in the Lord's vineyards labored to do good to those who presumably needed to be uplifted to higher planes of Christian endeavor.

Following a brief but cogent introduction, the author stands aside to let the reader appreciate the experiences of her cast of characters in their own words. With obvious concern for ecumenical diversity, she presents the adventures of Sister Mary Alenie (Catholic); David McClure (Congregational); Lorenzo Dow (Methodist); James Leander Scott (Baptist); Charles McIlvaine (Episcopal); Elkanah Walker (Congregational); Benjamin Brown (Mormon); Bert Foster (Episcopal); Mary Collins (Congregational); Annie Bidwell (Presbyterian); A. J. McNemee (Methodist); and William Robinson (African Methodist Episcopal). Embellishing these delightful narratives is a carefully selected assortment of rare photographs that depict, in a variety of compelling scenes, the many ways in which religion was a part of the framework of everyday life at this time.

Each reader of this volume will doubtlessly have his or her favorite episodes to relish as poignant examples of the struggle between good and evil in days gone by. One will find, for example, sharp contrasts between the stories of an eccentric circuit rider who witnessed a phenomenon known as the "jerks" in a backwoods camp meeting and the career of a prominent bishop who numbered President Lincoln among his admirers. Those who will expect to encounter tales of missionary work in mining camps and on Indian reservations will not be disappointed when they read about a man who brought the Gospel to miners and their

families in the northern Rockies and the woman whose peaceful conduct of a school for the Dakota Sioux was endangered by tensions created by white encroachment on Indian lands. Others will surely be captivated by a young woman's description of her harrowing experiences crossing the Isthmus of Panama in the 1850s on her way to a mission station in California.

If there is a deficiency in this otherwise exemplary work, it might be found in the "Selective Chronology of Significant Dates in Frontier Christian History." This compilation is oftentimes misleading rather than informative. The reader is told, for example, that in 1870 the Sisters of Charity established in Mexican Hill, Colorado, the first parochial school in an adobe building. One can only wonder why this event should be regarded as significant, rather than trivial, and where on earth was Mexican Hill, Colorado? And when we read that in 1874 the commissioner of Indian Affairs was named, with no further information, we must wonder why this date should be cited as significant when this office had existed for many years. Was there something significant, perhaps, about the person selected for this position at that time? Regrettably, too many questions are raised rather than answered by this chronological exercise. However, these critical observations, perhaps in themselves trivial, are not intended to deter from the overall value of this book to the growing body of publications on that often neglected ingredient in the taming of the wild, wild West, the frontier evangelist.

NORMAN J. BENDER
University of Colorado
Colorado Springs

Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier. By ELLIOTT WEST.
(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989. xiv + 343 pp. \$16.95.)

The idea that children were part of the collective "we" that settled the western frontier is the most basic assumption of *Growing Up with the Country*, a book that implies that the child's experience on the frontier was not all that different from that of an adult.

Growing Up with the Country creates a paradigm of nineteenth-century frontier life in the West as parents and children moved from one world to another. This is a story of how ordinary men and women reacted to the land and changed or persisted in the ways they related to one another, to their children, and to their new western environment.

West convincingly conveys a sense of place, a space filled with mystery and wonder. He reminds us that we cannot consider these people out of the geographic context of the bare, open space of sky and land that stretched in every direction they looked. He tries to help us feel the children's response to the land, saying, "This world was more than the background of the children's story; it also was an active force that helped shape their values and attitudes, their views of the future, and their understanding of themselves."

John Mack Farragher in *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* tells of a blurring of gender roles on the frontier as men and women struggled for survival, women performing tasks they would have considered "men's work" before leaving for the West. Likewise, West describes a similar occurrence, as the boundaries between the generations became less distinct and children worked alongside their parents, confronted the same dangers, and shared in their joy.

West contends that children born and raised in the West were the true test of the frontier thesis. These young Americans were potentially the most independent and inventive—what Ray Allen Billington called "optimistic individualists." They were a resourceful generation of boys and girls who with their parents met the challenges of living on the western edge of society.

In the last chapter West asks four final questions (one wonders why he waited so long): How did the frontier's peculiar conditions shape its children? Did this heritage alone make western childhood distinctive? How did their early years prepare children for facing the challenges of adulthood? How have frontier children left their mark on the modern West? These are intriguing questions that are the true subject promised by this book. They are questions that unfortunately this study does not adequately answer.

More important, *Growing Up with the Country* fails to alter the point of view from which historians have written the history of the West. This book is still history written from an distinctly adult point of view. Perhaps this is a problem inherent in the sources themselves and cannot be avoided. Where are the journals of children, the diaries pressed beneath quilts carried in wagons on the Overland Trail? Where are the letters that passed from calloused hands in a Montana mining camp to cousins in eastern towns left forever behind? Here there is too much assumption of how children must have felt, what they must have said and believed, how they must have acted to create a convincing picture of childhood on the frontier. Where is the child's voice?

While the vignettes at the end of each chapter highlighting the experiences of individual men and women who were raised as children in some very exotic western settings are certainly interesting, they are based largely on the reminiscences of much older people looking backward. How much more poignant, more touching, more moving these stories might have been if they had been told in the halting voice of a child, even an awkward, clumsy child of the West. I agree with the author when he says, "Until its children are heard, the

frontier's history cannot be truly written."

Growing Up with the Country is nevertheless an engaging study of the life of families as they moved into the West. The experience of the children in these families was, at least in this telling of the story, similar to that of their parents. Settling the West was truly a collective undertaking that bound parents and children together in the work.

MARTHA S. BRADLEY
Salt Lake City

Western Images, Western Landscapes: Travels along U.S. 89. By THOMAS R. VALE and GERALDINE R. VALE. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989. xviii + 190 pp. \$29.95.)

The book "is an exploration of a geographic region, the American West, and what that region means to people." If readers hope for much of an "exploration of a geographic region" they will be disappointed. Its view from the thin strip of asphalt labeled "U.S. 89" is limited enough that many specifics may be questioned, but the generalizations seem to hold up well. Perhaps they hold up well because "images" are often slippery and ambiguous anyway, and they are the real focus and charm of the book. It provides a small box of tools to stow in the mind's trunk for grappling with our feelings driving about western landscapes. It leaves pulling together the regional analysis to someone else. And it should be another small wedge in the myth that "geography is dull and uninteresting."

Read for its real theme, "what that region means to people," the book should tickle the fancy of many unfamiliar with academic geography's "perception studies." It is more an exploration of attitudes about places than the places themselves. The book

lists eight landscape images or "regional landscape meanings" north from Nogales, Arizona, to Peigan, Montana. The eight characterizations are Empty Quarter, Frontier, Big Rock Candy Mountain, Middle Landscape, Turnerian Progression, Desert, Protected Wild Nature, and Playground. They were chosen in advance of the field study to "emphasize people-land interactions" and ordered to emphasize historical development of the West by Europeans. Read on, undaunted by the labels! You will find classic quotes and stimulating ideas as you view landscape through the perception game.

An appealing feature of the book is the relatively balanced treatment of sometimes contradictory, sometimes compatible points of view. The authors address critical issues en route such as the "paradoxical antics" of the National Park Service at Tuzigott (a rebuilt wall is passed off as legitimate) and Wupatki (a 1930s rebuild was removed) in dealing with its site preservation/restoration choices. This indeed is life, and it is valuable for us as conscious and un-

conscious shapers of the landscape to confront the mix of emotions and motives we have as we use land—and abuse it. Whether we are turning the ignition key on for a four-block ride to church, consuming fast foods and packaging, or toothbrushing with the tap on, we are all users and abusers of the good earth and its resources. One of the book's strengths is its consistent views of the same scene through multiple eyes as inspired by Meinig and others. I wish all the "environmentalists" and "developers" could sit down and read it together.

The authors use U.S. 89 as a "cross section of the Interior West," a sampling. Their methods are convenient but flawed. They looked for "common landscapes that [they] felt were representative of what existed along the routes," but ignoring the uncommon placed blinders on reality. They stuck with their prejudice toward man-influenced environments as they tossed off the 70- or 80-mile stretch beyond Page with a comment on the Paria. "Nor did we search for portraits of interesting, local people," they state, and so missed some of the most acute observers of local landscape.

They "stressed a scale that approximates what an auto traveler might see from a car window," yet they made a long diversion off U.S. 89 to Bingham Canyon. Why this detour and not a hundred others equally or more telling? Bingham generated one of seven photos representing landscape between Mapleton and Montpelier. Did the distant Oquirrh tailings view so tempt them to a "closer look?" Or did they need a vehicle for telling the mining story in Utah? Why not a detour to Eureka or Park City or the Pima Mining District for different perspectives? They detoured to Walnut Canyon for another

water story and to the Grand Canyon. Why not a detour to Zion or Bryce or, to avoid the obvious, to Clear Creek Canyon, Utah's Fremont culture story, or Clear Creek Canyon, Arizona's amazing natural landscape? Or into the splendid Saguaro National Monument either side of Tucson? Only scant mention is made of the "neat and well-maintained . . . Mormon Temple" at Manti. This is one of the most telling and symbolic pieces of visual evidence on the 1,500-mile route! And they gave the same treatment to Sun City, Arizona, another amazing and symbolic story of emigrant people and the landscapes they create! This is puzzling.

Sidebars on "Deseret Grassland," "Sagebrush," and the Yellowstone ecosystem provide splendid and sensitive little vignettes on commonplace but significant elements of the landscape. They could well have been used more liberally. Mr. Vale has some plant ecology background and at least one of the authors is a "birder," and their observations on these topics lend an immediacy that is refreshing.

The authors ask "can this attempt at landscape interpretation succeed?" Yes, in spite of some presentation flaws. It does provide an introduction to reading common landscapes and a strong route, rather than destination, orientation (inspired by George Stewart, *U.S. 40*). At least for those who are not yet geographers (and everyone should want to be one for the pure pleasure of reading landscape and for the perspective it lends in treating land use issues critical to us all) time spent reading this book would be well spent.

GARY PETERSON
Mapleton and Eureka, Utah

Jornada del Muerto: A Pageant of the Desert. By BRODIE CROUCH. (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1989. 220 pp. \$28.50.)

The Jornada del Muerto has claimed another victim. That "infamous shortcut on the *Camino Real*," which at least since the seventeenth century has been exposing travelers to enemy attack and to its inhospitable environment, has proved too formidable for a twentieth-century chronicler. Despite an earnest attempt, Brodie Crouch's *Jornada del Muerto: A Pageant of the Desert* does not tell "the story of that land, that journey, and the people who experienced it," as the dust jacket would have one believe. At least, it does not tell the story very well.

A major problem is the author's naive approach toward history. The preface belabors the obvious fact that historians, unable to live for centuries, must rely upon the work of others; and it also makes the remarkable suggestion that the history of the Jornada really begins with Cortez, who never even set foot near it, because without the horses that he brought to the New World, "there would have been no Jornada del Muerto" (p. 7). Washington Irving's fictitious historian Diedrich Knickerbocker employs the same logic when he begins his history of New York with the creation of the world, but Irving was writing a parody. Perhaps it is this naive attitude that leads Crouch to make a number of errors and to rely upon a minor poet and novelist, Eugene Rhodes, as an unerring source of history.

Crouch's scholarship is limited in other ways, too. His choice of authorities is often questionable and, except for Rhodes, never explained. From the journey of Cabeza de Vaca to the development of the atomic bomb, many of Crouch's sources have been

superseded by more recent works published early enough to have been consulted. However, only 16 of the 174 items in the bibliography are later than 1969; and the only source from the eighties is an almanac (1982) cited once for a population figure. One looks again at the publication date: 1989.

Perhaps, then, it is no surprise that Crouch's attitude toward his subject is old-fashioned, as if the book had been written in a vacuum sealed during the fifties. In the first two chapters (which, incidentally, have little to do with the Jornada), the author perpetuates the old Anglo bias that the Spanish explorers were motivated exclusively by gold and glory. Later he acknowledges the work of the friars, but the first impression lingers. Indians fare no better. Toward them, Crouch's attitude vacillates between disdain and romantic admiration. In addition, it is strange to find someone arguing nowadays that such places as Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces are indeed "cities," not "mere towns or villages" (p. 184).

This book does contain some useful information, especially in chapters six and seven, about the caravans through the Jornada; but the text is repetitious and overlong. In fact, it seems to have grown beyond the author's control: each chapter seems to start over, and the book as a whole becomes a patchwork of times and events that blend in unexpected and illogical ways. Moreover, the author's style is pedestrian at its best and incomprehensible at its worst, plagued by numerous error-laden sentences that read like excerpts from an editing text. Indeed, one wonders if an editor ever saw the manuscript. Surely someone should

have stopped a sentence like this: "Literally the Spanish term [*Jornada del Muerto*] seems to signify the distance a dead man might travel in a day" (p. 43).

Finally one must question the decision to publish this book in its present condition, for to present it as a "new work" and as part of a series (Western Lands and Waters) that comprises some

sound and well-written studies is to mislead and ultimately disappoint the readers who would welcome a good book on the subject. "Reader Beware" should be posted at the entrance to the *Jornada del Muerto*.

DAVID HARRELL
Sante Fe, New Mexico

Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn. By DOUGLAS D. SCOTT, RICHARD A. FOX, JR., MELISSA A. CONNOR, and DICK HARMON. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989. xvii + 309 pp. \$24.95.)

The authors of *Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn* have combined to provide a sometimes riveting, always enlightening view of one of the most publicized cavalry-Indian battles in the American West. Some authors on the battle state that Custer sought little more than personal fame and glory when he led the Seventh Cavalry into the valley of the Little Bighorn River. He surely knew he was riding into a large encampment of Indians but had no way of knowing he was riding into a combined encampment of 5,000 Sioux and Cheyenne with approximately 1,500 warriors. What transpired on the 25th and 26th of June 1876 dramatically changed America and the nature of Indian-white relations. If Custer sought fame, he achieved his goal. Many of the myths that surround the battle are better remembered than the facts. Scott, et al., have brought a new perspective to bear on the battle in an effort to shed light on both the "fact" and "myth" that surround the events that came to be known as "Custer's Last Stand."

Archaeological Perspectives is essentially a final report covering the archaeological field investigations led by the

authors in 1984 and 1985. The investigations were possible due to a range fire that destroyed much of the heavy ground cover that shielded the area from the prying eyes of amateur enthusiast and professional archaeologist alike. The field teams used this opportunity to test a heretofore little utilized survey technique, a comprehensive metal detector sweep of the area within the monument boundaries. The metal detector survey was accompanied by a visual pedestrian survey, selective excavation, and a stratigraphic check of Deep Ravine via backhoe. The combined use of innovative and traditional archaeological techniques recovered a wide variety of artifacts. A description of these artifacts and their significance forms the core around which the book revolves.

The basic archaeological/anthropological tenet upon which the authors built is that all human behavior is patterned. An examination of the remains of patterned behavior, taken in view of defined research questions, can then provide a means to direct both recovery and analysis of the artifacts. The major goal of Scott, et al., was to understand the events of the battle.

Such understanding rests on the idea that archaeology provides complementary information to existing historic analysis. Archaeology can identify an entirely new set of "facts" to aid in the total study of the battle.

The field investigations in 1984 and 1985 provide insight into several areas of the battle. The spent shell cartridges found on the field illustrate the type of weapons in use and allowed the researchers to begin to identify possible movements of individual guns during the battle, based on firing pin marks. The cartridges provided additional evidence to suggest that while extraction failure existed during the battle, it occurred in the guns of both sides and probably did not occur in the cavalry guns at a level sufficient to influence the outcome of the battle. The rifling marks on the bullets further aided to identify specific guns and the possible direction of fire. The cartridges and bullets together corroborate the historic accounts of the battle sequence at the Reno-Benteen site and Indian accounts at the Custer site. The reliability of the artifacts to illustrate the events at Reno-Benteen suggests that the artifacts illustrate an accurate account of events.

The selective excavation of areas around the markers provides evidence of the relation of the markers to actual burials. It appears that many of the paired markers were actually pits created as the soldiers scooped dirt from either side of their fallen comrade in an attempt to quickly cover the corpse. On the whole, the markers tend to represent the relative pattern of fallen soldiers. Since most of the bodies have been removed to the common grave located on Last Stand Hill or to other cemeteries, it was difficult for the researchers to find enough skeletal material to draw many other conclusions.

A final area of interest concerns the investigations in Deep Ravine. The 1984 and 1985 metal detector surveys failed to locate either human remains or many artifacts from the Deep Ravine area. The backhoe trenches, however, suggest an area that may have been the historic cul-de-sac that trapped the "Gray Horse Company" and why their bodies were not found. It appears that the ravine investigated is indeed that mentioned by historic accounts of the battle. The stratigraphy of the ravine indicates that it was at least six feet deeper than its present depth, well beyond the two-foot effective depth of the metal detectors. As is often the case in archaeology, investigations in Deep Ravine left new and more intriguing questions for future research.

The work of Scott, Fox, Connor, and Harmon presents a very readable and interesting account of the events at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. They have made a strong statement for the integration of historical and archaeological methods to enhance our understanding of past events. If a flaw in the book can be found, it lies in the stated purpose at the beginning of chapter six. It is "our intent that the data we have collected and utilized to draw our conclusions be laid out and available for all concerned." An admirable goal, it often makes the book read like a technical report. The focus and message of the book go far beyond mere technical reporting. The investigations have a far-reaching effect on both the interpretation of events at the battlefield and the practice of historic archaeology in general. The information is of interest to both professional archaeologist and Custer enthusiast.

DAVID L. SCHIRER
Utah State Historical Society

Billy the Kid: A Short and Violent Life. By ROBERT M. UTLEY. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. xii + 302 pp. \$22.95.)

Robert Utley has tracked the Kid with more persistence and skill than any of the lawmen who pursued him, including Pat Garrett. His use of interviews, newspapers, and published books and articles should make any further pursuit unnecessary. There seems to be no need to search out the history of a young man who scarcely deserves the attention and even admiration of historical buffs and of historians like Utley.

Not being a historian, I found that much of the information was new to me and drew my attention. Content to know him as most people do, as Billy the Kid, I was interested in the biographical information provided. The author says, "The Kid's origins are shrouded in mystery and buffeted by controversy." However, what I learned from the book has not added to the luster of the legends of Billy. I prefer to remember him as "the Kid" rather than as Henry McCarty or Henry Antrim. Somehow that name provides some excuse for his life because of his youth and heretofore uncertain origins. Those who preserve the legend like to think of him as he was sometimes characterized as a slender, undersized girlish looking boy who "... never swore or tried to act bad like the other kids." He was rather a victim of those raw and lawless days. So he appears to many like the picture on the dust jacket of the book and not like the photograph in the book that Utley describes as the only indisputable photo of the Kid.

Lewis Wallace, the governor of New Mexico Territory during 1879-81, is one of the interesting characters presented. He bargained with the Kid, offered rewards for his capture, ex-

changed messages with him and finally signed his death warrant. Wallace also somehow found time to publish *Ben Hur*, *The Fair God*, and the *Prince of India* and later became the U.S. minister to Turkey. The attention given Wallace in the Kid's history reflects the interesting admixture of people involved in the expansion of American frontiers. Herein lies the real value of Utley's study. Using the Kid in a cameo appearance, Utley then introduces a variety of people involved in the Southwest and elsewhere on the frontier. So the book emerges as an important contribution to an understanding of the sociological, economic, and general cultural milieu of New Mexico and elsewhere. We meet not only Billy but also men like Pat Garrett, Sheriff William Brady, John Turnstall, Joseph Blazer, an Iowa dentist, Col. Nathan Dudley, Judge Warren Briston, a cattle king, John Chisum, and many others of various backgrounds and ethnic origins.

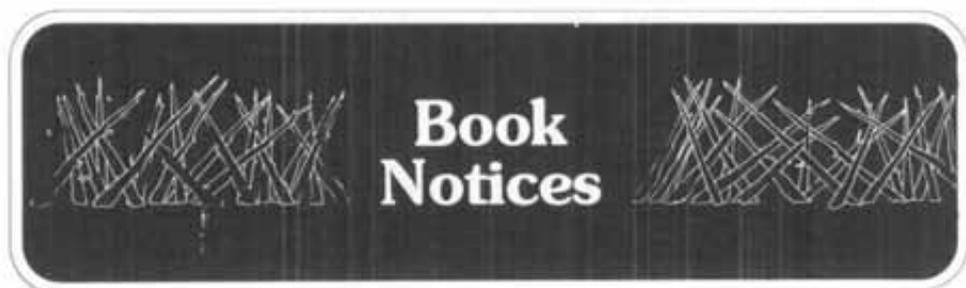
Acknowledging the value of the book, I think we can excuse the hyperbole in Utley's preface. His long pursuit has apparently persuaded him that the Kid deserves his place in the history and legend of the Southwest. When Pat Garrett shot Billy to death on July 14, 1881, in Pete Maxwell's bedroom at Old Fort Sumner, he says that "... almost at once an immortal Billy the Kid rose from the dead, ultimately to expand into a mighty legend of global impact ... few figures from the past have so profoundly stirred the human imagination. Among people everywhere, the name prompts instant recognition and evokes vivid images."

In Pete Maxwell's bedroom, not knowing Pat Garrett was hidden in the

dark but sensing that someone was crouched by the bed, Billy called out *Quien ese!* who is it? In response Garrett shot him dead. Now we still search a similar question: who and what was Billy the Kid. Was he hero or villain? Utley's answer is neither, but he was a complex personality, as person or

outlaw, who in reality sustains and contradicts the legend. There I think we must let the story rest. After all a legend is a story which is taken as historical but is not verifiable.

MILTON C. ADAMS
Logan, Utah



The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith; His Personal Account of the Journey to California, 1826-1827. Edited by GEORGE R. BROOKS. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. 259 pp. Paper, \$8.50.)

First published in 1977 in hardcover by Arthur H. Clark, Jedediah Smith's diary of his epic journey from Soda Springs, Idaho, across the Great Basin to California and back across the Great Salt Lake Desert was a major addition to the literature of the fur trade and western exploration. The diary first came to light in 1967, far too late to have been incorporated into Dale L. Morgan's biography of that great mountain man. The records of Smith's career, which probably place him behind only Lewis and Clark in the annals of western exploration, were tragically diminished by fire and destruction subsequent to Smith's untimely death and were laboriously collected to their present meager total by Morgan and Maurice S. Sullivan. With the appearance of this diary, George R. Brooks added greatly to the detail in which we

now understand Smith's great journey and his enigmatic personality.

Cowboy Culture: A Saga of Five Centuries. By DAVID DARV. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989. xii + 400 pp. Paper, \$9.95.)

The original hardcover edition of Darv's book which appeared in 1981 quickly staked out a permanent place in the vast literature of the cowboy. The book defies classification, for it is an intriguing combination of history and anthropology, but it is indispensable for those who wish to know how cowboys in various times and places lived and worked. Darv gives ample consideration to the different ethnic, regional, and historical manifestations of the cowboy, his equipment, and the social and economic circumstances that shaped and characterized his life. One might learn more about various aspects of the cowboy and the cattle business from more specialized studies, but for one who would know this famous American type from all angles, Darv's book is the place to begin.

Hidden History: Exploring Our Secret Past.

By DANIEL J. BOORSTIN (New York: Vintage Books, 1989. xxvii + 332 pp. Paper, \$9.95.)

The Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Americans* and *The Discoverers*, among many other books, here assembles a collection of reflective essays on various aspects of history and historians developed during the writing of those two monumental studies. This paperback reprint of the 1987 hardcover edition makes an excellent item for the bedside table, for none of the essays are lengthy and all exemplify Boorstin's accessible prose and acute insight. The subjects of these essays are "hidden" only because historians often do not have or take the time to explore the byways Boorstin finds so intriguing and brings alive so memorably to us.

An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith.

By SCOTT H. FAULRING (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989. lviii + 518 pp. Paper, \$9.95.)

Billed as the first complete (but see below) and unexpurgated publication of the ten extant manuscript diaries and journals identified by historians as written or dictated by Joseph Smith or written by a secretary of the prophet, this volume also contains the earliest autobiographical sketch by Smith, composed in 1832.

With the permission of the Joseph Smith Family Association, Faulring transcribed most of these documents from microfilm copies of the originals. In the case of "The Book of the Law of the Lord" (500-plus manuscript pages), however, only previously published excerpts are included because Faulring was denied access to the original in the custody of the LDS church.

Surely this is a compilation of pri-

mary importance, for it places the reader as close to Joseph Smith's side as it is possible to get. The prophet appears, in Faulring's words (p. xiii), as "a sincere and sometimes impassioned participant in the events described." The portrait Smith paints of himself is not likely to disturb many of the faithful, for there is no "evidence of pretext or deception, even though the documents may at times relate a story different from traditional accounts."

Riverman: The Story of Bus Hatch.

By ROY WEBB (Rock Springs, Wyo.: Labyrinth Publishing, 1989. x + 158 pp. Paper, \$10.95.)

Robert Rafael "Bus" Hatch (1902-67) was a carpenter, fisherman, baseball player, and well known colorful character in Vernal, Utah. Much more important, though, he was a boatman who accepted the challenges of white-water navigation, first on the nearby Green River, then on other western and even foreign rivers. Although he did it at first just for fun, he became an important pioneer in commercial river travel, founding a family business that continues today.

Roy Webb has run many of the rivers Hatch ran and interviewed many of his friends and colleagues. The result is an admiring, anecdotal biography based on extensive firsthand research. It makes a significant contribution to the history of river running and ought to find a place on the reading lists of all who annually ply our western rivers.

Secrets from the Center of the World.

By JOY HARJO and STEPHEN STROM (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989. viii + 67 pp. Paper, \$12.95.)

Volume 17 in the Sun Tracks Series, *Secrets*, like its predecessors, showcases

the work of a Native American writer, in this instance poet and screenwriter Joy Harjo, a member of the Creek Nation. Her prose poems—small, polished stones dancing on the bottom of a streambed—together with astronomer Stephen Strom's photographs of Navajo country, convey a powerful sense of place, a key theme in Native American literature.

Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America's Bloody Coal Industry. By PRISCILLA LONG. (New York: Paragon House, 1989. xxvi + 420 pp. Cloth, \$24.95.)

Readers interested in the story of America's coal industry will find this volume a useful overview. The book is really two volumes in one as part one, "Coal in America: A History of Work, Values, and Conflict," looks at the early development of coal mining in the eastern United States, working conditions, relations between miners and managers, immigrant miners, early benevolent associations, and the first decade of the United Mine Workers of America from 1890 to 1900. Part two, "Coal in the American West: Catalyst of Conflict and Change," proposes to look at the four-state Rocky Mountain

region of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico from the beginning of coal mining in the West through the infamous Colorado Fuel and Iron Company strike of 1913-14. Although the focus is on the Colorado coal situation with the other three states receiving little attention, the account is written with insights that help understand the complexities, violence, and inhumanity of western coal mining during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders. By LINDA SILLITOE and ALLEN ROBERTS. 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989. xiv + 571 pp. Paper, \$5.95.)

Anyone interested in the extraordinary Hofmann murder case will want to know about the second edition of this excellent book. A slightly revised version of the first edition, this new paperback reprints the full account, including the forensic analysis by George Throckmorton. It also contains a new (December 1989) "Afterword"—a fascinating up-to-date sketch of the lives of the characters introduced in the book and of the continuing fallout of Mark Hofmann's crimes.

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The Utah State Historical Society was organized in 1897 by public-spirited Utahns to collect, preserve, and publish Utah and related history. Today, under state sponsorship, the Society fulfills its obligations by publishing the *Utah Historical Quarterly* and other historical materials; collecting historic Utah artifacts; locating, documenting, and preserving historic and prehistoric buildings and sites; and maintaining a specialized research library. Donations and gifts to the Society's programs, museum, or its library are encouraged, for only through such means can it live up to its responsibility of preserving the record of Utah's past.

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