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The Mormon Passage of George D. Watt: First British Convert, Scribe for Zion

Ronald G. Watt

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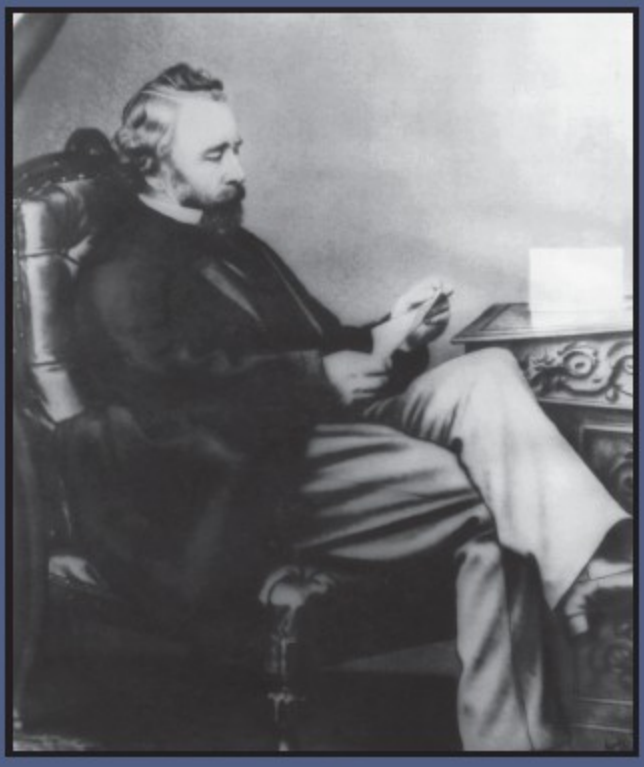

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Author's Collection

George D. Watt, ca. 1860.

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CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

I started this endeavor more than three decades ago, researching and writing about the life of an ancestor who intrigued me. Driven by curiosity, my search extended to sources at the LDS Church Archives where I worked. "Journal History," primarily a newspaper-clipping file, with its index proved a wonderful place to begin. I expanded to other sources like the *Millennial Star* and some church records.

I had earlier started this quest by reading a small red volume, a biography by Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack, entitled *England's First "Mormon" Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt,* which gave me an outline of my ancestor's life but nothing more. The more information I found, the more I doubted the authors' interpretations. For a while, I did not believe that the "Little George" stories, written by George Watt in the *Juvenile Instructor,* were true and for a short time even wondered whether my George was the author. After I completed a thorough analysis of those writings, however, I became convinced he was the author, and the stories were the autobiography of his youth. I also wondered if he had later gone to live with his grandparents in Scotland as his obituary says, but a discovery of shorthand letters has now proven this fact correct.

After thirty years of interest in this man, I have many people to thank, even some I may not remember. After I finished my first book-length manuscript, A. J. Simmonds, Chad Orton, and Ronald K. Esplin critiqued that early draft. I have benefited from having colleagues and friends show me sources because they knew I was working on Watt's biography. W. Randall Dixon, Michael Landon, Chad Foulger, Jay Burrup, Scott Christensen, Linda Haslem, Melvin Bashore, Pauline Musig, Steven Sorensen, William W. Slaughter, April Williamsen, Jeffrey O. Johnson, Clint Christensen, and William Hartley all provided me with materials. Russell Taylor, Larry Draper, and K. Haybron Adams kindly helped me at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University, and Ronald E. Romig found some material at the Community of Christ Archives. Yvonne Christensen helped

me find information at the Davis County Courthouse, and Linda Ross gave me information from the Kaysville Cemetery database about three little Watt girls who died.

I appreciate the support of administrators and friends who encouraged and listened to me: Donald T. Schmidt, Jeff Anderson, Glenn N. Rowe, Blake Miller, Matthew Heiss, Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., Linda Haslam, Jim Kimball, and Richard Jensen. I will always be grateful for the support of Leonard J. Arrington, who in his inimitable way helped me and all others interested in Mormon history. Ronald O. Barney, David Whittaker, Gene Sessions, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Walter Jones, Polly Aird, and Ben Bennion read all or some chapters. Will Bagley showed me two letters, held by a cousin of mine, which led me to court cases at the Utah State Archives, and I thank its staff, especially Alan Blain Barnett. Ardis Parshall showed me Watt's writings about practical agriculture and economic theory in Salt Lake's *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* and without that input, I could never have made him a complete person. Barbara Bannon and John Alley contributed their editing skills.

I also owe a great debt to LaJean Purcell Carruth, whose ability to read shorthand provided me with transcriptions of Watt's diary and letters that I knew nothing about. Shawna Stroebel gave me insight and found sources on Watt's early life, and Robert Holbrook helped. William (Bill) Sanders at the Layton Heritage Museum helped me with sources on his later life. Harris Adams went above the call of duty by traveling to the Davis County Courthouse in Farmington and doing some of my research. He also took me to the geographical sites of Watt's homes and the schoolhouse his children attended. Leon R. and Clara Jeppesen allowed me to photograph Watt's Volcanic lever-action repeating pistol. Claude and Linda Jeppesen, some other cousins, brought some of Watt's shorthand notes to my attention. Derek Farnes drew the maps for the book. Thanks to Peter Witbeck for sending me a photograph of Watt that I had never seen before. I thank all of these people for their help. Without those sources, this biography would be poorer and much less complete.

To the four members of my family who "volunteered" for the George D. Watt committee—Marva and Ralph Watt, Sharm Stevenson, and Suzy Sutherland—I can never show enough appreciation. They helped me many times, showing me errors, always supporting me, and sometimes acting as my cheerleaders when I became discouraged. I would also like to express my thanks to my good wife, Barbara, who listened to my long stories of Watt's life. She calmly stood by me, even when Watt was the only subject on my mind. To these five people, I dedicate this book.

George D. Watt penetrated my heart and soul. I have championed his achievements and wept at his failures. He was so superhuman at times and so fragile at other periods in his life. To me his life is a tragedy, and yet I

have defended him. He so wanted acceptance and love, but he sometimes made decisions that pushed people away from him. His wives stood by him, and when he died, three of them stayed in the community, where they suffered much mental and emotional anguish. Only Martha remarried and left the troubled glens of Kaysville to return to little Manti with her second husband.

Even though I have had the help of many, the mistakes in this book are mine alone.

INTRODUCTION
"ON THE LORD'S BUSINESS"

On May 15, 1868, an argument between Brigham Young, the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and George D. Watt, his clerk, erupted in Young's Salt Lake City office. Feeling desperate about the financial pressures of his suffering family, Watt was asking for $5.00 a day, a raise of $1.50. The labor-management discussion rapidly turned heated. Young grudgingly guessed he would have to pay Watt what he demanded but thought that he did not deserve it. As far as Young was concerned, no one in the office worked hard enough for the pay he received. Watt felt that was tantamount to an accusation of stealing. He was outraged and wounded. More than a decade later, he recorded, "I was suddenly and unexpectedly crushed, by a public charge of meanness and sly robbery, by one against whose affirmation I had no appeal. I could only see my character as an honest man gone among my friends and brethren, my future efforts to do good defeated, over thirty years of labor and struggle a blank, and branded as a scoundrel to the end of my life."[1] "I immediately put on my hat and coat and left."[2]

By storming angrily out, Watt left all his papers, especially his shorthand notes, in his desk for a future historian. He planned to throw them away, not bequeath this treasure trove to history. It was an accident, a very fortunate accident for us. For a future biographer, he left at least one letter that he

1. George D. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878, holograph, general correspondence, John Taylor First Presidency records, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
2. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, May 17, 1868, holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

had written in shorthand and longhand, one letter from Willard Richards, an 1851 shorthand diary recounting most of his journey from England to Utah, fifteen shorthand letters, and some shorthand notebooks filled with sermons he had taken down between 1851 and 1868. Included in these shorthand notebooks were his careful portrait sketches. He never came back for those papers. Probably some clerk who needed the desk boxed them up, thinking that the notes would be useful later. When clerks transferred Brigham Young's papers to the historian's office, they also moved Watt's shorthand notes. There they remained, more curiosities than objects of research. They waited until I arranged them in 1985. They preserve sermons and Watt's own musings; they also reveal a great deal about this unusual man.

As a teenager, I had heard of George D. Watt. He was the first person baptized into the Mormon faith in England. He was responsible for the Deseret Alphabet, and he was also an instructor at the University of Deseret. However, there was something else that lurked in his background. Sometime in that same period, Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack wrote *England's First "Mormon" Convert: The Biography of George D. Watt*. In that volume, I found out about the later period of his life. He had been excommunicated from his religion. Those authors thought that it was because of a disagreement with his bishop, Christopher Layton. Even after this discovery, I still knew that George D. Watt had been innovative in shorthand and the creation of the Deseret Alphabet, but many questions remained unanswered.

In 1972 I began employment in the archives of the LDS Church Historical Department and found many sources that Stringham and Flack had never used. With those sources, I had to find out why Watt had been excommunicated. I wrote a biographical sketch of his life with emphasis on the time when he had left the Mormon faith. I discovered that he had been involved with the Godbeites, a splinter group, even though the previous authors said he had not, and he had left the church. He no longer believed in Mormonism. My heritage and my religious conviction said that this good man could not have done this, but the sources did not lie. I published those findings in *BYU Studies* in 1977 under the title, "Sailing the 'Old Ship Zion:' The Life of George D. Watt."

After that publication, colleagues and researchers at the archives, knowing that I was interested in this ancestor, began finding more sources. I also discovered more, and I finally felt I had to write a biography. After I finished it, George Watt was a one-sided character—rather flat, but I felt it was the best I could do. I set him aside for several years.

After I finished other projects, I was ready to look at Watt again. In that period of time, other sources about him had surfaced. The Historical Department began to transcribe Watt's shorthand notes of the sermons of the General Authorities, and LaJean Carruth, the expert in Pitman shorthand,

discovered a diary that he had written about his second voyage across the Atlantic and his journey across the plains. Also Ardis Parshall, a researcher, had found some articles Watt had written in the Salt Lake *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*. Now I was finally able to create a full portrait of George D. Watt.

I also gleaned information from other sources. Until 1868 Watt had associated with all the important men of the Mormon kingdom. To some he wrote letters; others left statements about him. Friends and colleagues have been helpful in finding and sharing often-hard-to-locate snippets of information.

All of these letters and his diary show that George D. Watt could express himself on paper with remarkable fluency, vigor, and eloquence. Where did he learn this skill? He received only a few years of formal education from a teacher in an English poorhouse, yet his letters are very insightful, revealing his thoughts, aspirations, and personal feelings in memorable prose. Much of it must be a native gift, and his easy familiarity with the language of the King James Bible suggests that this literary masterwork strongly influenced his style.

Watt converted to the LDS Church in 1837 at the age of twenty-five. In 1840 he served a mission to Scotland with Orson Pratt as his companion. The earliest piece of writing from his pen is dated 1840, when he wrote to George A. Smith, another apostle in the British Isles, trying to cheer him after an illness. Watt wrote, "Bro. Geo. Let us rejoice even in afflictions knowing that the time is at hand, when we shall reap if we faint not."[3]

Watt emigrated to Nauvoo with his wife, Mary (Molly) Gregson Watt, and two sons in 1842. The little boys died on the arduous trip up the Mississippi River. He returned to the British Isles as a missionary in 1846 with Molly and their Nauvoo-born son, George D. Watt Jr. When they left Britain in 1851, Watt began a diary of the trip, keeping it in Pitman shorthand ("phonography") that he had learned on his mission in Scotland. During a storm, he kept his fears at bay by recording the many noises around him: "Outside the wind is heard raging on like the voices of a thousand malignant spirits screaming the requiem of some distant wreck. In it is heard the plaintive cry of an infant mingled with the disagreeable sound of a hundred females, discharging from their discomforted stomachs the provisions they refused to digest." About a week later, he recorded another storm: "The dark waters beneath us are angered by the merciless winds. They set foaming, roaring, and swelling powers in awful majesty as though they had waged war with the furious element beneath them, while our ship . . . is surrounded by the administrators of justice."[4] His combination of poetic metaphor and exact reportage is a rare fusion of vigor and vividness.

3. George D. Watt and Orson Pratt to George A. Smith, December 22, 1840, holograph, George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives.
4. George D. Watt, Journal, February 6, 21, 1851, shorthand, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, September 2001).

As a phonographer, Watt was in the forefront of a new technology that allowed a stenographer to record words as rapidly as a person talked. His greatest contribution to the Mormon church and history resulted from another argument—this one with Willard Richards, the *Deseret News* editor. When Watt returned to Salt Lake City in 1851, he obtained a position with the *Deseret News* reporting the speeches of church authorities, but Richards never paid him. He offered Watt some pamphlets to sell but not until Richards had already started to sell them. Finally, Watt wrote an imploring letter, telling Richards that he needed pay for his work. Richards rejoined that he had tried to help Watt economically but he had refused. Furthermore, Watt had not recorded the speeches that Richards thought he should have, so Richards felt he had failed the people of Zion, had a bad spirit, and was on the road to apostasy. Watt did not take this rebuke meekly and replied with a lengthy and detailed defense. He summarized, "I only ask for the enjoyment of my common rights with other men. I am not now aware that freedom of speach (whether verbaly or in writing) is always a shure sign of a man possessing a bad spirit." He then extended an olive branch: he was willing to work shoulder to shoulder with Richards and entreated him, "You can lead me but you cannot intimidate me: while a kind word from your lips vibrates through my soul like the sweetest sounds of harmony."[5]

It was the right note to strike. When Watt suggested to Brigham Young that he publish a journal of sermons from which Watt could receive his salary, Young and Richards agreed. The *Journal of Discourses* ensured that all Mormons and even non-Mormons would know what the Lord wanted through the speeches of his representative, Brigham Young.[6] From then on, Watt had a permanent desk in the president's office and the Tabernacle, taking down the speeches in his swift, curious symbols.

When the United States sent an army to Utah in 1857, Young reacted as the governor of the territory by declaring martial law. Watt went to the mountains as a member of the Utah militia to delay and perhaps even battle the oncoming soldiers. While he was in Echo Canyon, not far from Salt Lake City, he wrote to one of his plural wives, Alice Whittaker Watt, "How long we may stay at this point I cannot say, neither does it concern me, I am on the lords business." He continued, "Tho I presume my home is as dear to me, and your sweet society, as home and a wifes society can possably be to any mortal, it is to defend such endearments that I am here, ready if necessary to pour out our blood like water for them, for our holy religion, and

5. George D. Watt to Willard Richards September 24, 29, 1852, holographs, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives; Willard Richards to George D. Watt, September 26, 1852, holograph, Watt Papers and Richards Papers.

6. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, May 3, 1853, shorthand, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, May 2005.

for national liberty."[7] The two sides settled their differences amicably, and Watt's resolute sacrifice was not required.

After Nauvoo an expanding circle of believers accepted the doctrine and practice of plural or polygamous marriage. After August 1852, it was preached from the pulpit and propounded by missionaries. Watt married six times altogether, a large number when most plural husbands married only twice. His letters to his family members show him as very loving, concerned with guiding his wives and children in the ways of the Lord. Watt and Molly Gregson married in Britain before they encountered Mormonism. She died in 1856. He married his second wife, Jane Brown, in January 1852, followed the next year by Alice Longstroth Whittaker, whose first husband, Moses Whittaker, had died shortly after arriving in Utah. In his forties, Watt courted eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Golightly, proposing to her by letter: "I offer myself to you, if you can in return give me this love, and with it yourself, which offering would be prized by me above the glittering and perishable treasures of the earth."[8] Perhaps its passion influenced her decision, and they married on June 23, 1859.

About this time, ironically, Jane, his second wife, was deciding she could no longer endure a polygamous marriage, and she and Watt separated. In 1863 she asked Brigham Young for a divorce. When Watt learned what she had done, he chastised her by letter, telling her to stop speaking evil of him and his family. If she would return to him, live "a humble and faithful life before the Lord, and strive to make a loving wife to me the rest of your days," then "all shall again be right between us."[9] Unpersuaded, she did not withdraw her request, and Young granted the divorce.

Watt married two more women: Sarah Ann Harter in 1866 and Martha Bench on November 9, 1867. He fathered twenty-seven children, twenty-one by his last three wives.

Young encouraged learning, and so Watt joined the Universal Scientific Society, Polysophical Society, Deseret Theological Institute, Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society, and a few others, attending meetings regularly and participating as a speaker. His interest in agriculture and economics, both new fields to him, manifested itself in five articles for the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* and other papers on planting and raising trees and asparagus. When he wrote about raising sheep, he also included some solid information on economic theory: supply and demand and the availability of markets. "Demand and supply are the great foundations of commerce," he asserted correctly, but he was overly optimistic in seeing no end

7. George D. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 14, 1857, holographs, Watt Papers.
8. George D. Watt to Elizabeth Golightly, 1858, holograph. Elizabeth kept that letter in her special box of precious things for the rest of her life.
9. George D. Watt to Jane Brown Watt, n.d., ca. 1863, shorthand, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005).

to demand.[10] By 1869 he had earned the reputation of being one of the foremost experts in the entire territory about agriculture and economics.

Watt remained a fervent member of the church. Between 1858 and 1867, he regularly accompanied Brigham Young out of town and took down his sermons and those of other church authorities. He contributed greatly to the church by his shorthand notes and the publication of the *Journal of Discourses*. He had, as he said later, only one thought, and that was "to die in the harness for the triumph of truth and God's Kingdom on earth."[11]

But the argument with Brigham Young changed Watt's life. Two days after stalking out of the office, he wrote the details to his wife Martha, who was in Manti taking care of her parents, then added, "My Darling do not sorrow over these things. I have been grieved at the unqualified saying of the president, I have served him faithfully 16 years and had become attached to him, but the change will be for my good in health and circumstances."[12] Clearly he saw the breach as irreparable and, to my knowledge, never tried to repair it. Over a decade later, the year after Young's death, he lamented, "I have since discovered that I might have taken a more reasonable view of the matter. But feeling outraged and abused, I was chagrined and insensed. I did not take time to reason but in strict accordance with my impulsive nature kicked over the bucket and spilled the milk."[13]

That decade was a hard and lonely one. Watt grieved over the loss of his position and status, became bitter toward Brigham Young, and began to associate with English intellectuals like himself, especially William Godbe, who was flirting with Spiritualism. Godbe was also entertaining doubts about the truthfulness of Mormonism and, with his associates, strenuously opposed Young's economic policy. But Watt stayed distant enough from the Godbeites that he was not disciplined during their excommunications in 1869. He moved his families to his Kaysville farm—a prudent financial move but one that left behind friends and associates who understood and even empathized with him. He found himself in an environment where he did not fit and his differences aroused suspicions.

Two years later, Watt wrote to Brigham Young, disclaiming any Godbeite sympathies: "As to New movements and old movements at home and abroad, all hell being moved to dethrone God if it were possible, and destroying His rule on earth, they have no more of my fear or regard than the pooting [pooping] of a mouse a day old." He affirmed his loyalty: he had "entered into solemn and grave covenants to stand by my brethren and the cause of truth, and I am going to do it, the Lord being my helper, to the end of the

10. George D. Watt, "A Talk," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* October 24, 1867, 3; also see Watt, "A Talk," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* November 7, 1867, 1.
11. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878.
12. Watt to Martha Watt, May 17, 1868.
13. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878.

chapter." He admitted, though, to having been "under the devil's harrow now for two years. It has been my chief business to extricate myself, and have been of little use to the cause of truth, to myself, to you, to anybody else all this weary time."[14] If Brigham Young responded, the answer has not been preserved.

Nor were the hard years over. Watt's bishop, Christopher Layton, predicted that he would apostatize. The ward teachers, whom Layton sent, asked Watt personal, probing questions about his testimony, including why he did not attend church more often. He told them that his teams needed rest and sent an outraged letter to Brigham Young, where he was more candid: "I cannot sit and hear personal castigations administered from the stand to myself and friends." And if Bishop Layton was trying to make him humble, "it never can be accomplished in this way. Espionage, or adversity only stiffens my neck and sets me in defiance, while generous kindness, and smiling friendship melts my soul into tears of gratitude and resolves of eternal affiance."[15]

Watt struggled with his faith, and finally, it failed. He gave a formally prepared address to the Liberal Institute in Salt Lake City in April 1874. It was a vitriolic attack on Mormonism, and Bishop Layton excommunicated him. His old friends and neighbors shunned him. This punishment and isolation further embittered him. To John Taylor, he lamented, "Your humble friend stands in this category of rejected ones; . . . has been met with 'apostate,' 'son of perdition,' 'traitor' and such like hard and vicious terms."[16] He had still not reconciled with the church when his life ended in 1881.

Because Watt speaks so often in this work, it is almost an autobiography. By letting his own words express his thoughts and feelings as much as possible, I have chosen to let the reader discover the essence of George D. Watt. A few years prior to Watt's death, Edward Tullidge, another Godbeite, asked him to write an autobiographical sketch, which he did. He sent it off to Tullidge to publish in *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine*. It was too long, so Tullidge hesitated, then Watt died. The manuscript was later thrown away. Perhaps this book takes the place of that lost manuscript.

A complex and passionate man, Watt remained to the end of his days a believer, imbued with religious devotion as he expressed his hunger for God in Methodism, Mormonism, and then Spiritualism. Religious fervor was the mainspring of his life, but other facets—intellectual, cultural, personal—show a lively mind and a loving heart, manifest unstintingly in his devotion to his wives and children. In reality Watt is a tragic figure. From

14. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, July 27, 1870, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.
15. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, August 23, 1871, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
16. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878.

From Frank Graham, compiler, Lancashire One Hundred Years Ago (1968)

The Manchester, England, where George Watt spent his childhood, was a smoky, factory city in the midst of the Industrial Revolution.

the time of his baptism in Preston, he fervently believed in Mormonism, but because of his argument with Brigham Young, the feelings of his neighbors, the controversy with his bishop, and finally his embittered thoughts over the years, he let his faith fail and went on to another religion. This should have been a biography of an ancestor that his Mormon descendants would be proud of. Instead, it is the story of a complicated individual whose personality shows his inner self. This introduction is only a glimpse of a deeper soul, a talented and expressive man.

1

EARLY LIFE IN BRITAIN

> The dung which the farmer puts into his land, is not pleasant to work among but offensive to the smell, but not standing this, and many other troubles such as wind and rain &c. &c. he endures and gets in his seed. . . . It will just be so with us Bro. Geo. We go forth breaking up the falow ground at the same time sowing greacious seed some times with tears and many afflictions, but the promise is we shall return to Zion, with joy.
>
> George D. Watt to George A. Smith, December 22, 1840

On May 18, 1812, in the St. George Parish in Manchester, England, a son was born to James Watt and Mary Ann Wood Watt. More than a month later, this boy was christened George Darling Watt after his mother's oldest brother.[1] He was born just as the Industrial Revolution was sweeping Great Britain. Manchester, located in the English Midlands, is approximately two

1. George D. Watt never knew when his birthday was. When he received a patriarchal blessing from Peter Melling in 1840, he gave his birthdate as January 16, 1813, but the date that appears thereafter in LDS Church records is January 16, 1815. Births were not recorded officially by the state or county, so children were completely dependent upon their parents' memory of the event. Probably George's mother could not remember the date. Only if a baby was christened in the state church (Church of England), would that date be known by later generations. The actual date is May 18, 1812, as recorded in the records of St. George Parish, Manchester, England. See George Darling Watt, christened June 21, 1812, recorded birth as May 18, 1812, St. George Parish birth records, Parish Register printouts, microfilm of typescript, film no. 1235364, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Family History Library). Charles Dickens, the great English writer about the lower classes, had been born just a few months earlier in Portsmouth, England.

hundred miles north of London and thirty-nine miles east of the port city of Liverpool. The Industrial Revolution changed Britain from a rural, agricultural nation to one with large cities teeming with factories.

Life in these factory towns was precarious. Factory workers put in more than twelve hours a day. Slumlords packed their tenants into quickly built row houses that lacked adequate water and proper sanitation. Twentieth-century economic historians like T. S. Ashton acknowledged that these conditions were gruesome but argued that they were temporary, that the Industrial Revolution bettered living conditions for the masses.[2] However, when George D. Watt was born, any amelioration lay three decades or more in the future. Watt grew up breathing smoke-filled air and walking on sewage-filled streets.

Politically the welfare of slum dwellers was taking a backseat to concerns about the threat posed by Napoleon in France, a period that had begun in 1789 with the French Revolution. The British at first sympathized with the French Revolution, but later they were horrified by its excesses and stood prepared to suppress with the utmost harshness signs of a similar uprising among England's poor. Napoleon, who rose to power in 1799, channeled his nation's energy into conquering Europe. Finally, a British-led coalition of the other European countries defeated the French and exiled Napoleon in 1815; but even though the British won, the economic and social effects strongly impacted the England where baby George grew up.[3]

The disruption of the British economy during the Napoleonic wars brought unemployment. Factory owners wanted the tariffs on wheat abolished, making bread less expensive and leading to reduced wages for the workers. One faction of the working classes, led by the Chartists, wanted representation in Parliament.[4] Great Britain in the nineteenth century had a monarch with a Parliament consisting of a House of Lords, whose hereditary peers inherited their seats along with their estates, and a House of Commons with elected members who represented only a small part of the male population.[5]

Religiously the country had fragmented into several Christian denominations. This process had begun during the English Civil War in the

2. See Thomas Southcliffe Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution, 1760–1830,* 1st rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). An earlier work by Paul Mantoux, *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century: An Outline of the Beginnings of the Modern Factory System in England* (London: J. Cape, 1928), emphasizes the changes in the factory system.

3. For a summary of the war, see R. K. Webb, *Modern England, from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York, Toronto: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1969), 129–51.

4. The Chartists received their name because of their petition, which they called a charter. They obtained signatures from millions of people and presented the charters to Parliament. They wanted to have all men receive the electoral franchise, have equal electoral districts, have a secret ballot, and a few other items. Parliament ignored their requests.

5. See Webb, *Modern England,* 242.

seventeenth century and continued in the mid-eighteenth century with the rise of Methodism. In 1740 John Wesley began an experiment of taking religion to the masses in the English countryside. When the Church of England parish priests locked their churches against the Wesleyan preachers, Wesley took his enthusiastic religion to the fields and streets. Wesley, however, never intended to leave the established church. After his death in 1791, his followers created a formal church. Open-air preaching and revivals gradually ended. The Methodist movement also splintered.

One of the groups, the Primitive Methodists, organized about 1811, had the greatest impact on England during this period. "Primitive" referred to their expressed desire to return to the religion of the New Testament church. The Primitive Methodists restored revivals and open-air preaching. They found their adherents in the countryside and the colliery villages. Sometimes they became so emotional that they rolled on floors with groaning sounds, which gave them their nickname of "ranters."[6]

George D. Watt thus entered life at a time of great religious and social ferment in England. His father, James, had been born in Gatehouse of Fleet in Kirkcudbrightshire, a mountainous area best suited for pasturing cattle and sheep, in southwestern Scotland. Gatehouse faces south toward the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea some thirty miles away. Glasgow is about eighty miles north. Gatehouse, situated on the Fleet River, in 1800 could boast the small manufacturing presence of four cotton factories, a brass foundry, a wine company, a brewery, and a tannery.[7]

James had no birth recorded in church ledgers, suggesting that his parents, Andrew Watt, a lint miller, and Margaret McBurnie Watt, did not belong to the Church of Scotland. Andrew had been born in Kirkcudbrightshire, and his three children by Margaret were all born in Girthon Parish, also in that county. Andrew owned property and was elected bailee (similar to a city councilman) in Girthon. James was their second child and first son. He had an older sister, Margaret, born about 1780, and a younger one, Jannet, born in 1792, which suggests that his own birth occurred about 1790. Andrew's wife, Margaret, died, and he married Hannah McKean. They had two children, Charles, born in 1798, and Mary (ca. 1806–8).[8] James, the oldest

6. Julia Stewart Werne, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984). Lorenzo Dow arrived first in Ireland where he held street meetings. See Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration in Britain: Political, Social, And Economic Conditions," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987,* edited by V. Ben Bloxam, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter (Solihull, UK: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 64.

7. James's father and mother and several of his brothers and sisters were still living in Anworth, near Gatehouse, when the 1841 census was taken. See Scottish Census, 1841, County: Kirkcudbrightshire, Parish: Anworth, vol. 855, microfilm of holograph, film no. 1042833, Family History Library.

8. Ibid. Jannet's death record in the Kirkcudbright cemetery book identifies her mother

son, apparently saw little future in Gatehouse and moved to the city of Manchester, about 150 miles to the southeast.

On May 3, 1811, James Watt, a "traveler" (probably traveling salesman), married Mary Ann Wood by license in Manchester Cathedral.[9] Mary Ann's mother, Mary Ann Kennan, had married Joshua, her father, in Rochdale, England, on February 8, 1787, where their first two children were born. Then the family moved to Manchester, where the remaining four children were born, all christened in their parish church or in Manchester Cathedral. Joshua was neither a rich factory owner nor an impoverished factory worker. As a small businessman, he kept long hours so that his shop would be open before and after the working day as customers dropped off shoes to repair. Wood showed great pride in his ability to make and repair shoes.[10]

Since Mary Ann's brother, George Darling Wood, had no family, the Watt family shared his home in Manchester. The St. George parish records note George Watt's christening on June 21, 1812, followed by that of daughter Margaret five years later on October 17, 1817.[11] According to family tradition, James Watt and George Darling Wood sailed for America, seeking the fountain of youth, and died in New Orleans, but this is not true.[12] Since this fanciful notion was actually more popular three centuries earlier, it is more likely that James's motivation was simply economic betterment. The two must have left shortly after Margaret's birth. The brothers-in-law sailed to Bahia (present-day Salvadore), Brazil's main port and capital, where George D. Wood died on June 16, 1825. James Watt had his tombstone engraved, "Even his Failings lean'd to virtue's side."[13] It is not known when James left South America. He went to Australia sometime after that continent's settlement. Possibly he traveled there because of the gold discovery in 1851.

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as Margaret McBurnie. Andrew died in Skyreburn on December 5, 1849. His granddaughter, Margaret Watt Brandreth, put a headstone on his grave in 1867 in Anworth, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland, that lists all the children's names and usually their birthdates. Andrew's children's birthdates come from this source, except for James Watt, whose birthday on August 2, 1790, comes from Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert, The Biography of George Darling Watt* (n.p.: privately printed, [1958]), 8. The latter is not the best source, so his birth year has been estimated. Sources for a few of the children are estimated from the 1841 census. This gravestone was discovered in about 2000 by Shawna Strobel, a Watt descendant, with the assistance of a paid researcher in Britain. For more information on calculations of births, see e-mail from Shawna Strobel to the author on June 20, 2006, in author's possession.

9. Manchester Cathedral Parish marriage records, May 3, 1811, no. 225, p. 90, microfilm of holograph, film no. 438,189, Family History Library.
10. Part of this is family tradition, but part of it is knowing the working hours of the factory workers. He had to be there when they needed him.
11. St. John's Parish Register printouts, June 21, 1812, microfilm of typescript, film no. 1235364, Family History Library.
12. Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert,* 8.
13. David Asprey, e-mail to Robert M. Holbrook, November 30, 2004, photocopy in author's possession.

There he died in 1858.[14] James's absence naturally meant that George D. Watt's mother played an even greater role than usual in his life.

It is not clear when Mary Ann abandoned hope that James would return. She thought that he had died in New Orleans.[15] The Church of England required a divorce decree, the knowledge of the spouse's death, or the passage of seven years without news (presumption of death) before it allowed remarriage. Watt may have been seven or eight years old when his father and uncle sailed away. Years later in a letter to his sister in the 1860s, he wrote that their paths diverged "when we were children being fatherless and motherless too in all but name. We did not have a parents' home to comfort and bless us, a father to educate and form our early impressions."[16] Watt was allowed to roam the streets of Manchester during Mary Ann's working hours.

He described himself as small for his age, and he often came home bruised and battered from encounters with bullies.[17] He was of an age to work in a factory, and certainly the added income would have been welcome, but for some unknown reason, Mary Ann did not take that step.

It is not known how long James had been gone before Mary Ann decided to marry again. However, on March 4, 1825, she married Joseph Brown, a widower and policeman, in Manchester Cathedral when Watt was almost fourteen. Brown was from Rochdale, a city about ten miles north of Manchester.[18]

The new marriage brought problems. Brown, a widower who already had a large family, had no room in his house for Watt and his sister. Besides, he did not want the children. Mary Ann placed Margaret with her sister, Bridget, and her brother-in-law, William Howard. No one wanted Watt. Joseph Brown wanted nothing to do with this wild boy and kicked him out of his house. Now Watt was completely alone and permanently on the streets of the gigantic city of Manchester, where crime was rampant and other boys who were homeless were organized into gangs.[19] He told his

14. Information on Andrew Watt's headstone.
15. Just before George D. Watt died in 1881, he wrote an autobiographical sketch that was read by the reporter who wrote his obituary in the *Salt Lake Herald* on October 25, 1881. He included in the obituary that James Watt had died in New Orleans. Mary Ann Brown, his mother who lived with him, also believed that James had died in New Orleans.
16. George D. Watt to Margaret Brandreth, n.d., ca. 1863, shorthand, George D. Watt Papers, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives) (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006).
17. George D. Watt, "Little George, a True Story," *Juvenile Instructor* 1 (January 15, 1866): 5–6. Between the years 1866 to 1869, Watt wrote twenty-nine articles in the *Juvenile Instructor* under the title of "Little George" and signed them Uncle George. These stories appear to be fictional, but they are autobiographical.
18. Manchester Cathedral Parish marriages records, March 4, 1825, p. 137, microfilm of holograph, film no. 0438193, Family History Library; "Geo. D. Watt Dead," *Salt Lake Herald,* October 25, 1881, 8.
19. Watt to Margaret Brandreth, ca. 1863. This is earlier than the fictional *Oliver Twist*

sister, "Our mother's second marriage did not improve our condition so far as home comforts. . . . I was cast out, driven forth in a heartless manner upon the cold bosom of a wicked and ungenerous world."[20] Years later in 1867 in a serialized autobiographical essay he wrote for the children in Mormondom and entitled the "Little George" stories, he said—referring to himself in the third person—"Sometimes bad boys would beat him, and they were not afraid to do so, for he had no father to tell and no brothers to take his part."[21] At times strangers gave him food and a place to stay the night. Usually he would "crawl into an out-house and cuddle up in a corner all alone, and then he would cry himself to sleep." Because of his deep-seated faith in God, he never turned to crime. He would "pray to God in his trouble, for his mother taught him, when he was a very little boy to pray, and to believe that whatever he asked for would be given him." Then "he would pray that God would forgive these bad boys, and then he would feel better and go to his play again."[22]

He must have been homeless from the time of the marriage until late fall of 1825, when Mary Ann found him and placed him in a poorhouse/workhouse.[23] Poor laws established during Queen Elizabeth's reign provided care for the "worthy poor" who were unable to take care of themselves. In the early nineteenth century, poorhouses were usually workhouses where the county allowed a factory to use the residents for production purposes.[24] Years later in the "Little George" stories, Watt said that a "kind lady found him," and after obtaining a writ of admittance from a magistrate to a poorhouse, she handed him over to the gatekeeper. "Little George screamed with terror," crying aloud to the kind lady "for help, but she had hastened away."[25]

The poorhouse was an education for Watt. He made friends, was beaten by an old nurse, and was befriended by a teacher, also a poorhouse inmate, who taught him to read and write. Because of the kindness of this teacher, "he was willing to do anything that this kind-hearted old gentleman told him

written by Charles Dickens, but it does not take much to imagine what could have happened to him.

20. Ibid.
21. Watt, "Little George," 5–6.
22. Ibid.
23. For background on the poorhouse, see Brian Inglis, *Poverty and the Industrial Revolution* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971). Inglis integrates the poorhouse into the larger framework of what was happening among the lower classes, especially the youth in Britain. Poorhouses were for the old and insane in society. Workhouses were for the poor who could work but needed some state support. Watt's institution was a combination of poorhouse and workhouse.
24. See Gordon B. Hindle, *Provision for the Relief of the Poor in Manchester, 1754–1826* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press for the Chetham Society, 1975), chap. 3.
25. George D. Watt, "Little George in a Work House," *Juvenile Instructor* 1 (March 15, 1866): 23–24. The kind lady in his story had to be his mother because he later tried unsuccessfully to find her. Presumably he would not search for a stranger.

From Gordon B. Hindle, Provisions for the Relief of the Poor in Manchester, 1754-1826 (1975)

Manchester poorhouse where George Watt could have been an inmate.

to do."[26] The rigid regimen was difficult for a boy who had basically lived with no schedule. The residents rose at 5:00 a.m., ate their breakfast, and had twelve hours of labor with short breaks for lunch and evening meals.[27] Although probably the meals were skimpy for a growing adolescent, Watt recalled in 1867 that he had had more than he had had as a waif on the streets. He said, "He liked well enough to eat his breakfast and his dinner and his supper, when they were ready."[28] In the letter to his sister, Watt commented that the "poorhouse saved me from starvation or worse infamy."[29]

The governess of the establishment befriended him, and after several weeks, she arranged for Watt to visit his mother. To his dismay, he found another family living at his old home. Mary Ann had, apparently without telling Watt her plans or her new address, moved into Joseph Brown's house in Rochdale, just north of Manchester. One can imagine his disappointment. He detoured to look at the shop windows and street life of Manchester's fashionable district. The contrast to his own life was stark: the velvet-cushioned carriages of the rich, the silk skirts of the ladies, and the fine pantaloons and boots of the gentlemen must have made him feel that they were creatures from another world. He was a little boy, unnoticed in the crowd. He sensed that "though he was only a little drop in the stream of human life that seemed to be rushing headlong without pain or purpose, in this way he would sometimes dam up the channel for a moment and check the onward progress of the mighty stream."[30]

The highlight of Watt's rare outing came when he joined with other children in watching a man with a long box. The man set up his box, which

26. George D. Watt, "Little George at School," *Juvenile Instructor* 1 (June 15, 1866): 46.
27. See Hindle, *Provision for the Relief of the Poor*, chap. 4.
28. Watt, "Little George at School," 46.
29. Watt to Margaret Brandreth, ca. 1863.
30. George D. Watt, "Little George Visits the Big City," *Juvenile Instructor* 1 (December 1866): 95.

appeared to be seven feet high. It was a Punch and Judy show, the first Watt had seen. The show delighted him. Before he arrived back at the poorhouse, he met some boys who yanked at his shirt. He "lost his temper and then with his fist he hit one of them a good blow to the face, knocked him down and ran."[31] They pelted him with rocks and mud. The gatekeeper quickly opened the gate in response to his knocking, probably saving him from a beating.

After a little more than a year in the poorhouse, Watt's grandfather, Joshua Wood, must have convinced a fellow cobbler to take him as his apprentice, probably as an indenture that lasted only a year or two.[32] His new master and mistress took him into their home, which also served as their shop. Watt slept in the upstairs room, sharing it with the master's twenty-one-year-old son, who befriended him.[33] He learned all the aspects of making and repairing shoes.[34]

On Sundays his master's son took him to a Primitive Methodist Sunday school. Watt called it the "ranters' church" "because they shout and scream until they are out of breath and fall down on the floor," and in praying "they all shout and pray together, making a ranting noise."[35] On Sundays the Primitive Methodists had a series of meetings throughout the day. The children went to Sunday school, where they learned not only Christian principles but also the rudiments of reading, writing, and mathematics. About midday class meetings were held in homes and shops. George's master sponsored such a class meeting.[36] At the end of the meeting, everyone paid the leader two pennies. An evening meeting followed at a chapel. This meeting was followed by another prayer meeting, attended only by the most faithful.

Because of the other children's abusive actions toward him, Watt's kindly mistress took him to services at a Wesleyan Methodist Church.[37] He spent about two years with this couple. The poorhouse and his apprenticeship with the cobbler were Watt's preparation for life. He learned order and the importance of conforming to social expectations. He mastered a trade and also learned to read and write—a lasting and important acquisition in his young life.[38]

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31. Ibid.
32. For a social history of the period, see Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London: Addison-Wesley, 1959).
33. George D. Watt, "Little George in His New Home," *Juvenile Instructor* 2 (September 15, 1867): 141; Watt, "Little George—His New Home," *Juvenile Instructor* 2 (October 15, 1867): 156. Watt never mentions names in the stories. Usually shops in that period were on the first floor, but this one was upstairs.
34. George D. Watt, "In Trouble," *Juvenile Instructor* 3 (March 15, 1868): 46.
35. George D. Watt, "Little George at Sunday School," *Juvenile Instructor* 2 (November 1, 1867): 166–67.
36. George D. Watt, "A Ranter's Class Meeting," *Juvenile Instructor* 3 (January 15, 1868): 12.
37. George D. Watt, "He Goes to Another School," *Juvenile Instructor* 4 (March 27, 1869): 54.
38. See Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert,* chap. 13. Although there is

Probably in the late 1820s, when he would have been in his middle teens, Watt went to live with Andrew Watt, his grandfather, and Hannah, his stepgrandmother, in Skyreburn, Scotland, near Gatehouse. People of this county continued their traditional occupations of sheep herding and fishing. Andrew spent time at the Bay of Skyreburn, probably involved with a small fishing fleet. Watt refers to the sea in his writings in terms that communicate a fascination with boats and the water.[39]

His grandfather sent him to school, where he made friends and had many activities. "The old house and its surroundings are upon my memory," he mentioned in a letter to his uncle and aunt in 1863. He described his grandfather sitting on a three-legged stool with his feet propped up, telling tales, and his grandmother "drawing from an ancient tobacco box a bit of the weed to prepare a pipe to comfort and undo her much adored and glad companion." Aunt Jannet, their daughter, was "bustling around to make everything comfortable for everybody around her or silently spinning by the light of the evening [or] by the light of the old lamp." His Uncle Charles surreptitiously also indulged in the tobacco habit.[40]

In 1828 his mother and stepfather moved to Preston, a bustling cotton-manufacturing town, about twenty miles northwest of Manchester, where Joseph Brown became a jailer as well as a policeman. Watt decided to leave rural Kirkcudbrightshire and journey to the city to seek his fortune with them. In 1800 Preston had a population of sixteen thousand. By 1837 the town had forty-five thousand inhabitants with fifteen thousand employees in its thirty-eight factories. Preston had stone row houses, whose outdoor toilets allowed sewage to flow into the largely unpaved streets. Preston also had its share of labor disorders. In 1836, 660 spinners went on strike, forcing 7,840 factory workers out of employment for four months.[41]

In his letter to his uncle in 1863, Watt wrote, "When I left my grandfather's protection and went to England and found my mother and stepfather's family in the town of Preston, my stepfather Brown did not make me welcome" and "cast me out to fend for myself." He found himself now older but in the same condition he had been in when he left their home before. "This conduct driving me to seek companionship with evil company, it cast me about as I was to pray to God for aid asking him to raise up friends for me." He "succeeded in finding employment and lodging in a family who were strangers to me."[42] Watt may have been a contract weaver, working on

no evidence that Watt ever earned a living as a shoemaker, he kept the tools of the trade in his Utah home and made and repaired his family's shoes until his death.

39. In his diary of 1851, Watt vividly describes crossing the ocean. See the excerpts in chapter four.
40. George D. Watt to Jannet and Charles Watt, January 16, 1863, shorthand, Watt Papers, (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006).
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.

a home loom. Later he worked in a factory. In Preston he met Mary (Molly) Gregson, a pretty young factory worker.[43] They announced their wedding banns at Preston's St. John's parish church and, three weeks later, were married on June 13, 1835. Twenty-four year-old Watt signed the register, but eighteen-year-old Molly, illiterate, made her mark.[44] Their poverty was so intense that they did not even have a bed for several years.[45] Coupled with his indigent childhood, this continuing privation affected his outlook for the rest of his life.

Watt retained an interest in Methodism. When his stepfather expelled him, he mentioned that "he joined a religious sect," which undoubtedly was James Fielding's congregation in Preston at the Vauxhall Chapel.[46] Fielding had probably been a Methodist minister. He and his brother-in-law, the Reverend Timothy Matthews in Bedford, taught the restoration of spiritual gifts and premillennialism. Fielding had been raised a Methodist, and these beliefs undoubtedly influenced his teachings in the Primitive Episcopal Church at Vauxhall Chapel.[47]

George and Molly were members of Fielding's congregation by the time their first child, James, was born on July 14, 1837, in Preston.[48] One of the most devout in Fielding's congregation, Watt became an "exhorter" and a class leader in that sect.[49]

Meanwhile an American movement that would greatly affect the Watt family was gathering force. In 1830 Joseph Smith, not yet twenty-five, organized a new church in New York State. Smith claimed to have received a set of gold plates from an angelic messenger, translated them by the power of God, and published to the world the narrative of Israelites who had come to America, their promised land. The existence of this new scripture was a claim of continuing revelation to a prophet who had restored Christ's

43. "George D. Watt at the Institute," *Salt Lake Tribune,* April 15, 1874, 1; George D. Watt to Margaret Brandreth, 1863, shorthand, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006). In this letter, Watt calls Molly pretty.

44. St. John's Parish marriage records, June 13, 1835, microfilm of holograph, film no. 094015, Family History Library. Banns are called when a couple who are too poor to pay the fee go to the parish church and have the curate post the marriage date.

45. George D. Watt to Joseph Fielding, June 9, 1840, holograph, Joseph Fielding Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).

46. George D. Watt to Jannet and Charles Watt, January 16, 1863.

47. Malcolm R. Thorp, "Early Mormon Confrontations with Sectarianism, 1837–1840," in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain,* edited by Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 49–69; Thorp, "The Field Is White Already to Harvest," in *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles,* edited by James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 331–32.

48. Salt Lake Temple Sealings, vol. B, p. 173, microfilm of holograph, film no. 184653, Special Collections, Family History Library.

49. "Geo D. Watt at the Institute," *Salt Lake Tribune,* April 15, 1874, 1.

church. The church moved to Kirtland, Ohio, where the members built a temple. One of its newly appointed apostles, Parley P. Pratt, began a three-month mission to Toronto, Canada, in 1836, where he baptized Isaac Russell and Joseph Fielding, both born in Britain. Pratt was also instrumental in converting another Englishman, John Taylor, a future apostle.

These new converts wanted to explain their newfound faith to friends and family members in England. In June 1837, after Pratt and his converts returned to Kirtland, Joseph Smith asked Heber C. Kimball, an apostle, to proclaim the gospel in England. Joined by Orson Hyde, Willard Richards, and Joseph Fielding, and reinforced by three converts from Toronto: John Snider, John Goodson, and Isaac Russell, Kimball traveled to New York City, where they all booked passage on the 895-ton sailing vessel, the *Garrick*. They boarded on June 29, 1837, and sailed on July 1.[50]

Twenty days later, the ship docked at Liverpool, a harbor that was full of ships from around the world. More than twenty had arrived that very day. Standing on the deck within sight of Britain's leading port city, Heber C. Kimball "poured out my soul in praise and thanksgiving to God for the prosperous voyage . . . and while thus engaged, . . . the Spirit of the Lord rested down upon me in a powerful manner, and my soul was filled with love and gratitude, and was humbled within me, while I covenanted to dedicate myself to God, and to love and serve him with all my heart."[51]

Mormon missionaries set foot on Liverpool's docks at a moment when religion was in the air and a topic of discussion. Mormons later said that the land had been prepared for the preaching of their gospel. According to one study of 280 British Mormon converts baptized before 1853, 101 or 36 percent were either Wesleyan or Primitive Methodists. A total of 58 or 20.7 percent were Anglicans.[52] When the missionaries first arrived, they began preaching in Lancashire, an area that had been heavily harvested by new religions like Joseph Smith's upstate New York and was sometimes called the "Burnt-over District."[53] The Mormon elders attracted not only members of the more prominent denominations but also seekers who eagerly listened to a message about the restoration of ancient principles.[54]

50. Larry C. Porter, "Beginnings of the Restoration": Canada, an 'Effectual Door' to the British Isles," in *Truth Will Prevail,* 3–43.
51. James R. Moss, "The Gospel Restored to England," in *Truth Will Prevail,* 71–103; Heber C. Kimball, Autobiography, n.d., p. 98, holograph, Heber C. Kimball Collection, LDS Church Archives. The autobiography was written by a clerk.
52. Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837–52, *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 51–66; also see Thorp, "The Field Is White Already to Harvest," app. A, 323–44.
53. Thorp, "The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts, 51–66.
54. For an excellent article on contemporary teachings, see Grant Underwood, "The Religious Milieu of English Mormonism," in *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain,* 31–44; see also Robert Lively, "The Catholic Apostolic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: A Comparative Study of Two Minority Millenarian Groups in

The Mormons first concentrated their ministry among the urban poor.[55] Kimball was shocked at the class divisions and extremes in Liverpool: "We wandered in the streets of that great city, where wealth and luxury, penury and want abound. I there met the rich attired in the most costly dresses, and the next moment was saluted with the cries of the poor without covering sufficient to screne [screen] them from the weather."[56]

While the missionaries waited three days for their luggage to clear customs, they found lodgings and spent most of their time praying to ascertain the Lord's will about where to begin. They felt prompted to journey to Preston, almost thirty miles to the north, where Joseph Fielding's brother, James, lived. From a distance, the missionaries found Preston appealing, but they entered a dark, dingy, and dirty town, its thirty-eight mills belching smoke and soot.[57] The cheeriest note was a set of election-day banners for a parliamentary seat that proclaimed, "Truth Will Prevail." They took it as a propitious omen.

James, who had read his brother's letters about this new religion, was willing to listen to the missionaries' message and opened his chapel to these Americans. On Sunday morning, George D. Watt listened attentively when James Fielding announced that the American missionaries would speak in the afternoon.[58] Many of those who crammed the chapel to capacity that afternoon were motivated by curiosity, but Watt and others were serious seekers. Kimball, the first speaker, "declared that an angel had visited the Earth and committed the everlasting gospel to man." Then Orson Hyde bore his testimony. In the evening, John Goodson, one of the American missionaries, and Joseph Fielding spoke. James Fielding, alarmed at his congregation's great interest, closed his pulpit to the Americans. Undaunted, they preached in homes and scheduled the first baptism for July 30, the following Sunday.[59]

Watt later wrote, "I was at the first meeting that those American Elders attended, which was a Sunday morning prayer meeting. I then knew that they were the true servants of the Most High, before they had opened their lips to say a single word in my hearing." He continued, "I was with them both body and spirit, and was ready to stake my earthly all, and even my life on the truth of their testimony before I had heard it."[60] Hearing the missionaries

Nineteenth Century England" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1977).

55. Joseph Fielding, Diary, September 11, 1837, p. 9, typescript, LDS Church Archives; Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, September 2, 1837, holograph, Kimball Collection; Orson Hyde to Marinda Hyde, September 14, 1837, *Elder's Journal* 1 (November 1837): 19–22.
56. Kimball, Autobiography, p. 99.
57. Ibid.; Heber C. Kimball, Diary, June 21, 1837, holograph, Kimball Collection.
58. Kimball, Autobiography, p. 102.
59. Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission,* 31–33.
60. George D. Watt, "Elder F. D. Richards, May 8, 1867," *Millennial Star* 29 (July 6, 1867): 427–30.

only confirmed his belief: "When they introduced the Gospel, and bore testimony of the marvelous work which God had commenced in our day, I was there, and my body was filled with light, even the light of Christ."[61]

On July 30, 1837, the day of the baptisms, the American missionaries walked to the River Ribble, where they found thousands of Preston's citizens lining the river to observe.[62] Kimball baptized nine people that day, recalling in his autobiography that "two of the male candidates when they had changed their clothes at a distance of several rods from the place where I was standing in the water, being ebb tide, being so anxious to obey the gospel, that they ran with all their might to the water, each wishing to be baptized first; the younger George D. Watt, being quicker of foot than the elder, outran him, and came first into the water."[63] This vignette reveals both the depth of Watt's commitment to Mormonism, which would stand him in good stead later, and his impulsiveness, which sometimes worked against him. Years later, Watt remembered, "When the time came for the first baptism, I was there, to be the first who should open the watery grave in a foreign land under the administrations of the truly authorized servants of God in this last dispensation."[64] Kimball also baptized Watt's mother, Mary Ann Brown.[65] The others baptized that day were Charles Miller, Thomas and Ann Walmsley, Miles Hogden, George Wate, Henry Billsbury, and Ann Dawson. Molly, Watt's wife, was also converted, but she was still convalescing from the birth of their first child, James, on July 14.[66] There is no known date for her baptism.

Within the next few weeks, James Fielding lost most of his congregation and wrote bitterly to Joseph, "I do not believe at all that you were sent of God to rend my little church to pieces."[67] Fielding in 1838 joined forces with Richard Livesey, an early anti-Mormon pamphleteer in England, who wrote a tract denouncing the Book of Mormon.[68]

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61. Ibid. Watt had already expressed discontent to Fielding because he felt his church lacked the spiritual gifts manifested in the New Testament church.
62. Richard L. Evans, *A Century of Mormonism in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1984), 32–33; Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission,* 34–36.
63. Kimball, Autobiography, p. 105. The identity of the other man who ran the race is not known. It probably was Charles Miller since he was the second person baptized. The Clegg family has a tradition that it was Henry Clegg Sr. If so this seems odd because Clegg was not baptized for several months after that. See Garth N. Jones, "Who Came in Second?" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 21 (Summer 1988): 149–54.
64. Watt, "Elder F. D. Richards," 427–30.
65. Margaret B. Smurthwaite, notes on Mary Ann Wood (Watt) Brown, 1998, typescript, in author's possession.
66. Kimball, Autobiography, pp. 105–6; for information on the birth of James, Watt's son, see Salt Lake Temple Sealings, vol. B, p. 173.
67. James Fielding to Joseph Fielding, August 27, 1838, holograph, Joseph Fielding Papers, LDS Church Archives; see also James Fielding to "Dear Sisters," May 28, 1840, holograph, Mary Fielding Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives; and Thorp, "Early Mormon Confrontations with Sectarianism," 57.
68. Thorp, "Early Mormon Confrontations with Sectarianism, 49–69.

The missionaries baptized converts but waited until mid-August to confirm the gift of the Holy Ghost on them. On August 4, Jennetta Richards, Willard Richards's future wife, was baptized and confirmed at the same time. About a week later at Ann Dawson's house, the missionaries confirmed between forty and fifty converts, among them George Watt. Many years later, he recalled, "When the laying on of hands was administered for the gift of the Holy Ghost to the first few who had been baptized for the remission of sins in foreign lands, I was there, and through that ordinance I received an abiding testimony, even the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy."[69]

The missionaries expanded their work into villages near Preston. By September Ann Dawson's home, where they first held their meetings, was too small, and so the missionaries rented a large hall, known as the Cockpit because it had earlier been used for cock fighting, although it was now the site of temperance and preaching meetings. By October there were 160 Mormon members in Preston and the surrounding area. Kimball organized five branches and called and ordained teachers and priests in the Aaronic priesthood to take charge of them. Watt was one of the teachers.[70]

On December 25, the newly organized British Mission held its first conference in the Cockpit, attended by three hundred from more than twenty-four branches. That conference approved Watt as one of ten to be ordained as a priest.[71] The missionaries also blessed a hundred children and ordained seven men as teachers.

The American elders had brought a new spirit and hope for the working classes of Britain. On April 8, 1838, a little more than three months later, the church held a second conference in the Cockpit. This time it was attended by almost seven hundred—almost half of Britain's fifteen hundred members—from more than twenty-six branches.[72] Kimball, who was returning to the United States, selected Joseph Fielding as the new mission president with Willard Richards and William Clayton as his counselors. On April 20, Kimball and Hyde sailed aboard the *Garrick* for New York City, their passage paid by the English Saints. Watt probably donated a few shillings also.

On October 24, Fielding said, "In Preston, the work of sifting is still going on, but those who are faithful are increasing in Faith, but the Chaff is blowing away."[73] When Fielding, who was spending all his time in church work, needed a new pair of trousers, Watt, as a priest, asked the branch

69. Watt, "Elder F. D. Richards," 427–30.
70. Joseph Fielding, Diary, October 10, 1837, p. 12.
71. Ibid., December 27, 1837, p. 15.
72. Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission,* 53; Evans, *A Century of Mormonism in Great Britain*, 62.
73. Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 65; Fielding, Diary, October 24, 1838, p. 28.

to contribute money. The branch members refused, even though about three months later, they purchased two new coats for Fielding. At this time, Fielding noted their frugality when he said, "The Saints in Preston are pretty careful."[74]

A controversy in the branch began in March 1839, when some of the Preston Saints reacted against Willard Richards's tendency to criticize them openly.[75] Even Joseph Fielding felt that Richards was too severe and unaccommodating to the members' shortcomings. Also Richards had fallen in love with Jennetta Richards, the daughter of a wealthy minister. Her parents had money, and she dressed better than the other members.[76] Watt probably stood aloof from this internal bickering and continued to support Richards in every endeavor.

During this period, Watt commented to Joseph Fielding that he "had to pass through many temptations, have given way in many instances and done those things which I ought not to have done and left undone those things which I ought to have done." He thought that "he had to pass through many repentings and many sorrowings through my wickedness." Even with all of that, he emphasized that "the Lord has been merciful to me and has not taken his spirit from me."[77]

As a Mormon, Watt evidently felt no desire to return to his profession as a weaver. In February 1840, his stepfather, Joseph Brown, probably helped him get a position with the police in Bury, a rural area fifteen miles southeast of Preston. He sought counsel about this potential move from Willard Richards, who encouraged him to take the job and "blessed George Watt as he was about going to Bury as Rural Police."[78] These events suggest a special bond between the plainspoken Richards and the new convert.

Fielding, however, expressed pessimism about Watt's testimony at that time. He said, "Much talk of Elder G. Watt engaging as a Police Man—I think it is not wise in him, but Bro. Richards takes the responsibility on himself."[79] A little more than two months later, he recorded his pleasure in his diary that Watt was still stalwart in the faith: "He has been at Bury sometime as [a] Police Man; he is standing fast."[80] On July 4, 1840, Watt reported that he, Molly, and the almost-three-year-old James had made the move and "we got a better living than we should do if there was only myself working

74. Fielding, Diary, March 12, 1839, p. 33; June 7, 1839, p. 37.
75. Ibid., March 12, 1839, p. 27.
76. Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission,* 65; Fielding, Diary, March 12, 1839, p. 33. Richards was also Jeannetta's maiden name.
77. George D. Watt to Joseph Fielding, July 4, 1840, photocopy of holograph, Joseph Fielding Papers, Perry Special Collections. He does not describe the nature of these temptations.
78. Ibid.; Willard Richards, Diary, February 12, 1840, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
79. Fielding, Diary, February 29, 1840, p. 60.
80. Ibid., May 2, 1840, p. 73.

at the factory."[81] Watt returned to Preston fairly frequently. He delivered his first recorded sermon there on May 2.[82] George, Molly, and James also came back for the birth of their second child, Willard Richards Watt, who was born in Preston on July 23, 1840, probably assisted by the sisters in the branch.[83] During his time in Bury, Watt also found time to go four or five miles south to Manchester, where he preached the gospel.[84]

In America the Mormon church had run into intense persecution. Mobs had expelled the members from Independence, Missouri, in November 1833, and they had settled first in Clay County and then in northern Missouri with their headquarters at Far West, where Joseph Smith had joined them in the spring of 1838. That fall, in the short-lived, but violent, Mormon War, the Mormons fled to Illinois under pain of death, leaving Smith and a few others imprisoned in Liberty, Missouri, during the winter of 1838–39. As one of his last official acts in Missouri, on July 8, 1838, Joseph Smith had instructed the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to go to Britain and proselytize.

Hampered by poverty, illness, and the need to relocate their families, the apostles set off in twos and threes when they could. (William Smith and John E. Page refused to go.) John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff reached Liverpool on January 11, 1840. Woodruff lamented that "the poor are in as great Bondage as the children of Israel in Egypt."[85] After a brief stay in Preston, Woodruff departed for the area called the "Potteries" in Staffordshire, about thirty-five miles southeast of Liverpool, while Taylor and Joseph Fielding returned to Liverpool to open a sustained missionary drive there. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, and George A. Smith, the other apostles, arrived in Liverpool on April 6, 1840. In a meeting on April 9 in Preston, they accepted Willard Richards as a new apostle.[86] Then the missionaries scattered to many places in the British Isles. Young and Parley P. Pratt traveled to Manchester to set up mission headquarters, where they published a hymnal and, in May 1840, launched *The Latter-day Saints Millennial Star,* a semimonthly paper.

81. Watt to Joseph Fielding, July 4, 1840.
82. Fielding, Diary, May 2, 1840, p. 73.
83. Salt Lake Temple Sealings, vol. B, p. 173. This was the sealing of Willard Richards and James Watt to their parents, George D. and Mary Gregson Watt. Thomas Winters and Elizabeth Golightly Watt were proxies, and the sealer was J. R. Winder with W. W. Riter and G. Romney as witnesses. Richard, Elizabeth's oldest son, was the proxy for his deceased half brothers.
84. Robert Williams, Autobiography, 1859, LDS Church Archives. Williams said that Watt was his missionary companion in Manchester. The only time Watt was close to Manchester was when he was in Bury.
85. Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men With a Mission,* 108–9; Wilford Woodruff, Journal, January 14, 1840, microfilm of holograph, Wilford Woodruff Papers, LDS Church Archives.
86. Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d rev. ed., 7 vols. (repr., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1973), 4:118.

Meanwhile, Watt discovered that the improvement in his financial situation was not adequate, and he asked if "there was any way to extricate me from my present bondage." He felt that he had "learned many good lessons from the experience I have had" and wished "to praise the Lord for his goodness that he has helped me hitherto." He wanted to emigrate to the "promised land" of America, but he also felt the urge to be a missionary in his native land, for "the Lord knows that it is the desire of my heart to persuade the children of men to flee from the wrath to come." Reluctant to seem dismissive of Richards's priesthood blessing, he asked Fielding to query Heber C. Kimball, for "I entered this force by council and I think it would not be safe to leave it without council." Even though Molly wanted him to continue his employment at least until they were able to purchase a bed, Watt had his eye on a higher calling: "Dear Brother, the Lord knows my heart concerning these things. I desire to glorify him in every step that I take. I want to be found of him when he comes, having my lamp trimed and burning that he may welcome me to the Marriage Supper."[87]

If Fielding and/or Kimball responded, their answers have not been preserved. But three months later in October 1840, Orson Pratt called for volunteer missionaries, and Watt, who had been ordained an elder at the October conference, readily accepted this challenge.[88] In preparation he received a patriarchal blessing from Peter Melling, who had only been a patriarch for six months, which warned him that "thou has much affliction to pass through" but said he would see great signs and be supported by ministering angels. If he endured faithfully to the end, he would have eternal life. As long as Watt was humble, "thou shalt be blessed with great wisdom." As for his missionary labors, he was told that he would "go forth in the strength and power of God to prune his vineyard for the last time and to warn the people of what is coming upon the earth." Melling also told him, "Many shall rejoice that they heard the source of thy voice and inasmuch as thou will hold fast and be faithful thou shalt be gathered with thine and be brought to the land of Zion."[89]

Samuel Mulliner and Alexander Wright, both native Scots, first took the gospel message to Scotland in December 1839. They spent most of their time in Glasgow, but in January 1840, the two preached in Edinburgh. On May 18, 1840, Orson Pratt and Samuel Mulliner traveled to Edinburgh, where their baptisms included Mulliner's parents.[90]

Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, is situated about two miles from the south side of the Firth of Forth, a long inlet leading out to the North Sea.

87. Watt to Joseph Fielding, July 4, 1840.
88. Smith et al., *History of the Church*, 4: 214–17.
89. Peter Melling, "Patriarchal Blessing of George D. Watt," 1840, vol. 8, p. 145, microfilm of holograph, Patriarchal Blessing Collection, LDS Church Archives.
90. Orson Pratt to Parley P. Pratt, April 16, 1841, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

With a population of 166,909 in 1836, the city had established itself as a trading and fishing center. Edinburgh was a mercantile, educational, and professional city, rather than a manufacturing center. Thus, it was almost free of the smoke-belching factories of more industrialized regions.

Pratt stayed with Samuel Mulliner's parents and took a six-month lease on a public hall, where he preached three times on Sunday and twice during the week.[91] The Mormon missionaries found Edinburgh unwelcoming. It did not have the large laboring class for whom Mormonism had rapid affinity. As a result, the missionaries worked very hard for their converts—about forty-three by the time Watt joined Pratt at the end of October. With Watt as his companion, Pratt rented a hall in Leith, about a mile north of the heart of Edinburgh, for two Sundays and another at 40 Richmond Street that could hold about fifty people. One of their first tasks was to furnish the hall with benches. The missionaries slept in an adjoining room. Pratt felt pleased that he had finally begun to "lay the foundation of a church in Edinburgh."[92] As soon as Watt arrived, the two began to preach in the streets. Generally the two missionaries split up on Sunday mornings with Watt preaching at first in Leith and later at 40 Richmond Street.[93]

One of their baptisms was a tailor named George Watt (no relation), whose wife was also named Mary. To alleviate confusion in the months before the tailor and his wife left for Nauvoo in March 1841, Watt began consistently using "D" as part of his name.[94]

In early December 1840, the missionaries were still preaching in the streets but were limited by the cold. That month Watt wrote to George A. Smith in Staffordshire that the work "rolls slowly" but he and Pratt expected it to "roll on a little faster" since, after months of ignoring the Mormons, other ministers had begun warning their congregations about them, and hecklers had begun interrupting their street meetings. This mild persecution was encouraging, for as Watt commented, "When the priests begin to Bark the sheep get terrified and runs into the fold, that is kept by the true shephard."[95]

Also in December, William Smallwood, a Methodist minister, challenged Pratt to a debate, a two-night event staged in the Mormon meeting hall and chaired by an unnamed gentleman, not a member of the church. The debate centered on two issues: (1) "the means by which a sinner obtains

91. J. S. Mulliner, "The Scottish Mission," ca. 1908, copy of typescript, LDS Church Archives.
92. Orson Pratt, quoted in Wilford Woodruff to George A. Smith, November 21, 1840, holograph, Woodruff Papers.
93. Orson Pratt to Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith, November 6, 1840, holograph, George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives.
94. The confusion continued in Nauvoo, and I cannot be absolutely certain that all of the Nauvoo references to George Watt are to George D., rather than to the tailor. This second George, however, never went west, so the confusion ends after 1845.
95. George D. Watt and Orson Pratt to George A. Smith, December 11, 1840, holograph, Smith Papers. Both Watt and Pratt signed this letter, but Watt wrote it.

forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit," and (2) "Are the miraculous gifts necessary for the Church of God in the present day?"[96] The chapel had a good crowd of investigators, and Pratt showed his expertise with the scriptures. Smallwood countered with what the missionaries considered to be slander about the Mormons. The chairman ruled that Pratt won.

Watt felt the discussions strengthened the Saints, influenced many that Mormonism was good, and convinced some to be baptized. After the first night, one person was baptized, and two more baptisms followed the next evening.[97] The debate may have had a positive impact, for sixteen were baptized in the chilly Firth of Forth. Watt confirmed them the following Sunday. By mid-January, Watt had baptized ten more, bringing the number of members in Edinburgh to 122. "The work in this city is in a healthy state," Watt commented.[98]

Because of the constant flow of letters between the apostles, Pratt and Watt knew about John Taylor's work in Liverpool and on the Isle of Man and also about Parley P. Pratt's success in publishing the *Millennial Star*. Watt also learned about church news from the United States. Orson Pratt was torn between corresponding with the missionaries throughout Britain and writing tracts and pamphlets. When he found that Watt was capable of drafting acceptable letters, he entrusted that aspect of the work to him, usually adding a few personal comments. Pratt, thus freed up, devoted himself to writing the thirty-one-page *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions*. It includes the first published account of Joseph Smith's vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ, the visits of the Angel Moroni, the emergence of the Book of Mormon, and a set of Mormon beliefs that closely resembled what Joseph Smith published in 1841 as the Articles of Faith.[99]

A few days before Christmas, Watt and Pratt received a letter from George A. Smith complaining of his poor health. To comfort and cheer him, Watt composed a little essay on life's opposites: he told Smith that "when we have traveled a long distance on a rough road the more we enjoy the smooth." Then he mentioned that "in order that we may know what the sweet is, we must first taste the bitter." Watt felt that the person who knows what good health is, is the one who has known the opposite: "Who feels the most thankful to God for health and strength of body, than the man who has had his body racked with pain and born down with affliction." He concluded by passing on news about Pratt: he "enjoys himself well," has a good fire to sit by, books to read, clothes to put on, food to eat,

96. George D. Watt and Orson Pratt to George A. Smith, December 4, 1840, holograph, Smith Papers.
97. Ibid.
98. George D. Watt to George A. Smith, January 16, 1841, holograph, Smith Papers.
99. Orson Pratt, *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions* (n.p., 1842).

teeth with which to eat, and an appetite. "He is in good spirits, Yea he feels mighty well, and expects to see home some time this centry [century]."[100]

On December 30, Orson Pratt left for Glasgow, leaving Watt to carry on in Edinburgh. Seven days later, Watt reported to George A. Smith that he had preached twice on Sunday, confirmed nineteen, and baptized seven more on Monday.[101] Although Watt did not complain, he missed Molly and their sons: "I told you all the news, and I feel homesick, I never was so long away from my family before. I intend to go and see them when Bro. Pratt comes home if it is the Lord's will."[102] Two weeks after Pratt's return, Watt returned to Preston.

Since Molly was illiterate, Watt had heard nothing from her, and the absence had not been easy on her. Watt wrote to Brigham Young on January 29 expressing his concern: "My wife is almost worked to death in one of Babalons murdering mills," probably as a spinner or a weaver. "She is now off her work sick. May the Lord soon deliver his people from this modern, Egyptian oppression." Watt affirmed his desire "to labor night and day in unity with my Brethren to effect this great work . . . in about 3 weeks if all's well and if the Lord will."[103] He wrote a similar letter to Orson Pratt.[104]

Working in the textile mills was, in fact, arduous. Employees labored twelve hours or more six days a week. Molly had probably been working in a factory since she was a child and died of "consumption" (tuberculosis) sixteen years later, almost certainly caused or exacerbated by the lint-filled air, the insalubrious living conditions, and the close-packed tenements. A historical study of Oldham, another textile-mill community just north of Manchester and not far from Preston, showed that deaths from tuberculosis among women were more than twice the national average.[105]

Watt wrote to Young on February 9, obviously anxious to return to his missionary labors. Molly's health had improved, but the woman who tended the two boys could no longer do it, and he needed to find someone else, but the other members in Preston were even more destitute than he was. "Satin desires to block up my way and to hinder me from going forth to preach the uncearchable riches of Christ," he complained. He did not see how he could return to the mission field since the Edinburgh Saints could not support his family and Orson Pratt, too. Molly did not see how it could be

100. George D. Watt and Orson Pratt to George A. Smith, December 22, 1840, holograph, Smith Papers.
101. George D. Watt to George A. Smith, January 6, 1841, holograph, Smith Papers.
102. Ibid.
103. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, January 29, 1841, holograph, George Washington Blair Collection, LDS Church Archives.
104. Orson Pratt to George A. Smith, February 1, 1841, holograph, Smith Papers.
105. John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: English Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), graphs on 92–93. In Oldham one in eight women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four died.

the Lord's will to make her return to the factory while she was nursing six-month-old baby Willard. Watt felt he needed either to emigrate to America or find some work to support his family. Caught between his duty to his family and his call as a missionary, which "lies near my heart," he sought advice from Brigham Young.[106] Unknown to Watt, most of the apostles, including Orson Pratt, had begun planning to return to the United States in about a month, just after the April conference. No answer has survived from Young, but he probably shared this plan with Watt and advised him to move his family to Scotland.

At the end of February 1841, Watt returned to Edinburgh, bringing his family with him. In March Orson Pratt wrote to George A. Smith about his own plans to return to Nauvoo, ending his letter with an acronym signature: Give All Some, Oatmeal Pancakes." Watt, enthusiasm revived, added a postscript poem, putting Smith's initials at the beginning of three of his words:

> At the conference I shall see you
> So I bid you now adieu
> From colic pains, may he free you
> And gouty toes
> With Gravy Apples Soup to feed you
> And potatoes
> I subscribe myself
> Greasy Dish Water[107]

In 1842 Watt read Orson Hyde's *A Voice from Jerusalem*, an account of his journey to Palestine and its sacred sites. Watt's first publication was a letter from Edinburgh to the *Millennial Star*, addressed to Thomas Ward, the editor, where he praised *A Voice from Jerusalem* as "worth its weight in gold to every lover of Zion's cause."[108] He claimed that a person "cannot read it but with a heart bursting with that joy peculiar to the Saints, which only can find vent in a flood of tears." He also commented on Hyde's "glowing and awe inspiring description of a thunder storm upon the bosom of the mighty deep."[109]

On April 6, 1841, Watt attended the annual meeting of the British Mission in Manchester and was called to preside over the Edinburgh Conference. The meeting simultaneously approved his ordination as a high priest, an ordinance conducted on that same day. It is not known who

106. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, February 9, 1841, holograph, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.
107. Orson Pratt and George D. Watt to George A. Smith, March 20, 1841, holograph, Smith Papers.
108. Church publications first started in Manchester when Brigham Young established the headquarters there. With the beginning of emigration, the headquarters and publication center moved to Liverpool in April 1842.
109. "From G. D. Watt, Edinburgh, April 19, 1842," *Millennial Star* 3 (May 1842): 15.

ordained him.[110] As conference presidents reported progress, Watt stated that membership in Edinburgh stood at 203.[111] After the meeting, Watt returned to Edinburgh, while the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, except for Parley P. Pratt, returned to America.

Orson Pratt summarized his ministry in Edinburgh: "On the 20th of March I left upwards of 200 disciples under the watch-care of elder George D. Watt, a faithful and humble brother from Preston in England."[112] Pratt had had a marked influence on his young convert/companion. Watt gained a broader worldview, an openness to ideas in general, and a pleasure in intellectual activity from him.

Due to Pratt's tutelage and the *Millennial Star*'s welcome of such offerings, Watt also tried his hand at poetry. Although rough in both rhyme and versification, these efforts clearly communicate his exuberance for the Lord's work. In addition to the jocular effort to Smith, he also experimented with more serious subjects, creating this couplet for a January 1840 letter:

> Christians if your hearts be warm
> Frost and snow will do no harm.[113]

In an addendum to Orson Pratt's letter a few weeks later, he added,

> I have no doubt that you have seen
> Among other trees the olive grow
> And is it not an evergreen
> In Summer, Winter, Frost & Snow
>
> When cold December ushers in
> And frosty winds begin to blow
> The Olive it's an evergreen
> And blooms among both Frost & Snow
>
> The Church of God's an evergreen
> In Summer, Winter, Frost & Snow
> While other Sects are dead it's green
> And bears immortal fruits below.[114]

In his final letter to George A. Smith before the latter's departure from England, Watt wrote,

> The frosty winter now is past
> The sleety rain and snowy blast

110. Watt was ordained after the second meeting. "Conference Minutes," *Millennial Star* 1 (April 1841): 301–4; Brigham Young, Journal, May 25, 1851, holograph, Young Papers.
111. "Conference Minutes," 301–4.
112. Orson Pratt to Parley P. Pratt, April 11, 1841, *Millennial Star* 2 (May 10, 1841): 10–11.
113. Watt to George A. Smith, January 16, 1841.
114. George D. Watt, postscript to Orson Pratt's letter to George A. Smith, January 21, 1841, holograph, Smith Papers.

And spring again begins to cast
Her mantle ore us
Now man may sing, so may the Beast
Join him in chorus
The farmer Braks his fallow ground
With Joy he throws his seed arround
Hoping his Barn will soon abound
With fruits of labour
And looks to see his table crowned
With Bread and Butter

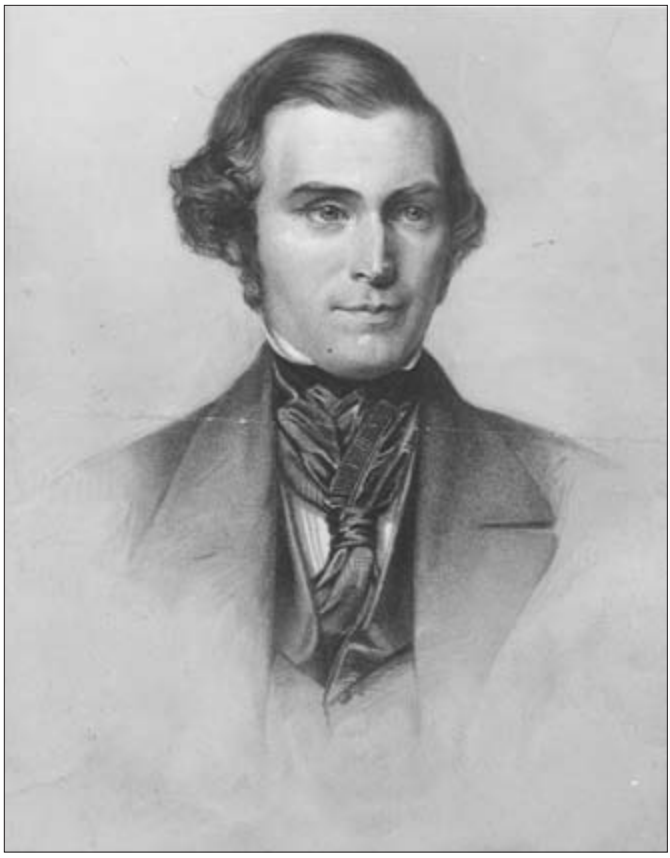
So does the servants of the Lord
Throw in their seed, which is the word
And hope to have a good reward
For all their labour
When earth and all things are restored
By our rewarder

Though Babel's Preists may cry Delusion
And men of science cry confusion
The hellish hosts put all their force on
Against this Church
But they will find at Christs Desention
Who's in the lurch[115]

In addition to Watt's missionary work, he provided leadership to the Edinburgh branch and conference, establishing new branches in Sterling and Wemyss across the Firth of Forth. This gave a total of three branches to the Edinburgh Conference.

Although specific vignettes about Watt's labors are rare, a couple have survived. A Wemyss man named Robert Crookston received urgent invitations from his newly baptized aunt and cousin to come hear the preaching of George Watt, their minister in the "Church of Jesus Christ." Although Crookston admired his own minister's ability to deliver extemporaneous sermons, he was confused by his insistence that all they needed was "saving faith," a term Crookston did not understand. Seeking enlightenment from ministers of other congregations left him more confused until he heard Watt, sometime in early 1841. Watt "preached faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance from our sins, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. He showed that a man must be called of God as was Aaron." Crookston wrote, "I was converted on the spot and was baptized that very evening in the Duddenston Loch or Lake."[116]

115. Pratt and Watt to George A. Smith, March 20, 1841.
116. Robert Crookston, Reminiscence, n.d., pp. 3–5, typescript, LDS Church Archives.



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Orson Pratt

Crookston returned home and confronted his minister, then appealed to Watt to come preach in Wemyss. Watt arrived on a beautiful spring day, enthusiastically informing Crookston, "There will be more turning over the leaves of dusty Bibles in the next three months than has been in the past 20 years." Crookston rented a large hall, and Watt soon baptized twenty people. After several weeks, he sent two other elders to take charge of the branch and returned to his duties in Edinburgh.[117]

William McFarland, another Scotsman in the Edinburgh area, had long felt that angels should still appear to men as they had in olden times. When Watt told him that he must yield obedience to the baptism in the true church, McFarland told him, "If you will only give me that knowledge, you may dip me in any mud hole you please, for I have been hunting for that

117. Ibid.

knowledge all my life, and have been unable to find it." Watt baptized him on June 4, 1842.[118]

Another significant event during Watt's stay in Edinburgh was his learning Pitman shorthand, a system devised and taught by Isaac Pitman, a schoolteacher. In 1837 Pitman published his "Stenography Sound-Hand," a forty-sound alphabet system. He taught in Bath at his Phonetic Institute and lectured throughout the United Kingdom. The University of Edinburgh was on his circuit three times, and Watt may have attended one or all three of these lectures. It is not clear, however, whether Watt learned the system from a book or Pitman's correspondence course. Still, it was a skill he used for the rest of his life, and it changed the way the church promulgated its religion.

The semiannual conference in Britain in 1842 was held on May 15 in the Navy Corn Exchange in Manchester. At this British Mission conference, presided over by Parley P. Pratt, the minutes show that Watt preached on an unknown topic the second day, seconded two proposals, and reported that the Edinburgh Conference had 271 members with 13 elders, 19 priests, 7 teachers, and 3 deacons. It had branches in Edinburgh, Wemyss, and Stirling.[119]

At the same time as these events were taking place in the British Mission, a focus of political and social tension in Great Britain was the attempts of the Chartists, a group of reformers from the lower class who wanted representation in Parliament. They had first presented their charter or petition in 1839 to the House of Commons, only to have it rejected. In May 1842, the Chartists presented another petition, signed by more than three million people. Again the House of Commons rejected it. In August strikes broke out in Lancashire and spread to Glasgow and the Midlands. The strikes failed, and the government arrested many of the Chartist leaders, suppressing the movement.[120] Watt does not comment on the movement, and Mormon converts do not seem to have been involved, but it probably supplied further evidence of Babylon's iniquities and the Saints' need to flee to Zion.

Among these fleeing Saints were George and Molly Watt and their children. On August 30, 1842, Watt baptized John Currie in Fifeshire, his last Scottish convert, and set his eyes on the Promised Land.

118. Archibald McFarland, [Reminiscence], photocopy of holograph, LDS Church Archives. William's son, Archibald, wrote this and talks about his father being converted.
119. "General Conference," *Millennial Star* 3 (June 1, 1842): 28–32.
120. Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815–1870*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), chap. 3.

2

JOURNEY TO AMERICA AND NAUVOO

> We have had a passage of fifty-six days—fine weather, with a kind captain and crew, who allowed us every reasonable privilege. There have been five deaths out of the company, and one sailor who fell from the yard-arm and was killed—brother Yates's eldest child, sister Cannon, brother Brown's child, and two children belonging to a man not in the church. We stuck upon the bar at the mouth of the river thirty-four hours.
>
> G. D. Watt to *Millennial Star,* New Orleans, November 13, 1842

The desire to emigrate to Zion was virtually a continuation of conversion to Mormonism. George D. Watt had realized early that linking his fortunes to the restoration of the gospel would take him from his native land to the United States. In fact, two weeks after he was baptized, Watt prophesied that they would all go to America. Heber C. Kimball in 1854, talking about prophecy, commented, "One night we met with a small company of the new members in Preston, Lancashire, and brother George commenced reading the Book of Mormon." After he finished reading, he said, "The land of America is the promised land, it is Zion and we shall be gathered there, altho' you have not told us anything about it."[1]

1. Discourse by President Heber C. Kimball, Tabernacle, July 16, 1854, "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (chronological scrapbook of typed entries of newspaper clippings, 1830–present), Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). The view of America as the Promised Land was common by that period, not only because of its Book of Mormon designation but also from three centuries of romanticization of the New World in European culture.

The Saints had always been a gathering people. Joseph Smith counseled his followers to gather to Kirtland. The Lord instructed the church members to gather to Jackson County, Missouri, but when they were driven out of that state, Joseph Smith reaffirmed they should go to a new place, Nauvoo, Illinois. The poor economic conditions of Britain also encouraged people to emigrate. In four short years, 1830 to 1834, more than twenty thousand left the British Isles for America. When Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, and Orson Pratt arrived in March 1840, they began talking about the gathering.[2] The first group of forty-one Saints departed in June 1840 on the ship *Britannia*. Early in September one more company left. Brigham Young organized five more companies. The apostles began to contract with ship captains for passage, imposing order on the movement and also safeguarding their unsophisticated flock.[3]

Most of the British Mormons shared Watt's feelings: they were leaving their native land to become part of the new Zion: an anchor, a refuge, and a field of new opportunities. They quickly adopted the image and the rhetoric of coming out of Babylon and entering Zion, making literal the metaphor that already, for many, explained their conversions.

On September 17, 1842, thirty-year-old Watt, accompanied by Molly and their two sons, five-year-old James and two-year-old Willard, left Britain. They sailed with almost 180 other passengers on the American ship *Sidney* from Liverpool. Unlike his memorable Atlantic crossing in 1851, Watt was not keeping a diary in 1842 and hence did not record his feelings about the departure. He was leaving—for all he knew forever—his mother, a stepfather, a sister, a half sister, two half brothers, and many friends.

The *Sidney*, a three-masted square rigger, was, at 450 tons, a length of 129 feet, and a width of 28 feet, one of the smallest ships used by the Mormons.[4] The ship sailed twelve miles down the River Mersey, the Liverpool harbor, its first day, then sat becalmed when the wind died. The next day a steam tug pulled it out of the harbor, where the passengers got under sail. By the end of the first week, most of the passengers had found their sea legs. During its first two weeks, the *Sidney* made good time, a notable 224 miles under full

2. Joseph Fielding, Diary, April 18, 1840, typescript, Joseph Fielding Papers, LDS Church Archives.

3. For the best article on the gathering, see Richard L. Jensen, "The British Gathering to Zion," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987,* edited by V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter (Solihull, UK: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 165–98. For the ships, see V. Ben Bloxham, "The Apostolic Foundations, 1840–41" in *Truth Will Prevail,* 121–62. See also James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 136–37.

4. Conway B. Sonne, *Ships, Saints, and Mariners: A Maritime Encyclopedia of Mormon Migration, 1830–1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 181–82. A square rigger is a sailing ship with rectangular sails on the mainmast, foremast, and rear mizzenmast.

sail in a single twenty-four-hour period.[5] On September 29, the ship sailed within twenty-one miles of Santa Maria Island in the Azores. Watt appears in the diary of Levi Richards, the company leader, twice in the first week, offering prayers in the twice-weekly service of hymn singing and praying, supplemented on Sundays by preaching and partaking of the sacrament. Watt preached on the second Sunday he was on the ship.[6]

Levi Richards had joined the church in 1835 in New York after reading a Book of Mormon that his cousin, Brigham Young, had given to him. In 1840 he joined the missionaries in Britain.[7] Before he left in 1842, Parley P. Pratt asked Richards to be the president of the company. Richards selected John Greenhow, former president of the Liverpool Conference, for his first counselor, George D. Watt as his second counselor, and Richard Harrison as his clerk.[8]

A physician, Richards also treated Molly Watt's head, which was wounded in a fall, by closing the gash with a plaster and later giving her lobelia, which caused vomiting. This type of medical treatment was developed by Samuel Thomson (1769–1843), who was born in Alstead, New Hampshire. Thomson came to believe that cold caused illness and disease should be treated by restoring the body's "natural heat." His methods included taking steam baths and administering cayenne pepper and lobelia to induce vomiting.[9]

In contrast, orthodox doctors, trained in medical school, relied on a theory, almost fifteen centuries old, that illness was caused by imbalanced "humors" (blood, bile, yellow bile, and phlegm), with blood letting as the most common remedy. Sometimes a patient would be bled as much as 1.5 liters of blood, a drastic remedy when the average adult body contained only 5 liters. Another orthodox remedy was calomel, a drug containing mercurous chloride that acted as a violent purgative.[10]

Some passengers recall resistance to Richards's leadership. George Cannon, father of George Q. Cannon, future member of the church's First Presidency, noted that Richards did not have the "confidence" of

5. Levi Richards, Journals, 1840–53, September 25, 1842, holograph, Levi Richards Papers, 1837–67, LDS Church Archives.
6. Ibid.
7. Helen Richards, comp., *Levi Richards, 1799–1876: Some of His Ancestors and Descendants* (Logan, UT: Unique Printing, 1973) 111–15.
8. Richards, Journals, October 15, 1842.
9. "Samuel Thomson," in Wikipedia, available online at http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Thomson. See also Robert T. Divett, *Medicine and the Mormons: An Introduction to the History of Latter-day Saints Health Care* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers and Distributors, 1981), 14–20.
10. Joseph Smith's family blamed the death of their oldest son, Alvin, on a fatally large dose of calomel, which made Thomson's medicine popular among the Mormons. For details on the death of Alvin Smith, see Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 53–54.

the company and thought that John Greenhow would have made a better president.[11] Even though Greenhow was a very able leader, Richards's longer church experience was the reason for his selection. Greenhow told Richards during the voyage— referring to his feelings about Elder Watt— "that he thought more of him than almost any other man."[12] However, problems between the two quickly emerged aboard ship after two weeks of calm and congeniality.

They centered on different approaches to the preaching sessions. Greenhow wanted an open debate on gospel principles, a method he had used with considerable success in Liverpool, while Watt apparently favored the more traditional congregational style with the preacher declaring his message and the audience listening. Watt had misgivings about Greenhow's method because he had seen problems caused by a similar approach in Edinburgh. The controversy between the two raged for four weeks.

On October 3, Greenhow proposed that the group investigate certain gospel topics and find out all the scriptures about them, then to have individuals speak for and against them. Watt, who was conducting, declined putting the motion forward.[13] George Cannon, who had been in Liverpool, remembered his earlier experience under Greenhow's direction with fondness: "We came together," he said, "not to show our wisdom, but our ignorance."[14]

A few days later the two attempted to work out their differences but failed. "Watt became dissatisfied with the spirit Elder Greenhow manifested & [thought] that he inclined too much to continue & cast personal allusions upon his understanding prejudicial to his feelings & influence." Later that evening Watt told Richards about a curious dream he had had the night before. "He dreamed he saw a man with one foot broke and in putules like pox filled with the most offensive and loathsome matter, he then happened to look on his own feet and one of them was affected in the same way only not quite as bad." He felt that he was as responsible as Greenhow for the problem.[15]

On October 15, Watt lectured that "the elders were not sent out to command the winds and waves or raise the dead," but that "additional power in the Priesthood would come by and through an ordinance" in the temple. Cannon recorded that Watt did not believe that the dead could be raised or healing could take place. The brethren pretended to have this power, but

11. George Cannon, quoted in John Q. Cannon, *John Q. Cannon, the Immigrant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), 116. John Q. Cannon wrote this volume except for chapter 15, which is a diary of the voyage written by George Cannon and the source of the quotes in this chapter.
12. Richards, Journals, October 25, 1842.
13. Ibid., October 3, 1842.
14. George Cannon, in *John Q. Cannon,* 115
15. Richards, Journals, October 12, 1842.

no man had it. Cannon told Richards that if Watt's "doctrine was true he had kicked the ladder from under my feet."[16]

With additional material against Watt, Greenhow "offered remarks on the lecture saying if he was presiding over a church & such incorrect teaching should occur he would stop them there & then." Richards asked Greenhow to curtail his criticisms, but he did not. Later that evening Richards ended all preaching sessions because of the dispute between his two counselors.[17]

That evening Greenhow said he "did not know why he might not speak for the edification of the Saints." On the evening of October 20, as soon as Richards climbed into bed and fell into "the most grateful sleep," he was soon awakened and again met with the two feuding men. Watt was grieved at Greenhow's comments, but "would humble himself to make confession of any thing in which he might been out of the way & all he wanted was to have Elder 'G' to do the same." Greenhow said that he had spoken in that fashion "because of the remarks 'W' had made about him in private conversation with some of the elders." Watt denied that. Watt, as he left, "stated he would submit to any cause I thought proper & would humble himself to anything like righteousness for the sake of having peace & fellowship restored." Greenhow then turned again to Richards and asked what he should do. Richards, no doubt sleepy and too smart to umpire this ongoing disagreement, finally said, "Settle it between yourselves."[18]

Simultaneously with this controversy was the illness of pregnant Ann Cannon, George Cannon's wife, a forty-four-year-old convert who already had nine children. At 4:30 a.m. on October 28, she died. George Cannon later recalled, "I will not attempt to describe the nights in particular which I have passed while watching by the side of one of the best wives that ever man was blest with."[19] Later in the afternoon everyone attended the funeral with Greenhow, an old friend from Liverpool, presiding and giving the sermon.

Just prior to the funeral, Greenhow asked those people near him why he could not preach. Richards, being within earshot, told the group that he had stopped all gospel lectures and sermons because of the quarrel between Greenhow and Watt. Greenhow, who wanted to preach, especially at the funeral of Ann Cannon, an old friend, realized that he had to acknowledge his mistake. He immediately "confessed that he did wrong in speaking as he did evening of 15th," when he had spoken loudly against Watt's lecture. Richards asked someone to find Watt. Once he arrived, he heard about Greenhow's confession. The two men mutually "confessed their wrongs,

16. George Cannon, in *John Q. Cannon,* 116.
17. Richards, Journals, October 15, 1842.
18. Ibid., October 16, 20, 1842.
19. George Cannon, in *John Q. Cannon,* 113.

forgave each, & shook hands as a sign of satisfaction." Richards cautioned the Saints not to revisit the controversy again "as it was now settled. Let that be the end of it."[20]

By November 5, the *Sidney* was crossing the Gulf of Mexico. At the mouth of the Mississippi River, the pilot tugboat accidentally guided the ship into a huge sandbar, where it stuck fast. The *Sidney* could not be dislodged until the next day. It docked in New Orleans on November 11 after a voyage of almost two months. Two days later, Watt wrote the *Millennial Star* a report that summarized the trip's main events: a journey of fifty-six days with fine weather, a sailor killed when he fell from the rigging, four children and one woman (Ann Cannon) dead.[21]

New Orleans, the most prominent city on the Mississippi River, had a seaport that drew ships from all over the world.[22] It is not clear what level of understanding these prospective citizens had of their soon-to-be-adopted country. Originally settled by the French, New Orleans had become part of the flourishing United States in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase. It had also been the site of a decisive battle during the War of 1812, where Tennessean general Andrew Jackson rose to celebrity as the embodiment of frontier virtues, an image that took him to the White House in 1829.

Richards arranged for a steamship, the *Alex Scott*, to take the Mormons up the Mississippi at twenty dollars a person. A large side-wheel paddle steamboat, it was large enough to take all of the *Sidney's* passengers, including a few non-Mormons. As part of his negotiations, Richards wangled free passage for fourteen of the poorest passengers, which included the Watt family.[23] The *Alex Scott* churned slowly up the roiling muddy waters of the Mississippi past fields and forests. Although seasickness was not a problem, conditions on board were poor. The passengers slept on the deck between machinery parts, chilled by the November wind, with no facilities for bathing or even privacy for changing clothes.[24]

On November 18, about 300 miles north of New Orleans, the weather turned bitterly cold, and shallow water along both sides of the river froze. Two days later, the boat came to some rapids about 130 miles south of St. Louis and ran aground on a sandbar. Many of the passengers went ashore and built a bonfire to warm themselves. Somebody on board produced bottles of the locally made corn whiskey, another sovereign remedy against

20. Richards, Journals, October 28, 1842.
21. G. D. Watt, letter to the editor, November 13, 1842, *Millennial Star* 3 (January 1843): 160; see also Fred E. Woods, *Gathering to Nauvoo* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2001), 69, 72.
22. John Moon's 1840 company had made New York its port of entry, but mission leaders had changed the next year to New Orleans since it provided an easier, all-water route to Nauvoo.
23. Richards, Journals, November 13, 1842.
24. George Cannon, in *John Q. Cannon,* 117.

the cold, and some passengers indulged freely, perhaps ten or twenty to the point of intoxication. Levi Richards stayed on board and helped to move the boat up the river. He did not know who drank the whiskey.[25]

Farther on, about 90 miles south of St. Louis, low water halted the *Alex Scott*. The St. Louis newspaper, the *Missouri Republican*, confirmed that the river "continues unusually low, too low for the deep New Orleans boats."[26] Now the passengers went ashore during the days, foraging for food (squirrels and shriveled grapes) and returning to the shelter of the boat at night. Some of the Mormon men tried to find temporary work but had no luck.[27] Two days later on November 21, the *Missouri Republican* reported that, in less than a week, the water level had fallen more than two feet and "the weather, though clear, continues unnaturally cold for the season."[28]

Although American men routinely drank liquor—and drank a lot—Levi Richards was indignant at the casual violations of the LDS health code, known as the Word of Wisdom, which forbade the consumption of alcohol, tea, coffee, and tobacco. Cheap gin had been readily available in Great Britain, and the switch to whiskey was easy for some members. Many considered adherence to the Word of Wisdom "advice," rather than absolute prohibition.[29] Some of the Mormons had continued drinking alcohol and using tobacco as they traveled up the river. Richards summoned twenty-eight priesthood holders to a meeting. He "stated that the object he had in calling the council was to ascertain under existing circumstances who were determined to be on the Lord's side." He commented that he was determined "not to commend any at Nauvoo that drank intoxicating drinks & used tobacco." Those in attendance agreed "to the order of the church in those two things." Watt's prayer closed the meeting.

The following day, December 1, Richards held another meeting to discuss this subject. Watt proposed that they select a committee "to reprove certain persons (members) for their disorderly conduct." Richards prudently opposed this idea because some of the company's officers were among the offenders, and it would clearly be useless for them to reprove others for behavior of which they were guilty. "Every officer present made confession (who had not before) or spoke of his views and feelings in

25. Richards, Journals, November 15–20, 1842.
26. "The River Weather, & c.," *Missouri Republican,* November 19, 1842, 2.
27. Untitled article, *Missouri Republican,* December 5, 1842, 2.
28. See the following articles in the *Missouri Republican:* "Monday Morning," November 21, 1842, 2; "Tuesday Morning," November 22, 1842, 3; "The River Is Falling," November 24, 1842, 2; "The River, Weather, &c.," November 28, 1842, 2; and "The River," November 29, 1842, 2.
29. Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972), 38.

regard to the subject before them." President Richards then called for a show of hands "whether they were satisfied with the confessions and explanations of all others present." R. Benson was not satisfied with Watt's explanation. That evening Watt and Benson reconciled their unknown differences. Then Richards appointed George D. Watt, Alexander Wright, Richard Harrison, and Thomas Fairbridge to "wait upon the members & remind them of the order of the church, the [advice] of the council, of their covenants and obligations & c."[30]

Leaving his wife aboard ship, Greenhow traveled overland to St. Louis sometime before the first meeting on November 30 and published a letter in the December 2 issue of the *Missouri Republican* describing the plight of the *Alex Scott,* still aground almost 100 miles to the south with many of its passengers destitute of "food and means."[31] Richards had a copy of this letter by December 5. He called a meeting of his leaders and asked them to manifest, by a show of hands, if they were in a state of destitution. George Cannon was astonished that only four of the fourteen raised their hands. Cannon realized that many of the fourteen had suffered from lack of food: "I had seen some of these sell things that they could ill spare, to purchase the necessaries of life" and "had relieved some myself from famine, and still they said they were not destitute."[32] Richards felt they always had enough food if they asked him. He composed a letter to the editor, which was written by the clerk, Richard Harrison, rebutting Greenhow's letter, and it was signed by a "large majority of the council," including Watt.[33] Nevertheless, whatever way the group defined destitution, they needed food. Alexander Wright found a farmer, willing to sell a hog. Levi Richards gave him the money, and Wright and Watt brought the hog back to the boat, where it was butchered and divided among various families.[34]

On December 7–8, in a quirk of midwestern weather, the ice disappeared, and the river rose eighteen inches in a single day. On December10, the *Alex Scott* safely resumed its trip.[35] In St. Louis, Greenhow came aboard and scolded everyone who had signed Richards's letter. He claimed "it had

30. Richards, Journals, November 30–December 2, 1842. The minutes of the meeting were probably kept by Richard Harrison, who was the clerk, and later copied into his journal by Levi Richards.

31. John Greenhow, letter to the editor, *Missouri Republican,* December 2, 1842, 2. On the same page is a long letter about the adventures of another steamboat on the Mississippi. The letter from Greenhow is also described by George Cannon; see Cannon, in J*ohn Q. Cannon,* 117.

32. George Cannon, in *John Q. Cannon,* 118–19.

33. Richards, Journals, December 5, 1842. Richards's letter cannot be found in the newspaper. The *Missouri Republican*'s issue for December 9 is not extant, and it is probably there. Watt must have signed it because he was a member of the committee.

34. Alexander Wright, Diary, December 2, 1842, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

35. Richards, Journals, December 10, 1842; see also the following *Missouri Republican* articles: "The Weather, River, &c.," December 8, 1842, 2; and December 10, 1842, 2.

driven him from his employ & was false testimony & c. Making him a liar."[36] The *Alex Scott* did not continue up the frozen Mississippi.

After two days of looking for work and shelter for his company, Richards decided to take the group across the Mississippi to Alton, Illinois, at the mouth of the Missouri River, where housing was cheaper. They spent from mid-December 1842 to April 1843 in Alton. It had a slaughter and packing house that processed thirty-eight thousand hogs that winter, and no doubt many of the Mormon men found jobs there. Wages were low, but food was inexpensive.[37] Watt might have worked at the packing plant but also resumed his work as a cobbler. Richards recorded that Watt mended his thin boots at least twice. The Watt family probably rented two rooms for two dollars per month in the large Mansion House, where others of their party also stayed.[38]

In late December, Richards's diary records a Watt family tragedy. On December 22, two-year-old Willard came down with scarlet fever, and Richards gave him lobelia. On Christmas Eve, James, his brother, was also feverish. In a few days, Richards stopped at the rooms of the Watt family and found James had a large swelling on his face and his left hand and right arm were swollen. Seven-year-old James died on January 1, 1843. Alexander Wright and his brother, John, made the coffin, and Wright dug a grave in the public burial ground.[39] Willard survived until May, dying sometime after the Watt family arrived in Nauvoo.[40] George and Molly must have been heartsick. They had lost one of their sons and in a short time would lose another. They would never forget their sorrow and feelings of forlornness. Nevertheless, they still believed that their journey for the gospel's sake was the right thing to do, and they pressed on.

As soon as the Mississippi River became navigable, Levi Richards went upriver to Nauvoo, where he arrived on April 12. Here he convinced the owners of the *Maid of Iowa,* the Mormon steamboat, to go down to Alton and pick up the British emigrants. George and Molly must have come aboard eagerly, anxious to leave behind the scene of such sorrow. On April 25, 1842, the boat arrived in Nauvoo with about sixty passengers. In the crowded city of Nauvoo, Richards helped Watt find a house, although it is not known where.[41]

36. Richards, Journals, December 10–12, 1842; Wright, Diary, December 11, 1842. Richards was asleep on the boat when Greenhow first came aboard. He reported what the other passengers told him. He later saw Greenhow on the streets, and Greenhow ranted at him also. See also John Greenhow, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* (June 1843): 30–31. Greenhow wrote that letter three weeks after he arrived in Nauvoo, which must have been in April. Unlike most of the rest of the company, he did not go to Alton but stayed in St. Louis. He mentions nothing in his letter about the problems he had.
37. Robert Crookston, Reminiscence, p. 6, typescript, LDS Church Archives.
38. Richards, Journal, December 13–20, 1842.
39. Ibid., December 22 1842–January 2, 1843; Wright, Diary, January 2, 1843.
40. George D. Watt to Jannet and Charles Watt, January 16, 1863, shorthand, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006).
41. Crookston, Reminiscence, p. 7; Richards, Journal, May 5, 1843.

Watt was not accustomed to cities with the obvious newness of Nauvoo. In 1839 Joseph Smith had purchased land from Isaac Galland that sloped up from the Mississippi shore to a bluff with a commanding view over a big bend in the river. In the winter of 1838–39, the Mormons had left their homes in northern Missouri, leaving Joseph Smith and five others incarcerated in Liberty Jail. The refugees found a warm welcome in Quincy, Illinois, and in April 1839, Smith and the other prisoners were allowed to escape. They joined their families in Quincy, promptly investigated the property Isaac Galland was offering, and made arrangements for a series of purchases. Smith had hopeful plans for this city on the Mississippi River: as a gathering place, a center of industry, the heart of the church, and a temple city.[42]

What seemed like providential help arrived in September 1840 in the person of John C. Bennett, a physician and quartermaster general who joined the church, became Smith's confidante, and, perhaps most significantly, helped guide a bill establishing the Nauvoo City Charter through the state legislature. It was a promising beginning, and Bennett became the city's first mayor in February 1841.[43] By the spring of 1843, when George and Molly Watt set foot on the dock near the Nauvoo House, the city numbered about nine thousand.[44] Nauvoo was in a growth phase. The British immigrants must have also hoped to participate in the evident prosperity, but housing was expensive, and many of the new arrivals sheltered temporarily in tents. Their very presence testified to their willingness to endure the hardships of gathering and their desire to associate with their fellow Saints.

Shared religious beliefs obviously smoothed some of the difficulties inherent in blending such a diverse population into one people. More than 50 percent came from the northeastern United States and Canada. About 20 percent came from the southern states, and about the same percentage was from the British Isles. The city also had a few people who had been in the area before the Mormons came. The town lacked an industrial base, and converts from manufacturing centers had great difficulty finding employment.[45]

Joseph Smith organized the church in Nauvoo into three and eventually four wards with a bishop over each to take care of the poor. The church as a whole met in a grove just west of the temple construction since

42. See Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), chaps. 1–7, for information on building the city.
43. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2002), 177.
44. The Mississippi changed continually as it flowed past Nauvoo, and usually the city had two possible docking places: one in the northern part where a hotel was located, and one in the southern part by the Nauvoo House, a hotel still under construction.
45. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 174–76.

there was no large meeting hall. There Smith and the other leaders of the church preached to the people. In March 1842, a group of women organized a benevolent society for the women. They elected Emma Hale Smith, Joseph's wife, as the first president and named their organization the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo.[46] Under the direction of William W. Player, another British immigrant, the temple had risen several feet upon the bluff.[47] Workers had started construction on the temple in the fall of 1840. On April 16, 1841, church leaders laid the cornerstones with Smith offering a benediction at each corner.[48]

Founded with such great hopes and by a persecuted people, Nauvoo was a town devoted to the principles of gathering to Zion. Unfortunately, people began to break apart even before the Watts arrived in May 1843. John C. Bennett, sometime after his mayoral inauguration, began seducing women under the guise of teaching them a secret doctrine of spiritual wifery and assured them that Joseph Smith sanctioned that practice as long as it was kept secret. Smith heard rumors of Bennett's corruption and that he had abandoned a wife in Ohio. Finally, on May 11, 1842, Bennett was excommunicated from the church, and he resigned as mayor.[49]

Bennett might have known something about polygamy, but it is unclear how much he heard from Smith. The practice of plural marriage was one of the causes that would eventually contribute to the city's downfall. Possibly as early as 1831, the Mormon leader said he had received a revelation concerning eternal marriage and the plurality of wives or, as it was more commonly called, polygamy. In 1841 after the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles returned from Britain, Joseph Smith taught a select few and eventually all of them about the principle, and even though many of them were reluctant, these men eventually accepted the doctrine. Smith taught many others about plural marriage also, although he never preached it openly. It became a secret doctrine, practiced by only a few.[50] However, when Joseph and Hyrum Smith introduced it to the Nauvoo Stake presidency and the high council in August 1843, these men were divided over the issue. William Law and Sidney Rigdon, counselors in the First Presidency, rejected both it and Smith. Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, despite two brief episodes of being reconciled to the practice, ultimately denounced it.[51]

46. Ibid., 223–25; Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 27–35.
47. Flanders, *Nauvoo,* 128.
48. Ibid., 183–85.
49. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 350–52; Flanders, *Nauvoo,* 262–65; for information on Bennett, see Andrew F. Smith, *The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
50. See Gary James Bergera, "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841–44," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38 (Fall 2003), 1–73.
51. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 343–48; also see Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives*

Problems from Missouri also followed Smith. In April 1839, he had, with the connivance of his jailers, fled from their custody and reached the safety of Illinois. Between 1840 and 1843, Smith avoided extradition to Missouri four times, sometimes hiding from the marshals for days.[52] Another problem involved politics in Hancock County. Before the arrival of the Mormons, the Whigs and Democrats had divided the county almost equally. The Mormons generally voted Democratic, but the Democrats had supported their expulsion from Missouri. The Saints were open to the Whigs. Both Whigs and Democrats assisted them in gaining the Nauvoo Charter. But voting as a bloc, the Mormons satisfied neither party, causing the rise of an anti-Mormon group of both Whigs and Democrats who wanted to drive them out of the state.[53]

In the midst of these problems, the Watt family arrived in their adopted city. On April 28 and 29, five and six days after his arrival, Watt delivered two lectures on phonography and advertised to teach classes in the subject. The *Nauvoo Neighbor* wrote that "Mr. Watt laid the principles of phonography before his audience in a clear and lucid manner." He said it was like comparing railway locomotives with stagecoaches: the "one is truth and order, the others are error and disorder."[54] Watt worked as a private tutor and did not teach at the Nauvoo University or common school.[55] It cannot be determined how long Watt taught shorthand students. Perhaps he made so little as a teacher that he had to supplement his income with his old trade of shoemaking.

Although Watt does not talk about the process of settling into the life of the family's new home, there are indications that he and Molly quickly did so. In mid-July, he purchased a half-acre lot in the southwest quarter of section 32, almost two miles from town, for seventy-five dollars. He built a cabin on the land but never lived there because it was too far from Nauvoo. Perhaps he bought it to farm—not a skill he possessed—or as an investment.[56] In November, Watt received a high priest's license from his quorum.[57]

Molly, who had crossed the ocean pregnant—a condition that did nothing to make the voyage more pleasant—gave birth on June 10, 1843, to George D. Watt Jr., probably a couple of weeks after the death of their

of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 594.

52. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 185–87.
53. Ibid., 289–300.
54. "Phonography," *Nauvoo Neighbor,* May 3, 1843, [2].
55. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 192–97.
56. "George D. Watt," index cards, Nauvoo Restoration Collection, ca. 1964, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
57. Nauvoo High Priest and Salt Lake High Priest records, November 19, 1843, holograph. LDS Church Archives. This volume recorded the names of the high priests accepted into the quorum in Nauvoo and then was taken to Salt Lake City and used there for the same purpose.

second son, Willard. George Jr. was the only child of this marriage to survive to adulthood.

Freemasonry had come to Nauvoo in 1842 when Grand Master Abraham Jonas, a friend of Joseph Smith's from the Columbus, Illinois, chapter, installed the Nauvoo Lodge on March 15. Smith probably hoped that involvement in Freemasonry would tap into friendship networks for the Mormons; with his enthusiastic sponsorship, the Nauvoo Lodge numbered more than 250 members by the end of 1842. The total membership of lodges in communities around Nauvoo did not total a quarter of this number. On January 18, 1844, Watt applied to be a member and was initiated a month later on February 19. The following day the lodge elected him to the degree of fellow craft Mason, and on March 28, he was promoted to a master Mason. Masons accepted more than a thousand priesthood holders in Nauvoo into their ranks, so it was not unusual for Watt to be admitted. However, he was not, the sources indicate, active in the lodge.[58] Fearing that this lodge would dominate Freemasonry in the state, other lodges became suspicious of the Mormons and supported the growing anti-Mormon movement.

It is not known whether Watt worked on the temple. He was unskilled in masonry, but the temple also used unskilled laborers. Molly did not join the Female Relief Society. Watt became a member of Captain Isaac Allred's foot company in the Nauvoo Legion. He actively drilled and paraded at musters.[59] The legion played a colorful role in city celebrations—for instance, at the laying of the cornerstone of the Nauvoo Temple in 1841.[60]

Missouri problems and the lurid exposés of the excommunicated Bennett kept Nauvoo in turmoil after May 1842, increasing tensions with the surrounding Illinois residents. The Law brothers, William (who had been a counselor in the First Presidency) and Wilson (a Nauvoo Legion general), became disillusioned over polygamy and were excommunicated in April 1844, vowing to expose what they felt were corrupt practices. With others they organized the Reformed Mormon Church in April 1844 with William Law as their leader.[61]

With pressures from outside and inside Nauvoo, Smith contemplated extension of Mormonism to other areas, perhaps even the Rocky Mountains or Texas. In February 1844, he instructed the apostles to send an exploration

58. Freemasonry Nauvoo Lodge, minute book, January 18; February 19, 20; March 28, 1844, holograph, LDS Church Archives; "George D. Watt," index cards, Nauvoo Restoration. See also Ronald O. Barney, *One Side by Himself: The Life and Times of Lewis Barney, 1808–1894* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2001), 70; and Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 313–21, for information on Lewis Barney's association with Freemasonry.

59. Nauvoo Legion, Order Book, 1843–44, Fifth Regiment, Second Cohort, June 1, 1844, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

60. Flanders, *Nauvoo,* 110–12.

61. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 357–59.

group of twenty-five men to the Far West—California and Oregon—seeking a new location for the Saints. Later, eleven men volunteered for this expedition. The apostles selected nine more men altogether, including George D. Watt. Three days later, Smith met with them, inquiring whether they would volunteer for the exploring expedition. Watt, with characteristic enthusiasm, was the first to say, "I shall go." Smith described their duties: "I told them I wanted an exploration of all that mountain country." They should be mounted with both a horse and a mule apiece and be well armed with two rifles, two pistols, a Bowie knife, and a "good sabre." For a while, the group held weekly meetings with Smith never knowing when they were going to leave.[62] A poor man could not have assembled the materials, mounts, and weapons Joseph Smith listed. Watt, who had needed financial assistance to travel from New Orleans to Nauvoo, surely did not have enough money to provision himself. Perhaps Smith envisioned a subsidy for those who needed it. As matters turned out, however, pressing events that spring in the city took precedence over this expedition.

The year 1844 was a national presidential-election year, and Watt got an immediate immersion in the processes of American democracy. In October 1839, Smith and other Mormon representatives had presented affidavits of their property losses in Missouri and petitions for redress to U.S. President Martin Van Buren. Although expressing sympathy, Van Buren pointed out—correctly—that this was a local issue and, given the rigorous political emphasis on states' rights, he was unable to assist the Mormons. Smith felt that the Mormons' constitutional right to freedom of religion had been infringed. In November 1843, he wrote to potential presidential candidates asking their opinion about issues of interest to the Mormons. Only two responded, and neither one of them promised to intervene in a Missouri-type issue. So the Mormon leader decided to run as a candidate with a broad platform, one plank of which was intervention when the local governments failed to protect citizens.[63] Smith needed men to spread the word and campaign for him in the various states. At the April 1844 conference, calls were issued to 338 men. The campaigners had a double purpose: to preach the gospel and gather votes for their candidate, Lieutenant General Joseph Smith.[64] Watt joined with the men going on electioneering missions and was assigned to the South.

In mid-April, Watt, perhaps because of his shorthand skills, attended a meeting with Smith, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Nauvoo High Council, where William and Wilson Law and Robert Foster, another of

62. "Journal History," February 21, 24, 1844; see also Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d rev. ed., 7 vols. (repr., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1973), 6: 244, 255–61.
63. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 333–38.
64. "Journal History," April 15, 1844.

the dissidents, were excommunicated.[65] Watt had been in Nauvoo for only a year and had no knowledge of polygamy, but because of the Laws' vigorous opposition to plural marriage, Joseph Smith and the apostles discussed the topic at that meeting. It must have been an eye-opening experience for Watt, but he left no record of his reaction.

Although the exact date of Watt's departure is not known, he probably left Nauvoo early in May on his proselytizing/electioneering mission.[66] To help fund his trip, he sold Mary Gardner a third of his lot for twenty-five dollars.[67] It is possible that Watt, traveling with others, may have found friends and members with whom to lodge all the way to Virginia. He went to Virginia as the second counselor to Benjamin Winchester in his mission area. He may have traveled with Peter Muir Fife, who was his companion in June 1844 in Marion County, Virginia (later West Virginia).[68]

Shortly after Watt left, the Law brothers founded a newspaper called the *Nauvoo Expositor,* established particularly to expose the practice of polygamy. On June 7, 1844, the first issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor* told its readers that it was "earnestly seeking to explode the vicious principles of Joseph Smith and those who practice the same abominations and whoredoms."[69] The city council declared the press a public nuisance, and Smith, as mayor of Nauvoo and by order of the council, had it destroyed.[70] Shocked by this attack on freedom of the press, Joseph Smith's enemies had the excuse they needed. He was arrested and, on June 27, was killed along with his brother, Hyrum, at Carthage Jail.

Meanwhile, Watt and the other missionaries found the people in Virginia unreceptive to their message and teachings. Because they traveled without

65. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 429.

66. The Nauvoo Legion records show Watt was fined for absenteeism for the first three meetings in May: May 4, May 11, and May 18. Possibly he did not attend those drills because he realized that he would soon be leaving Nauvoo. Or he may have left in early May without informing his officer. See Nauvoo Legion, Order Book, May 4, 11, 18, 1844.

67. "George D. Watt," index cards, Nauvoo Restoration. When Norton Jacob, who would be part of the vanguard company to Utah in 1847, left on his mission with Charles C. Rich, an officer in the Nauvoo Legion, they stayed with friends and members most of the way. When they arrived, they printed five thousand copies of Joseph Smith's "Views of the Powers and Policy of Government." See Ronald O. Barney, *The Mormon Vanguard Brigade of 1847: Norton Jacob's Record* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 32–36; see also Leonard J. Arrington, *Charles C. Rich: Mormon General and Western Frontiersman* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), chap. 8.

68. D. L. Shin to Brigham Young, July 2, 1870, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives. Shin remembered Watt preaching in Marion County. "Journal History," April 15, 1844, lists Watt as Benjamin Winchester's second counselor in Virginia; Peter Muir Fife, Reminiscence, typescript, in author's possession.

69. See "Preamble," *Nauvoo Expositor,* June 7, 1844, [1]; and William Law, "Affidavit," [2], in the same issue.

70. For a summary of the events and controversy surrounding the *Nauvoo Expositor,* see Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 362–63.

purse or scrip, they often went without food. Few received them or their message, and they could not find work. When Watt heard of Smith's death is unclear, but he had learned the dreadful news at least by early August. His activities are not clear for the next few months. The next record that mentions him is his purchase of some beef in Nauvoo from Brigham Young on November 13.[71] Almost certainly he was also worried about finances, hence his return to Nauvoo.

On December 1, Watt was in Quincy, Illinois, about ninety miles south of Nauvoo, looking for employment, but his wife was not with him. He spoke on "the order of the Church of God." He must have had a good job lead because during the next week, he asked the Quincy branch members to accept him into full fellowship. They unanimously agreed,[72] but the promising lead never materialized. By the end of the month, he was back in Nauvoo.

Watt had left Nauvoo in 1844 with Joseph Smith as the head of the church. He returned with the city in religious and political disarray. He probably missed the August conference when Sidney Rigdon, attempting to establish himself as the church's "guardian," was rejected.[73] During the fall, however, he undoubtedly heard of the claims of James J. Strang, a recent, but charismatic, convert, who preached gathering to Wisconsin. Watt totally rejected Strang. His sympathies were strongly with the apostles who had converted him.

Watt was in desperate economic straits as 1845 began. He had spent all of his available funds on his mission and again faced the old specter of poverty that had haunted him in England. He wrote to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on December 31, 1844, confessing he would not have written were it not that "my present situation has put me to my wits end, so that I know not which course to steer. . . . I have no work, in consequence of which I have nothing to eat, and no where to dwell, my wife lives about two miles out of town and I live no where." He asked for their advice, "for I always have and still do consider myself, and all I possess at your disposal, and trust to the dictates of that wisdom of which your Quroum is the embodyment."[74]

A few days later on January 2, 1845, Watt attended a party at Willard Richards's home. Sixteen converts from Preston were at this gathering,[75] and Richards suggested that Watt use his shorthand skill to record important speeches of the day and earn his living by teaching classes. Richards's

71. Brigham Young, Account Book, 1836–46, November 13, 1844, holograph, Young Papers.
72. Quincy Branch records, minutes, December 1, 7, 1844, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
73. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 438.
74. George D. Watt to the Twelve Brethren, December 31, 1844, incoming correspondence, holograph, Young Papers. Molly Watt must have been living in a cabin on his property.
75. Willard Richards, Journal, January 2, 1845, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.

suggestion was exactly what Watt needed. Shortly thereafter he began teaching phonography to a few pupils.

At the April 1845 General Conference, Watt began a significant career of recording speeches by church authorities. The church could now record and publish speeches of its leaders, especially of the president, thus disseminating this word to the world. Brigham Young provided Watt with a desk in the historian's office, where he joined Willard Richards and Thomas Bullock, a fellow Englishman. On April 10, George A. Smith, an apostle he had known in Britain, noted in his history that Watt "read a proof of President Young's sermon on the first day of the conference. It was the first reporting he had ever done and showed the great benefit of the art of phonography."[76] The *Times and Seasons* mentioned that his services "are highly appreciated."[77] Watt's record of Young's address of April 1, 1845, appeared in the local LDS periodical, the *Times and Seasons,* on July 1, 1845. The *Times and Seasons* later published four more sermons recorded by Watt: two by Heber C. Kimball, one by Orson Hyde, and the last by John Taylor. Watt also began using his shorthand in meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. On April 10, 1845, he took notes at the conference's morning, afternoon, and evening meetings.[78]

Also in April, he began teaching a second round of phonography classes, with each meeting starting at 7:00 a.m. and lasting until noon. The length of the class was because shorthand was essentially a memorization and practice skill, and longer sessions were more effective at training the memory than short ones. It is not known how many took the class, but some of the leading men of Nauvoo attended at least a few classes, including Brigham Young, George A. Smith, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Lucius Scovil, John D. Lee, and Amasa Lyman.[79]

Early in May 1845, Watt again advertised for students, this time offering thirteen lessons for a dollar per student and volunteering to teach in any part of the city where a class could be arranged. Three such locales were the Seventies Hall, the second floor of Joseph Smith's red brick store, and Orson Pratt's home.[80] The textbook cost $1.50. He had nineteen pupils, including Miles Romney, George Miller, Andrew Cahoon, Thomas Bullock, and Charles Wesley Wandle, who also worked in the office with Watt. In July

76. George A. Smith, History, April 10, 1845, holograph, George A. Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives. See also "George A. Smith Papers," in *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), DVD 32 and 33.
77. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 6 (April 15, 1845): 871.
78. Historian's Office, Journal, vol. 4, April 10, 1845, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives.
79. Ibid., April 25, 1845.
80. "Phonography," *Nauvoo Neighbor,* May 7, 1845, [3]; "George D. Watt," index cards, Nauvoo Restoration.

Watt began another class of at least eleven. Fourteen more signed up for the class that started in July and finished on October 14. The records show that only two women signed up for the class: Nancy Davis Hunt and Constantia Elizabeth Clementine Hutchinson.[81]

The class influenced Young's ideas and resulted in the development of the Deseret Alphabet, a phonetic alphabet originated by the Mormons. Sir Isaac Pitman, who had devised the shorthand system that bears his name, also promoted a longhand system called phonotype, which had an alphabetical symbol for every sound in English. Watt suggested to Young that English orthography needed to be revised so that each sound had its own alphabetical symbol.

In May 1845, Watt interrupted his classes and began using his skills in the services of the church by recording the proceedings at the trial of the five accused murderers of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.[82] Because anti-Mormons feared that the church would use the record for its own purposes, they searched those leaving the courthouse daily, including Watt. He thwarted their plan by secretly passing his notes out of a window to friends hourly and thus had no paper on his person when he left the courthouse each day.[83] The trial finished on May 30 with a verdict acquitting all five defendants. When Watt transcribed his notes several months later, they totaled more than a hundred pages, a remarkable accomplishment for a junior reporter.[84] Young was so pleased that he arranged for Watt to be given a lot, had a house built for him, and employed him as the church reporter.[85] Watt was very seldom, while he was in Nauvoo, absent from official proceedings after that.

Following the trial, Watt threw himself into his classes, teaching one every two or three days and organizing, in July, a phonographic society to promote shorthand.[86] He also energetically recorded speeches by church leaders. On

81. Nauvoo Temple, Daybook, Building Committee entries, July 5, 1845, holograph, LDS Church Archives. This is an accounting daybook and the entries are arranged as they happen each day.

82. According to Smith et al., *History of the Church,* 7: 421–23, Watt was at the trial in Carthage. However, the first thirty-three pages of the minutes are in Daniel Mackintosh's handwriting. It is possible that Watt did not get there the first day and Mackintosh had that assignment.

83. Ibid.

84. Watt, who had been staying in Carthage, returned to Nauvoo the next day. He must have made some rough drafts of his notes, but he did not transcribe them completely for several months. The manuscript transcription is cataloged as George Darling Watt, ["Report of the Trial of the Murderers of Joseph Smith,"] 1845, LDS Church Archives. The shorthand notes are not extant. See bibliographic note in Dallin Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 228.

85. Smith et al., *History of the Church,* 7: 425. There is, however, no evidence that the church built a house on this lot.

86. "Constitution of the Phonographic Society of the City of Nauvoo," *Nauvoo Neighbor,* July 16, 1845, 3: 465.

August 17, he recorded a speech by William Smith, Joseph Smith's youngest brother. Smith told his congregation that this day he wanted to teach some basic principles of love your neighbor—"men and some women"—and do good to them, especially the widows.[87] Watt reported sessions of the October conference, but no records have survived. In November Watt recorded minutes for the fortnightly city-council meeting.[88]

Because Young had hired him, Watt's salary and expenditures were credited on the Temple Committee's financial daybooks and ledgers from July 1845 to February 1846. From those financial accounts can be pieced together some of the purchases he made for his family. In that period, Watt drew from the store 169 pounds of beef, 199½ pounds of flour, 22½ bushels of wheat, and 21 bushels of corn. In December 1845 and January 1846, he purchased 51¼ pounds of pork. In August and September, he supplemented the family's diet with melons and even got ten cents worth of peaches. In November he purchased two bushels of turnips and one of beets and carrots. In November he drew out of the store twelve pounds of salt, perhaps to preserve some of the beef. He purchased sugar periodically. He also bought a gallon of molasses twice in July and another in early September. He acquired a cow and a calf for nine dollars in July, which must have materially improved the family's diet. The cow and calf survived on grass until early December, when he purchased 2,850 pounds of hay for $9.26.

The committee store also supplied his professional needs: four pencils in November, quills in January (suggesting that he was now using ink), and a quire of paper (four sheets folded once) five times. He also bought an unspecified number of books for $.76—probably on shorthand, although their titles are not given. He also drew out $.99 in cash, perhaps for stamps to send letters back to England. He purchased a box of ague pills as a remedy for the malaria that afflicted so many in Nauvoo. Since it is not known if these pills contained quinine, it is unclear if they helped. On September 16, he bought a quart of whiskey for $.10 and, on February 27, two quarts of wine for $.75.

He also partly furnished his house from the storehouse: six chairs, one bed coverlet, and some candles. In mid-August, he purchased a stove for $16.00, but it must not have worked correctly or Molly did not like it because he returned it on January 3, 1846.[89] The Temple Committee clerk also credited his account for $97.70 in the "property and labor-tithing" column for

87. William Smith, "The Gospel According to St. William," August 17, 1845, Report of Speeches, ca. 1845–85, holograph, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives.
88. Historian's Office, Journal, vol. 3, January 6, 8, 1846.
89. George D. Watt account 352, 492, Nauvoo Temple, ledger, Building Committee entries, July 1845–February 1846, holograph, LDS Church Archives. Financial accounts started with a daybook or journal, where transactions were recorded daily as they took place. These accounts were then posted to a ledger under the individual's name or account number.

"preaching in the mission field." The clerk added the note that Watt had preached for eight months and been sick for four.[90] Since he was not gone more than six months maximum (May to November) on his electioneering trip, this notation is somewhat mysterious unless Watt had done something else that is unknown.

After the death of Joseph Smith, the Mormons' enemies allowed them a reprieve for more than a year, thinking that the leaderless community would fray apart and perhaps also be shocked by the extreme step of murder. However, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stepped into the void for those who remained in Nauvoo. By the end of April 1845, the workmen at the temple had completed framing the second floor, and work continued to progress well through August, when these same laborers added the tinned dome to the top of the tower.[91]

Watt was in Nauvoo when the Illinois Legislature repealed the Nauvoo City Charter in January 1845. Without a charter, Nauvoo had no police force, so church officials divided the city into quorums of twelve deacons with a bishop at their head. Many Mormons lived outside of Nauvoo. If hostilities developed, their families would be the first to suffer. Beginning in January 1845, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles advised these families to move into Nauvoo, where they would be safer. In February 1845, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sent Watt on a short mission to Adams County, just south of Hancock County, advising the Mormons there to move.[92] Some Latter-day Saints moved into the city, but most, realizing their farms would be untended, decided to stay where they were as long as possible.

In September 1845, a vigilante group burned the village named for Kirtland member Isaac Morley, several miles south of Nauvoo. In four days, more than forty buildings went up in flames. It was a strong signal that the Mormons would not be allowed to stay. People in Nauvoo helped the refugees move in. Before the month's end, Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles negotiated a truce: the Mormons would leave in the spring as soon as the grass was long enough to sustain their animals in exchange for a cessation of hostilities. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had studied the reports of the expeditions of John C. Fremont and Lansford W. Hastings's *Emigrant Guide.*

Watt took shorthand reports of the meeting held on October 5–6, 1845, on the first floor of the temple, when Brigham Young dedicated the unfinished temple in general and that assembly room in particular. Parley P. Pratt told the congregation that they should leave Nauvoo as a place "that will be

90. Trustee-in-Trust, donation records, 1846–52, rec. no. 3, February 11, 1846, p. 22, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
91. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 250–52.
92. Warren Foote, Autobiography, n.d., p. 66, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

a monument of our industry and virtue." George A. Smith commented that the Mormons were "seeking a place where we can enjoy the fruits of our labors and God himself be the sole proprietor of the elements." Watt also listened to the passionate talk of Lucy Mack Smith, the mother of church founder Joseph Smith, who endorsed the decision to abandon Nauvoo and move west.[93] It was a nostalgic farewell since she had earlier told Brigham Young that she wished to be buried next to her husband, Joseph Smith Sr.

Nauvoo now became a community of packing. Wagons and draft animals from the entire region became high-priced items, just as property values plummeted to nothing. By the end of 1845, the church leaders had decided that the Great Salt Lake Valley was their destination, even though no public announcement had been made.[94]

Watt had heard about plural marriage while he was in Nauvoo. He had heard and probably concluded much from the trial of the Law brothers when he had taken shorthand notes. He had probably heard it also in meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, where again he had acted as reporter. The only church authority who could have possibly taught him about polygamy was Willard Richards, and it had to have been early in December 1845, just as the temple was sufficiently finished that members could receive their endowments. It is not known how he felt about the practice of polygamy. Many thought that the very idea of taking more than one wife was abhorrent to their Victorian principles. Watt, though, had associated with the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles since his baptism in Preston, and he knew them as men of God.[95]

For unknown reasons, he requested that he be allowed to return to Britain on a mission. He wrote to Brigham Young, asking to take a mission to Scotland. His father's family lived in Gatehouse, Kirkcudbrightshire, and

93. *Times and Seasons* 6 (November 1, 1845): 1010–12. Watt was at the meetings, but none of his reports were published.

94. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* chap. 17.

95. There are two sources for Watt's knowledge about plural marriage in Nauvoo. They are both after the fact. In 1858 Robert Williams wrote about his experience with Watt when they crossed the plains together in 1851. There is a slight hint in his autobiography that Watt had been taught about plural marriage before he left Nauvoo. Williams, who was angry at Watt when he wrote, said that he might have had his blessings in Nauvoo if he had stayed, but he was "cast out. He would not take a spaid on which to help build the House of our god. He was taken with the chills and beged to travel to England." Watt was endowed and sealed in the Nauvoo Temple, however, and so his situation did not mean he did not receive his temple blessings. Perhaps Williams meant that Watt could have received the blessings of plural marriage. Instead, Watt returned to Britain. See Robert Williams, Autobiography, 1859, pp. 119–25, holograph, LDS Church Archives. The second source is a letter Watt wrote to Mary Asenath Richards in about 1865, where he describes witnessing the plural marriage of Willard and Nanny Longstroth Richards in the Nauvoo Temple. George D. Watt to Mary Asenath Richards, n.d., ca. 1865, shorthand, typescript, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005).

he felt that he could convert them. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also desired that he be more proficient with shorthand and hoped he could take lessons from Sir Isaac Pitman and other experts in Britain. In mid-December, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approved his request, and on Christmas Day 1845, Young notified Watt of their decision.[96]

On December 10, 1845, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles began to administer temple endowments to the Mormons in Nauvoo. The system of instructions and covenants conferred sacred knowledge that would guide the obedient to the highest degree of heaven—the celestial kingdom—and commit the faithful even more firmly to the church, rallying them as individuals and as a people to meet this newest challenge they were enduring. A continuation of the endowment was a sealing of husband and wife that united couples, not only for this life but eternity. On December 22, 1845, with confirmation of his mission pending, George D. and Molly Watt received their endowments.[97] A month later in the temple, they watched Willard Richards and Nanny Longstroth be sealed as husband and wife in a plural marriage on January 25, 1846; then Watt and Molly were "adopted" by Willard and Jennetta Richards and sealed as husband and wife.[98] At this time, part of the higher law was for Mormons to be adopted by priesthood hierarchy and thus grafted into a patriarchal order that linked them in an unbroken line back to Adam.[99] When Richards approached him about becoming his adopted son, Watt quickly consented.[100] The temple closed in February.[101]

While their neighbors were purchasing oxen and building wagons, George and Molly Watt were readying themselves to return to Britain. On February 4, about two weeks before Young departed from Nauvoo, Watt received his official mission notice, in which the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recommended him to the people of Britain and also to Wilford Woodruff, the mission president, to preach in Britain, especially the western counties of Scotland.[102] Watt was then helping Richards, other staff, and relatives to pack all of his records and office materials, as well as personal belongings, for the westward migration.[103]

96. Brigham Young to George D. Watt, December 25, 1845, holograph, outgoing correspondence, Young Papers.
97. Nauvoo Temple, Endowments for the Living, 1845–46, December 22, 1845, microfilm of holograph, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Family History Library).
98. Nauvoo Temple, Sealings and Adoptions for the Living, 1846–57, January 25, 1846, microfilm of holograph, Family History Library; George D. Watt to Mary Asenath Richards, n.d., ca. 1865.
99. Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830–1900," *BYU Studies* 14 (Spring 1974): 294–95.
100. Historian's Office, Journal, vol. 7, January 10, 1846.
101. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 573.
102. Brigham Young to Wilford Woodruff, February 4, 1846, holograph, Watt Papers.
103. Willard Richards, Diary, February 4–7, 1846, holograph, Richards Papers; Historian's

In January 1846, personal threats to Brigham Young intensified. An advanced group led by Charles Shumway left Nauvoo with fifteen wagons on February 4, and it became a city in transition. Parley P. Pratt and his family crossed the river on February 14, and Brigham Young and his families followed the next day. Most residents left between March and April 1846. Some of the very poor and sick did not leave until August, when the vigilantes forced them out.[104]

Missionaries usually did not take their families with them, but Watt's experience on his first Scottish mission and his trip to Virginia had made him reluctant to be without Molly and their son. Because of the exodus from Nauvoo, church leaders allowed them to go to the mission field as a family unit.

Watt first crossed the Mississippi with the Saints who left Nauvoo in February and camped on Sugar Creek. In a letter to the *Millennial Star,* he mentioned that when he arrived, "several thousand Saints had already crossed the mighty Mississippi, and were encamped in the wilderness, then made dreary and cold by a recent snow storm." The condition of the Saints when he left, "and for some time previous, were at once animating and heart rending, calculated to force a sigh accompanied with tears from the hearts of those who know how to sympathise with suffering humanity." Even though some seemed to have lost hope previously, "a brightness of hope beamed from every countenance." He mentioned that all were recovering their health and "seemed nerved with fresh life and vigor." He painted an optimistic picture of their future: "Could you have seen that camp smiling in the rays of the moon's silver beams, could you have emerged at once into the place and pervaded the silent valley at an hour when animated nature slept, and while contemplating the scene, would not your cogitations at once embrace the gloomy past, the interesting present, and the glorious future."

Since he was writing this in Liverpool, he commented that thousands were now on their way: "Thus they are leaving the city of their exile, built up by them in the midst of poverty and want, which they have beautified and adorned with many noble buildings, which would do honor to any of the large and opulent cities of that country." He then finished by echoing the sentiments of Parley P. Pratt and George A. Smith: this people "have crowned the whole with a magnificent temple which by this time is nearly finished if not quite, which will stand as a monument of Mormon industry, talent, perseverance, and grandeur to the latest generation."[105]

On March 10, the Watt family set out for New York City, probably traveling by boat through the Ohio River basin. Watt had been in America about three and a half years but had only spent 70 percent of his time in Nauvoo.

Office, Journal, vol. 3, February 5, 1846.

104. Leonard, *Nauvoo,* 618.

105. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 7 (June 15, 1846): 199.

Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

The Nauvoo Temple on a hill

He had arrived in Nauvoo in May 1843 and left a year later in May 1844 as a missionary to Virginia. He had returned to a Nauvoo without Joseph Smith but led by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He had known these men earlier in England and trusted them. In the next year, he had made a niche for himself as a conference reporter, but he was now ready to return to his native land, once more to proselytize among his relatives and fellow Britons.

3

MISSION TO BRITAIN

> After I left you, and launched forth with my frail bark upon the boisterous sea of varigated sercumstances that surround the servants of God, when apart from the body of the saints, I began to learn and know many things by my own experience, that I had not in the least anticipated in my former life.
>
> George D. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848

Early in May 1846, the Watt family left New York City, returning to Liverpool less than four years after they had left. They stayed in Liverpool for about two months, where Watt learned about the joint stock company that would benefit Mormon emigrants. Then Reuben Hedlock, president of the British Mission, assigned him to go north to Scotland. Great Britain had been racked by the devastating potato blight that had struck Ireland in 1845, reducing the harvest to a fraction of its expected plentitude so that famine and starvation swept across Ireland. The British cabinet under Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel supported a repeal of the tariff on wheat, enabling the British to import inexpensive grain from Europe to feed the Irish, but the repeal came too late. The potato blight, a fungus, appeared in 1845 and continued for three years until 1848, when it disappeared as suddenly as it had come. Somewhere between 500,000 and 1,500,000 Irish lost their lives in the Great Hunger.[1]

1. Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815–1870,* 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1962), 352–56; also see "Irish Potato Famine (1845–49)" in Wikipedia, available online at http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Potato_Famine; and "The History Place, Irish Potato Famine," available online at http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/famine

The other event that affected Europe—although less while Watt was in the British Isles—was the revolutions of 1848. Beginning in France when the people expelled their monarch, the revolutions spread to almost every country in Europe except Russia and Britain. However, within two to four years, the countries affected reverted to conservative and reactionary governments. Most millennialist religions viewed the revolutions as one of the cataclysmic events preceding Christ's second coming.[2]

None of Watt's writings contain comments on these revolutions, for he was giving his attention to his mission experiences. He expressed both exhilaration and disappointment during this period, working diligently to lead efficiently and inspire as he had been inspired but with only inconsistent success. He had a position of prominence but was replaced by younger men. In a poignant letter to Willard Richards at his mission's midpoint, he summarized what he had learned from his experiences. Probably his most significant achievement—which he may have considered a mere sideline—was taking classes in Pitman shorthand and becoming proficient by reporting many meetings. This accomplishment, more than any of his missionary activities, had a lasting impact on the church.

The British Mission had changed very little since Watt had left. Before he had departed in 1842, the apostles had grouped the branches into a hierarchy of conferences. Between the Watt family's departure in September 1842 and June 1846, fifteen ships had left Liverpool for New Orleans. Altogether more than two thousand Mormons had left the British Isles for America.[3]

When George and Molly Watt arrived, Reuben Hedlock, an American, was the mission president. Hedlock was an enthusiastic preacher who eagerly used the printed word to spread the gospel, but he was an unorganized, worrisome spendthrift. He had many pressures as mission president, most of which he could not handle competently. Also he received very little advice from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.[4] Hedlock donated mission funds to poor British converts who wanted to emigrate. Consequently, he diminished funds and created more expenses. He feared that he would have to stop publishing the *Millennial Star.* In February 1844, he wrote to Brigham Young that, if matters did not improve drastically, "I shall not have a sovereign left to live on through the summer." All of the demands had placed him in debt, and he had to borrow from the temple fund to keep the mission running; he felt certain, however, that his financial books were in order. Four conference presidencies remained vacant, and he begged for missionaries,

2. As quoted in Craig Livingston, "Eyes on the Whole European World: Mormon Observers of the 1848 Revolutions," *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 78–112. These quotes come from pages 86–88.

3. "British Mission Manuscript History," 1842–46, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

4. Reuben Hedlock to Brigham Young, Willard Richards, and Theodore Turley, February 25, 1844, in "British Mission Manuscript History."

but church leadership had its own problems in Nauvoo and no one to send.[5] Finally, in January 1845, Wilford Woodruff arrived in Liverpool to take charge of the mission. He worked hard at reviving this once-strong field of labor and brought the mission back to financial solvency.

Sometime in this period from 1843 to 1846, Thomas Ward, the former mission president, came up with the idea of something called the British and American Commercial Joint Stock Company. Ward proposed establishing a shipping company that would sell stock to individuals throughout Britain, including non-Mormons. As a commercial company, it would ship merchandise from Great Britain to the United States and agricultural products from the United States to Britain. Also it proposed to transport European Mormons to the United States either free or for a nominal fee. The idea was attractive because it promised that the church would not need to draw upon its resources.

The company's success depended on money invested by Britain's Mormons—but most of them came from the poorer classes and had little or nothing to invest. Nevertheless, Ward and Hedlock appointed a committee to write the articles of incorporation for the company, completed in April 1845. Thomas Ward was designated as president, and Thomas Wilson, who had chaired the committee, became the secretary.[6] Because of new laws, the company had to rewrite the incorporation articles, which delayed progress for a year. Wilford Woodruff attended the company meeting in December, but although he had endorsed the concept in April, he refrained from speaking about it at that conference.[7] On January 20, 1846, Woodruff again showed confidence in Hedlock by reappointing him as president of the mission. He advised the Saints to gather, but he made no mention of the joint-stock company.[8] He sailed for the United States on January 22, 1846.

Watt arrived in England on June 6, 1846, just when the mission presidency began preaching about the joint-stock company again. Hedlock enlisted him to urge members to invest in the company. Watt said, "It is the subject of my heart, I have put it on; it is part and parcel of my religion: it is hallowed by the prayers of the first presidency of this church, and all those

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., April 8, 1845. Although the committee members are not identified, they were probably the men listed as the first shareholders: Reuben Hedlock, Thomas Ward, Thomas Dunlop Brown, Peter McCue, Matthew Caruthers, Hiram Clark, James Flint, Dan Jones, Henry McEwan, Henry Cramp, John Druce, Isaac Brockbank, Robert Wilson, and John James.
7. Ibid., minutes of meeting, December 14, 1845.
8. Richard L. Jensen, "The British Gathering to Zion," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987,* edited by V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter (Solihull, UK: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 165–98; "British Mission Manuscript History," January 20, 22, 1846; Wilford Woodruff, "To the Saints in the British Isles, Greetings, January 20, 1846" *Millennial Star* 7 (February 1, 1846): 42.

England and Southern Scotland

of tried and sterling faith." He concluded his letter with the following comments: "What, then, can impede the progress of such a system; the foundation of which is laid in wisdom, hallowed by the prayers of apostles and prophets, protected by the British lion, supported and fed by Saints, and regulated by the judicious management of men of profound wisdom, learning, and virtue, clothed with the authority of the great Jehovah?" He felt that the joint-stock company was such a great idea that it would "call forth the confidence, support, and energies of all Saints."[9]

Watt arrived with a letter appointing him to work in western Scotland. Hedlock must have presumed that meant for him to preside over all of Scotland. So sometime in July, Hedlock appointed Watt to oversee all the conferences in Scotland with headquarters in Glasgow, a seacoast city. Watt's position was that of a submission president. The Scottish conferences' (districts') presidents reported to Watt, who in turn reported to the British Mission president, while in the rest of Great Britain, the conference presidents reported directly to Hedlock. Although Watt had family ties in Scotland, he had not spent a concentrated period of time in this major regional industrial center, which lay about 250 miles north of Liverpool and 40 miles west of Edinburgh. With more than three hundred thousand people, as calculated by the census of 1840, it displayed dramatic differences between rich and poor.

Watt announced his appointment by a letter in the *Millennial Star*. He commented that he felt his own inadequacies for the position, for he had had little experience during his last four years: "I feel to some extent the weight of such a charge, called, and am aware of the diligent perseverence required to do justice to the same, but . . . connected with your prayers and united assistance, we may be able to accomplish a work that will not rank among the least in the pages of history." Despite this humble plea for assistance, he also asserted quite authoritatively, "Let no man presume to dictate to his leader except in a proper manner." He then encouraged the members: "Let humility be the leading virtue, from the president down to the least member." He reminded them that "while I am among you I shall act according to the spirit of this letter, taking a straight forward course in all my proceedings, having no respect for one man more than another in the line of my duty."[10]

On August 12, Watt attended the Glasgow Conference meetings, where he appointed David Drummond, who had been the Glasgow branch president, to preside over the Glasgow Conference and be his first counselor. He named William C. Dunbar, a Glasgow native, as his second counselor, and Graham Douglas as Drummond's replacement for Glasgow branch president.

9. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, June 12, 1846, *Millennial Star* 7 (June 15, 1846): 199–200.

10. Geoge D. Watt, "Address to the Saints in Scotland," *Millennial Star* 8 (August 1, 1846):19–21.

Remembering the poverty he and his family had suffered during his earlier Scottish mission from 1840 to 1842, Watt made what some may have considered a radical proposal. He gave a talk on charity and proposed a scheme to support himself and Dunbar, his second counselor. His plan was for each Mormon family in the Glasgow Conference to subsidize him and his counselor by sending a penny a week to the conference office. Up to this point, the missionaries had been supported by the largess of the members, not by a paid subscription that smacked to some of the tithe collected by the state church. The Glasgow Conference, however, voted unanimously to accept this plan, but William Gibson, who was the conference president in Edinburgh, objected to it.[11]

Hedlock must have considered Watt an effective speaker and a good convincer because he sent him on August 30 to the Clitheroe Conference, which was situated about forty miles northeast of Preston. Here Watt preached on the "duties of the priesthood, and advising in all things, to act in charity and love" in the morning services. In the afternoon, at the conclusion of the meeting, he urged the members to remain faithful in discharging their duties. "He considered the Joint Stock Company as a germ from which glorious things would spring in these last days."[12] Despite Watt's enthusiastic sermons on the joint-stock company, its records do not show that he invested any money in it, probably because he did not have any.

After Wilford Woodruff reported to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on the state of affairs in the British Mission, Brigham Young and others became concerned over the joint-stock company's expenses.[13] Many British Saints invested their pennies, essentially the widow's mite, but it was not enough. Hedlock continued enthusiastically to support the joint-stock company, but he admitted "labouring under embarrassments" (meaning he did not have enough money). In August 1846, he left Liverpool for London, never to return to his duties as president of the British Mission. Simeon Carter, who had arrived as a missionary on June 22, 1846, complained in his diary before Hedlock left that "I now found Hedlock was much confused in the ship emigration and soon found he was much in difficulty and debt." When Carter attended the conference in Manchester, he discovered that Hedlock had fled: "Here I found the Church in much confusion on Hedlock's account, for he had gone and left all his affairs and had borrowed much money with a promise to pay and did not."[14]

11. "Conference Minutes, Glasgow," *Millennial Star* 8 (October 1, 1846): 73–74; "Glasgow Conference," minutes, September 12, 1846, LDS Church Archives; see also William Gibson, Diary, August 22, 1846, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
12. "Clitheroe Conference, August 30, 1846," *Millennial Star* 8 (September 1, 1846): 52–54.
13. Jensen, "The British Gathering to Zion," 170–73.
14. Simeon Carter, "Simeon Carter's Mission to England," May 7, 1846–August 1848, quoted in "British Mission Manuscript History."

Thomas Ward, who was the president of the joint-stock company, said on August 30 in the Clitheroe conference "that it was generally known that elder Hedlock was no longer with us, and that he had got into embarrassed circumstances principally by being too good natured." He also indicated that Hedlock did not have "sufficient cunning to meet the villany of the parties with whom he had to deal in Liverpool."[15]

In October Apostles John Taylor and Orson Hyde, followed by Parley P. Pratt, arrived in Liverpool to supervise the missionary activity, regulate the joint-stock company, and examine the books. They arrived about a week before the British Mission's two-day conference in Manchester, where all the missionaries gathered, including Watt. Even with all the serious business ahead of them, they could also have entertainment and enjoy each other's company. On October 16, the night before the conference, they gathered together. As Franklin D. Richards, who became an apostle in 1849, recorded, "In the evening brs Watt, Dunbar & Gibson gave us some scotch melody."[16] The evening after the first day's meeting, several of the elders gathered at a local member's home for "tea." After their meal, William Dunbar, Watt's second counselor, sang some songs and then brought out his bagpipes and, as recorded by Oliver Huntington, "gave us a couple of first rate tunes and brother George Watt danced to one of them."[17]

The deputation from America found that the president of the joint-stock company and a few others had been drawing a salary and the board had also loaned Hedlock an exorbitant £400 for unspecified purposes. On October 3, Orson Hyde and John Taylor asked the members "to patronize the joint stock company no more for the present." In an editorial, Hyde told the British Mormons that "the spirit of God never sent forth men to preach 'Joint Stockism;' neither did it ever inspire the hearts of our elders to proclaim it."[18]

The failure of the joint-stock company devastated many of the British Mormons. Those who had invested lost most of their savings. Those who hoped to travel to America for almost nothing lost a hope for a better future. Hyde informed the members that even though those associated with the joint-stock company had good intentions, "their wisdom had been turned into folly." Hyde made it clear that the church could not "be held responsible for any of its liabilities or its losses," but the British Mission leaders paid every penny that came into their hands to the shareholders.[19]

15. "Clitheroe Conference," 53–54.
16. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, October 16, 1846, typescript, LDS Church Archives.
17. Oliver Boardman Huntington, Journal, October 17, 1846, typescript, LDS Church Archives.
18. "Dear Brethren," *Millennial Star* 8 (October 15, 1846): 90; also see "Circular" in the same issue, 92.
19. See the following articles in the *Millennial Star* 8: "Balance Sheet of the British and American Joint Stock Company," December 6, 1846), 160; "The Joint Stock Company," December 6, 1846, 102; and "Notices," December 19, 1846, 180.

At Manchester on October 17, the British Saints excommunicated Reuben Hedlock and disfellowshipped Thomas Ward for their mismanagement of the joint-stock company. Ward made a full disclosure, taking responsibility for his faults, and was restored to full fellowship sometime in November.[20] Hedlock stayed in London and remained estranged from the church.[21]

After the conference in Manchester, Watt detoured through Preston to visit his mother, staying with the two Preston missionaries: Henry Jacobs and Oliver Huntington. Huntington was only twenty-three at the time, and Jacobs was his brother-in-law.[22] On the following day, Watt took the two to meet his mother, Mary Ann Brown, whom Huntington described as "a very good, smart, old sister and full of life." For the visit, she also invited Margaret Anderton, who called herself a seer, "a curious looking and acting woman she was. Coarse in word and deed. Not so coarse neither but plain and easy. . . . Brother Jacobs and I thought to try her, and watch her words and the run of her conversation, to see if we could not find a contradiction, but none could we find." Huntington said that she would look at a person, just like Joseph Smith did, from head to toe: "Her eye commencing at the face, go down and then up. This she called 'taking stock.'"

When Anderton looked at Henry Jacobs, she became very excited and "said he was born under the planet Jupiter . . . and that he would prosper let him go where he would."[23] Anderton told Huntington that he had been "born under the planet Venus" and would have continual trouble "until I was 36 years old." At that time, he, even if he had married a half dozen times already, "should be married to a black eyed woman, who would bring me great riches, and then would my fortune change for the better." (Huntington did not marry anyone when he was thirty-six.)[24]

According to Huntington, Watt's mother said that Anderton had prophesied several things about her son that had already come to pass, although Huntington did not record any details. She looked into "a glass, like an egg, in which she saw, and told him [Watt] many things concerning his wife, and my wife. His was to die within 3 years; and my wife she said was not my own, and was not the right one for me to have." Huntington had married Mary Melissa Neal in Nauvoo on August 17, 1845. Molly Watt may well have been sickly as a result of working for years in a factory during her youth, but she died ten years later.[25]

20. *Millennial Star* 8 (November 1, 1846): 111. The note at the end of the article does not say that he was restored to fellowship, but it implies it.
21. Details about Hedlock's life during this period appear throughout vol. 8 of *Millennial Star*. For Ward's death, see "Died," *Millennial Star* 9 (March 14, 1847): 96.
22. Huntington, Journal, October 20, 1846, p. 75. Huntington misdates his journal by a day. The day they went to Mary Ann Brown's and saw Anderton was October 21.
23. Ibid., 76–77.
24. Huntington, Journal, 77.
25. Ibid.

They returned to their room, and since they had no pressure to rise early, "we lay until our breakfast was ready, having our own times and taking our comfort, telling our own stories." Later the next day they "commenced talking about old times and scenes of home. Then upon our present situation in all relations."[26] The events Anderton described were probably interesting curiosities for the missionaries, despite Huntington's careful summary, but it is doubtful that they took them seriously. Such folk beliefs and individuals who claimed supernatural gifts were common in both the United States and England and merely offered intriguing possibilities.

Watt, with freshly updated shorthand skills, looked for chances to exercise them. Reverend Joseph Baylee, a "Christian" minister (probably from the Church of England) in Liverpool, issued Hyde a challenge to debate the issues of Mormonism versus other Christian faiths on November 21. Hyde replied he had to obtain the services of a phonographic writer from Scotland, but Baylee failed to reply to the counterchallenge, thus robbing Watt of an opportunity to try his shorthand skills.[27] Hyde thereafter discouraged Watt from even using his skill, thinking he needed first to be a missionary. In a letter to Willard Richards, Watt wrote, "I have not practised much of late in the art of reporting. Bro O. Hyde considered that it was not good for me to meddle with it while I am in this country."[28]

At the end of October, Franklin D. Richards arrived to replace Watt as president over Scotland.[29] Although no confirming documentary evidence has survived, Hyde probably wanted to give Richards an important position while he waited to be named as British Mission president; his replacement may have come as a shock to Watt because he thought he was doing some good work. Richards arrived in Glasgow, accompanied by his brother, Samuel, whom Hyde had appointed president of the Glasgow Conference. Within a few days, they had moved into the Watt home with the Watts still living there. Franklin spent most of his time in the office. Watt began regular missionary duties, often assisting Samuel. According to Samuel's diary, in late October, he and Watt administered to one ill man and the next day visited an older lady who was lame, prayed for her, and gave her a small bottle of oil to anoint her limbs.[30]

The missionaries found some time for pleasure. Twice in November, Watt, Molly, and the Richards brothers went to plays (sixpence each). In

26. Ibid., October 22, 1846, 78.
27. "Correspondence," *Millennial Star* 8: (December 19, 1846): 158–59.
28. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.
29. Franklin D. Richards, Journal, October 16, 1846, in *Selected Collections of the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2003), DVD 34.
30. Samuel W. Richards, Diary, October 28, 31, 1846, LDS Church Archives.

mid-December, the four dined at a member's home with Parley P. Pratt and John Taylor, followed by poetry readings and "good conversation." In December they took tea at another member's house and then saw a play at the Theatre Royal (for one shilling, sixpence, apiece).[31]

Even though the Richards brothers had displaced Watt from his position of authority, he harbored no ill feelings toward them. They were cousins of his adopted father, Willard Richards, had much experience in the church, and were friends from Nauvoo. In mid-November, a couple of weeks after their arrival, Samuel Richards discussed possible future assignments with George and Molly. Watt was not free to move until Christmas, when the twice-weekly phonography class he was taking at Sir Isaac Pitman's school ended. The Richards brothers decided that Watt would remain in Glasgow until Christmas, then probably go to his old field of labor, Edinburgh, while Molly kept house for the two brothers. Both George and Molly Watt accepted this decision, and the evening ended, as Samuel wrote, with "all in good humour."[32]

Just after Christmas, Watt went to Edinburgh under the direction of William Gibson, the conference president and Glasgow branch president. A few days later, Watt joined in planning the Saints' New Year's Day celebration and was part of the decision to have whiskey punch instead of tea. Even though the Word of Wisdom was advocated throughout the church, many members thought it was merely advisory, calling for moderation, rather than abstinence. When Gibson discovered that celebration organizers had planned whiskey instead of tea, he objected: "I told them I protested against such a thing & would not sanction it by my presence. Upon that Br Watt said it was a hard thing if men were not to be allowed a little whiskey on New Years day. For his part he could take it or he could let it alone." Watt took the position, however, that it would be wrong to deprive the Scots of their national drink on this occasion. Gibson told Watt that the Scots could do anything within reason in their homes but not at the meetinghouse. "I wanted Br Watt to understand that it was I not he that was responsible for their acts in a meeting like that. George then got in a rage & said he wished me to understand that he was a High Priest while I was only an Elder & therefore he was above me in authority." Gibson quickly told Watt that he was under the presiding authority in the branch and area. In the wake of the ensuing argument, Gibson set off to Glasgow to report matters to Samuel Richards, who sided with Gibson. Franklin D. Richards and Gibson then traveled to Liverpool to discuss the matter with Orson Hyde. To settle the issue, Hyde ordained Gibson a high priest: "I was ordained a High Priest by Elder Orson Hyde President of the Twelve Apostles so that the means that G. D. Watt tried to bring me down the Lord made the means to lift me

31. Ibid., November 6, December 17, 1846.
32. Ibid., November 12, 1846.

up." In Gibson's absence, the Glasgow Saints celebrated New Year's Day, apparently with the whiskey punch.[33]

On January 9, 1847, after arriving in Edinburgh, Samuel Richards went with Watt to a planning meeting with leaders from the branches. "While on the way bro. Watt, told me his feelings toward Bro. Gibson, that he considered him his enemy &c &c and I knew that bro. Gibson felt hard towards him as he had operated against his influence there." Still, Watt knew it would be better to reconcile this quarrel. "While standing before the Council bro Watt handed me a line [a note] to know if he should have an understanding with Gibson before the Con[ference]." Richards objected, but Watt, remembering his difficult time with John Greenhow on the ship *Sidney* many years before, met with Gibson anyway. Richards wrote, "I objected but heard them both after the Council dispersed and saw all settled with them which took near 1 ½ hours."[34]

Richards still thought it wise to remove Watt from Edinburgh. In mid-January, Orson Hyde, the mission president, approved his move to Staffordshire with headquarters in Burslem, about fifty miles southeast of Liverpool. At the end of January, Hyde came up from London and met with George and Molly Watt. The next day, January 28, 1847, Richards bade the two good-bye, receiving "a kiss from each."[35] Hyde, John Taylor, and Parley P. Pratt sailed for the United States on February 23. Franklin D. Richards replaced Orson Hyde as president of the British Mission, and Orson Spencer became the mission copresident with responsibilities primarily as *Millennial Star* editor.[36]

The county of Staffordshire was the center of the pottery industry, and its workmen made fine china for the world. Hundreds and hundreds of kilns shaped like bottles poured smoke into the atmosphere. In 1840 Apostles Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith had converted many Staffordshire people, but by the time Watt arrived, the conference was struggling. The Staffordshire members felt that their conference and mission leaders had neglected them. The conference consisted of 321 members in eleven branches; the largest, Burslem, had 101 members. In several branches, missionary work was languishing. Watt immediately visited the branches and analyzed their needs.

In his first conference meeting, which was held in the Temperance Hall in Burslem on May 16, Watt said that he found good Saints, "but who were in a languid and drooping condition." Then he declared, "When I came

33. Gibson, Diary, January 1–28, 1847.
34. Samuel Richards, Diary, January 9, 1847.
35. Ibid., January 2, 9, 13, 27, 28, 1847.
36. Orson Hyde, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 9 (March 1, 1847): 76. This notice of Watt becoming the president of the Staffordshire Conference was signed by Orson Hyde; see also "Editorial," *Millennial Star* 9 (April 1, 1847): 105.

here I found it something like the gathering of grapes after the vintage is over." Even though the devil was at work with all his might, "I am happy to say that the officers are learning their duty and that the spirit of God is burning within them and prompting them to do the same." He also advanced six men in the priesthood and ordained three elders, one priest, and two teachers at the Staffordshire conference on May 16, 1847.[37] Watt only stayed six months in Staffordshire; then Franklin D. Richards appointed him to preside over the Preston Conference.[38] For a while, Watt was the president of both the Staffordshire and Preston Conferences, which he administered from Preston. Franklin D. Richards wrote him at least one letter "about difficulties in Staffordshire &c."[39] In September of 1848, Richards appointed Joseph Clements, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy who had arrived in October from Council Bluffs, as president of the Staffordshire Conference.[40]

Meanwhile, in early 1846, the main body of the Saints in the United States had struggled across Iowa, bade farewell to five hundred of their hardiest men, who enlisted in the Mormon Battalion, and established a temporary home in Winter Quarters and Council Bluffs, where they suffered through the winter of 1846–47 and many died.

Caught up in the pressures of the exodus to Winter Quarters, Willard Richards, Watt's surrogate father, found little time to write to him. (Watt was just as delinquent in writing to Richards.) On March 1, 1847, after having been awake all night writing on official church business, Richards penned a three-page letter to Watt at 5:00 a.m., communicating the exciting news that "President Young, Kimball with most or all of the twelve at this place including myself expect to leave for some place at the foot of the mountains . . . with 2 or 300 pioneers in about two weeks." Their families would follow them as soon as the grass was well enough established to provide the oxen with feed. He concluded by admonishing Watt to "thrust in your sickle like a man of God . . . and bear your testimony of the first principles of the gospel." He closed with the comforting promise: "Always watch the whisperings of the still small voice which will ever cry in the bosom of every humble and prayerful soul."[41] If Watt answered this letter, and he surely would have, that letter has not survived.

When Watt returned to Preston in July 1847, it was like a homecoming, for his mother still lived in the town, and this was the community where he

37. "Staffordshire," *Millennial Star* 9 (August 1, 1847): 228–30.
38. Franklin D. Richards, Journal, July 19, 1847. According to a notation in his journal, Richards wrote a letter to Watt on that day appointing him president of the Preston Conference. Watt probably received it a few days later.
39. Ibid., August 14, 1847; "Notices," *Millennial Star* 9 (August 15, 1847): 256.
40. "Appointments," *Millennial Star* 10 (October 1, 1848): 299.
41. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, March 1, 1847, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

had first heard the gospel. The Preston Conference stretched from Euxton, about 15 miles south of Preston, to Kendal, a little more than 120 miles north. It was almost impossible to administer such a large geographical area with its eight branches and a total of 527 members. Preston, the largest branch, had 371 members. Kendal, the farthest away, was the next largest with 36.

After Watt's arrival, the Preston Conference held its first meeting on September 26, 1847. In his first short sermon in Preston, Watt told the members "that a union of feeling was necessary, in order that the Spirit of the Lord might be with us; . . . and peace and good order would be in our midst." He also ordained fourteen men to new priesthood offices. Amos Fielding, an American elder, admonished the brethren in the audience "to go out and preach the gospel." At the end of the day, John Foley, the clerk wrote, "Peace and order prevailed in our midst, and the countenances of the brethren and sisters showed the joy and gladness of their hearts."[42]

During his second conference in March 1848, Watt exhorted the congregation "to store up the precious word of God upon their memories, that the Holy Ghost may call it forth in the very hour when they need it, and thus throw out the net of truth, and catch men. At the end of the day, Foley wrote, "Thus passed one of the happiest days of our lives, and one that will never be erased from the memory." The Saints had become stronger since Watt had arrived.[43]

Watt must have made a concerted effort to practice his shorthand.[44] He probably took shorthand reports at the Preston conferences and other meetings. In a letter to Willard Richards in February 1848, he reported "I can write at this time 90 words per minute. A month's practice would bring me to a 120 which is the average amount of words that are spoken in a minute, a Phonographer in full practice is able to write 140 per minute."[45]

While Watt was in Preston, Europe erupted in revolution in 1848, prompted by various classes and reasons. In some countries such as France, it was due to liberalism held by the middle classes mixed with socialism in the lower classes. In Italy and Hungary, the motivation was nationalism. In Germany the revolution was primarily a middle-class movement, but in Austria, nationalism and oppression of the lower classes provided the spark. The revolutionary movements that began the process were bloody but short. The old order's reaction was also short but more organized, and more people lost their lives than in the revolutions the previous year. As these revolutions swept across Europe, the *Millennial Star* turned to predictions of "wars and rumors of wars." To Orson Spencer, who was the editor,

42. "Preston," *Millennial Star* 10 (January 1, 1848):4–6.
43. "Preston," *Millennial Star* 10 (July 1, 1848): 198–99.
44. "Conference Minutes, August 13th, 1848," *Millennial Star* 10 (August 15, 1848): 260–66.
45. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848, holograph, Richards Papers.

"The dethroning of sovereigns and the radical changes of long tried governments have become a matter of everyday talk." He thought the Christian nations should turn "unto God and the power of primitive christianity be restored, and the world will be regenerated," an allusion to the Mormons being able to preach in these new areas.[46]

The revolutions of 1848 in Europe revived the Chartist movement in England, which had flourished earlier in the 1840s. Chartist leaders now saw an opportunity to pressure the British government to grant greater participation to those who were shut out of the electoral process. They called a general convention for April 1848 and prepared a petition signed by more than five million people demanding these rights. Fearing revolution, the government quickly acted to prevent the "great procession" from marching, and the movement collapsed. Electoral and economic reform would have to wait until later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[47] It is difficult to tell whether the Chartists affected Watt in his missionary labors. He must have at least read and heard about the petitions and also the revolutions taking place on the continent, but none of his surviving writings or recollections comment on them.

We cannot tell how well Watt was doing in the Preston Conference. In August 1848, there were 529 members. By September 1849, the Preston Conference had baptized 29, eight had emigrated, and there were 525 members. A likely reason for the decline was that the area had been heavily proselytized for a decade with a significant number of members emigrating. In 1849 Wales exploded with more than 1,000 baptisms, and the city of Edinburgh alone had more than 150 baptisms. At the end of 1849 and midyear of 1850, John Foley, the Preston Conference clerk, did not turn in reports, so no evidence exists for that year. By December 1, 1850, the Preston Conference had declined to 450 members with 12 new baptisms and no one emigrating.[48]

As conference president, Watt must have promoted emigration since that was a major theme in the mission. In one case in August 1847, he walked from Preston to Liverpool, a distance of almost thirty miles, with a "Company of Saints who are to go on the 'Charlotte.'"[49] While Watt was in

46. Editorial: "Latter-day Saints Millennial Star," *Millennial Star* 10 (July 1, 1848): 201–2; Livingston, "Eyes on the Whole European World 78–112; "General Conference," *Millennial Star* 10 (August 15, 1848): 252.

47. For a good discussion of the Chartist movement and the workers' plight, see Woodward, *The Age of Reform,* 133–46.

48. For information on the Preston Conference, see the following articles from *Millennial Star:* "Extract from Conference Minutes," 11 (September 15, 1849): 287;"Reports of Conferences," 12 (January 1, 1850): 15; "Half Yearly Report of Conferences," 12 (July 1, 1850): 207; and "Statistical Report of the Church in the British Islands for the Half-Year Ending December 1st, 1850," 13 (January 1, 1851): 15.

49. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, September 29, 1847. It is not known how many walked with Watt.

Liverpool, he cut out a profile of Franklin D. Richards using scissors, a pen knife, and black paper, which pleased Richards.[50]

Brigham Young wrote to Watt on April 16, 1847, when the vanguard company was already sixty miles west of Winter Quarters, instructing him to "procure 200 lbs" of printers' font of phonotype.[51] He wanted to publish a small book, but he did not say on what subject, probably a primer for education. Phonotype was an attempt by Sir Isaac Pitman to change the English longhand alphabet into a phonetic one by using symbols for every sound. It is remarkable that, despite his many pressing responsibilities, Young was considering the possibility of revising the English alphabet. It is not clear what success Watt had in carrying out these instructions—apparently none since Franklin D. Richards visited Sir Isaac Pitman in October, obtained a small font sample from him, and reported his success to Watt. The mission office sent it to Winter Quarters,[52] but for some unknown reason, it was "ruined" upon arrival.

At the end of Young's letter, Willard Richards had Thomas Bullock, the scribe, pen a postscript. He had apparently forgotten his 5:00 a.m. missive in late March, for he apologized for not writing sooner: "The great cause of Zion, taken en masse swallows up all minor or perrsonal considerations, and wife, and children and relatives appear lost as it were, and we are obliged to forsake them all to build up the Kingdom of God and bring about a reign of peace upon the earth."[53]

On February 5, 1848, Watt sent a personal letter to Willard Richards, who was back in Winter Quarters. He shared with him conclusions formed on his mission: "I might write upon the work of God in this land, or I might give you the news pertaining to the conditions of this and other nations, but Bro. Spencer so completely skims off the cream from all news, both of a home and foreign nature, that I feel perfectly unable to interest you, should I venture to write upon any matter which his pen has pointed at." He prefaced his comments with a nautical image: "After I left you and launched forth with my frail bark upon the boisterous sea of varegated sercumstances that surround the servants of God, when apart from the body of saints, I began to learn and know many things by my own experience, that I had not the least anticipated in my former life." He was probably alluding to Hedlock's fall, the collapse of the joint-stock company, his own removal as president of the Scottish Mission, and perhaps his quarrel with Gibson.

His first conclusion was "that I am more foolish than wise in general. This conclusion has checked in some degree my headstrong nature, teaching me

50. Ibid., October 1–2, 1847.
51. Brigham Young to George D. Watt, April 16, 1847, Watt Papers; there is also a copy in Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.
52. Franklin D. Richards, Journal, October 29–30, 1847.
53. Willard Richards, postscript to Brigham Young's letter to George D. Watt, April 16, 1847.

to think twice before I speak once." Reflecting on Hedlock and Ward, he had decided "that those of my Bren. [Brethren] Who are in high standing or vice versa, are men that are subject to like passions as myself, and am therefore not surprised should they step aside, but considering myself will spread a mantle of charity over my brothers defects, expecting the same measure to be meted out in return to me." He found "that true merit without a sword is better than the empty sound of many words destitute of merit." His next conclusion he had to learn many times: "That true merit without a sound, is better than the empty sound of meny words destitute of merit." The requirements for mortal happiness "is filled up in the possession of a healthy body, a healthy and good wife, healthy and good children, a good inheritence in the proper place, among the proper people and a good conscious." This was possible "only when the government of God prevails among men." He added, "As to our temporal condition I will not complain, when I think of the afflictions that my Bre[thre]n and Sister in Zion must have passed through." Times were difficult in England: "We have suffered much, and suffer at this time, in consequence of the hardness of the times in Lancashire."

Then Watt approached the main point of his letter. He longed to return home to Zion: "Sister Watt longs to mingle again with the saints in Zion." He thought the mission had been a good experience for he was "still willing to lay down my life, by the Lords help for this great work, which I know to be of God, and so is my Dear Wife." It had probably not provided him with the satisfaction that he had experienced on his first mission with Orson Pratt, however. "I have a great desire to be with you. I desire it more than Gold or anything this world can produce." He said that he was "willing to labour in Babalon for the good of souls, until my Bre[thre]n in Zion shall say come home, for I know what loss I suffer by being absent from you will be made up to me in some way."[54]

In the middle of May, Richards responded to Watt's letter. He had left with the advance party to the Great Salt Lake Valley and returned. His short description of the valley was "climate very healthy air clear & pure, Water excellent." He said he was not sure when Watt would be able to return. The revolutions of 1848 had shown Richards that people were discontented with the old "precepts & creeds." The elders were sent to show them the truth, so "I would say to thrust in your sickle, preach the Gospel, call men to repentance."[55]

Watt felt that the letter was for all of the missionaries in Great Britain and gave it to Orson Spencer to publish in the May issue of the *Millennial Star*. Richards added a personal addendum that was not printed. He told Watt that they had received the "Phono-type," but it was ruined. He also advised that it was "wisdom for you to write Phonography as you have opportunity,

54. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848.
55. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, May 16, 1848, holograph, Watt Papers.

but not to infringe on your ministerial labors." In fatherly tones, he told Watt, "I am pleased with your letter and hope you will continue to come to such conclusions as will make you wise with many others."[56] Through his letters, Richards remained adviser, counselor, friend, and, most important, a surrogate father to Watt.

At the general conference held in Manchester on August 13, 1848, Orson Spencer, the president of the mission, asked Watt to be the clerk, and Watt chose Thomas D. Brown, then the *Millennial Star* editor, as his assistant. Spencer then introduced Orson Pratt, one of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The *Millennial Star* published the minutes, which included six pages of Pratt's sermon. Even though Watt had told Richards earlier that he was only a junior reporter, he indeed did the job well enough to capture Pratt's talk as it fell from his lips.[57]

Furthermore, as a backhanded compliment to Watt's shorthand ability, William M'Ghie, a British member, published a play in the *Millennial Star* in July 1849 entitled "Priestcraft in Danger—A Drama." Characters known to the Saints made appearances in it. His Heber C. Kimball, referring with praise but some anxiety to Watt's diligence in taking his stenographic reports, says, "Elder G. D. Watt, in particular, writes in such a strain I hardly know whether he is on the earth, in heaven, or somewhere between the two. I pray God that excellent man may remain humble under the great power with which he is endowed."[58]

Sometime in early December 1848, Watt left Preston to travel with William Speakman, a native missionary, north to Newcastle on Tyne, Speakman's new assignment. Watt remained with the newly widowered Speakman for two weeks, visiting "many of the branches of that conference." He then traveled into Scotland's southwestern counties, fulfilling his long-cherished desire of visiting his ancestral site. In late September, he arrived at Gatehouse of Fleet, a small town in Kirkcudbrightshire. The town probably had not changed much since Watt's father, James, had resided there. He found a branch of ten Saints: "I found the Saints in Gatehouse all in good standing except two." He promptly cut off those two for indulging in "taking intoxicating liquors to excess." In his report to the *Millennial Star,* he added a little homily about the virtues of cold water. It was to him the item that was in greatest abundance, "both as drink to refresh the stomach, to sweeten the blood, and to invigorate the mind; also as the means of washing away the filth of the flesh, and to give power and strength, health and beauty to the skin."[59]

56. Ibid.
57. "Conference Minutes," *Millennial Star*, 10 (August 15, 1848): 260–66.
58. William M'Ghie, "Priestcraft in Danger. A Drama," *Millennial Star* 11 (July 15, 1849): 191.
59. George D. Watt, "Port William Feb. 24th, 1849, Wigtonshire," *Millennial Star* 11 (March 15, 1849): 93–94.

Although Watt does not mention personal details in this letter, he probably visited his grandfather, Andrew Watt, in Skyreburn, a short distance from Gatehouse, and his second wife, Hannah. Andrew died a little more than a year later on December 5, 1849, just fourteen months after Watt left Gatehouse. He also probably visited his Aunt Jannet Watt and Uncle Charles Watt, who were living in the old family home in Anworth. His other paternal aunt, Margaret, now sixty-one, lived only a short distance away in Girthon.[60] His family, with whom he had lived as a boy, greeted him warmly and invited him to stay with them, at least for a while. He worked hard but had almost no success: "I have scattered much seed in Gatehouse and its immediate neighbourhood, but owing to the cold nature of the soil, it does not germinate, so soon as it would in a southern latitude." He later admitted he baptized one man and "expect to baptize several more to night."[61] He had no success with his own family. His aunt and uncle had a certain standing in the community, which they were already jeopardizing by housing this heretical relative: "My own people here have turned me out of their house; they told me I might stay as long as I pleased if I would cease my preaching, but I could not stay and preach; so I took my hat and my bag, and left."[62]

Watt's identity as a Mormon was stronger than his heredity as a Watt relative, and he left—although his account placed the blame squarely on his aunt and uncle: "Thus my own blood relations have turned me out without a farthing in my pocket, among strangers, near 200 miles from home and 100 from any of the churches of the Saints."[63] The position of being rejected and cast out for the gospel's sake was an honorable, even romantic, one—although the reality must have had its bitter side. He found shelter, though not of the lavish sort, with an old couple who were on town relief and were probably members. The lady welcomed him: "As lang's I hae a hoose, an adrap parritch tae tak, yees share it wi me, saie dinna ye fash yer lugg, nor be troubled ava aboot it; lay doon yer bag an a'll mak ye a wee drap tea." He thought "at this unexpected welcome, given in native eloquence, my heart melted within me and a flood of tears rushed from my eyes and spoke my gratitude to the old matron." He immediately pronounced a thankful benediction: "O God, bless thine aged handmaiden, and let thy salvation come

60. Scottish Census, 1851, County: Kirkcudbrightshire, Parish: Anworth, vol. 855, p. 5, microfilm, film no. 1042833, Family History Library. Watt's grandfather and his wife were living at Skyreburn Walkmill, which is a short distance from Gatehouse and Anworth. They were close to the sea. Margaret is recorded in Girthon Parish, Kirkcudbrightshire, parish 866, p. 14, microfilm, film no. 1042833; it is a little farther from Gatehouse but still close. The dates of Andrew and Hannah Watt's deaths come from their headstone in the Anworth parish cemetery; photograph of headstone in author's possession.
61. "Letter to T. D. Brown," *Millennial Star* 10 (December 1, 1848): 367.
62. Ibid., 366.
63. Ibid.

to this house." He remained there a few weeks: "I have remained here ever since, eating such things as they set before me, asking no questions."[64]

In February 1850, he left for Wigtonshire, the county immediately west of Kirkudbrightshire. It was something of a psychological turning point. Since his relatives had rejected him, his brothers and sisters in the gospel would thereafter be his family.[65] When he corresponded with the mission president, Orson Pratt, he was in Port William, Wigtonshire, about thirty miles from Gatehouse: "I have been two weeks in this place . . . and have preached five times. He thought Scotland was more difficult than other places: "It requires great endurance, perseverance, patience and determination in a man who labors in Scotland (especially in this part of it) to open places which are entirely new."[66] He did find one Mormon there, Joseph Maxwell, whom Watt must have baptized in Preston three months earlier and was there for unknown reasons. He ordained him an elder.[67] Watt probably returned to Preston in early March.

After three years in Britain, Watt expected to return to the main body of the church, but financing the trip was an enormous challenge. He had barely been able to get by day to day. The *Millennial Star* of April 1, 1849, petitioned the Saints throughout the mission to help him: "It is his privilege to return to the land of Zion, next fall; but the conference over which he presides is unable to give him the necessary assistance to help him and his family across the great waters. He is however able to obtain the means by the handy work of his own hands, in the business of cutting likenesses with the scissors." Orson Pratt, the mission president, gave "Brother Watt liberty to travel among the conferences to obtain means in this way, while at the same time he will preach and instruct the Saints, where opportunity permits."[68]

The Preston members also wanted to help send Watt to the United States, and they organized a council to raise money for him. The council, wanting to encourage others to take advantage of Watt's artistic ability, wrote to Orson Pratt, "We have much pleasure in recommending to the patronage of the Saints, who may be desirous to obtain correct likenesses, our beloved president G. D. Watt." They felt it was their "duty to give him this recommendation as an introduction for him to the Saints in other conferences.[69]

How far he traveled, peddling his skill, is a mystery, but he at least went to London, where he came into contact with a church member by the name of J. H. Hawkins, who suggested that they could raise money another way. Hawkins wrote the *Millennial Star,* "It has been, for some days, my happy

64. Ibid., 366–67.
65. Ibid., 367.
66. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, "Port William, Feb. 24th, 1849, Wigtonshire," *Millennial Star* 11 (March 15, 1849): 94.
67. Ibid., 93.
68. Editorial, *Millennial Star* 11 (April 1, 1849): 105.
69. Preston Conference Council, letter to the editor," *Millennial Star* 11 (May 15, 1849): 155.

Millennial Star

Engraving of George D. Watt (1849)

privilege to have the society of our excellent brother Elder G. D. Watt, whose blandness of manners, and edifying teachings have contributed greatly to benefit myself and family." He continued, "I find myself unable to express my gratitude in words, seeing that Brother Watt was endeavouring to obtain the means of gathering with his family to the valleys of the mountains."[70] Hawkins sat down and drew a picture of Watt. "Feeling desirous to do all in my power to promote that object, I have had his portrait engraved for the purpose of supplying those Saints who feel a similar sentiment with myself,

70. J. H. Hawkins, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 11 (July 15, 1849): 223.

with a faithful likeness and memento of the amiable original; and at the same time afford them an opportunity of aiding him in his noble efforts." Hawkins produced the engraving at his own expense and "intend to devote it entirely to his benefit, as a slight expression of esteem."

The editor of the *Millennial Star* wrote, "It is with pleasure we recommend to the notice of the Saints the engraved portrait of Elder G. D. Watt." It also hoped that he will "through this medium, obtain ample means to assist himself and family to the Great Salt Lake country."[71] It is not known how much the sale of this engraving helped Watt in his attempt to raise enough money. The following month the editor again appealed to his readers to sell the Watt engraving: "For his convenience, and to facilitate his departure, we wish the book agents of conferences and branches to supply themselves with the amount of portraits they think they can dispose of." That provided for posterity the first image of George D. Watt in his lifetime.[72] The journal still had some left a year later, when it advertised "Portraits of G. D. Watt, quarto, 1s. each."[73]

Watt expected to leave sometime in the fall of 1849, but for unknown reasons, his emigration was delayed, not just for a few months but for a year and a half. During that time, he stayed mostly in Preston, although he made preaching tours within the mission.[74] On August 5, 1849, he spoke at the Manchester quarterly conference on the way Heber C. Kimball had first introduced the gospel into Preston. Joseph Eckersley, a native missionary, found his sermon "very edifying." Watt followed it up with a sermon on the gathering, as Eckersley wrote, "in a masterly manner proving by scripture what a Zion is and were [where] located, and also the Zion of the last days to the satisfaction of the Honest."[75]

On September 7, 1850, Brigham Young announced a new program called the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company (PEF), designed to help the poor in particular. It was a revolving account from which British Saints could borrow, finance their emigration, and then repay the loan once they were in Utah. Watt did not use this fund, but probably about twenty-five thousand others did.[76]

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71. Ibid.
72. Editorial, *Millennial Star* 11 (August 15, 1849): 249.
73. "Portraits and Plates for Sale," *Millennial Star* 12 (June 1, 1850): 176.
74. Editorial, *Millennial Star,* 105.
75. Joseph Eckersley, "A Record of the Dealings of God with Me," Journal and Reminiscence, August 5, 1849, LDS Church Archives.
76. The best source about the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company is still Gustive O. Larson, "History of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1926); see especially chaps. 5, 6, and 10. Also see also Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom: Mormon Deseret Conquest, a Chapter in American Cooperative Experience* (Francestown, NH: Marshall Jones Company, 1947), chap 11 and 25. See also Philip A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century,* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), 26–27, 130–35. Larson says that

Near the end of October 1850, William Gibson, now president of the Manchester Conference, asked Watt to take down in shorthand his debate with Reverend Woodville Woodman. Woodman had challenged a proselytizing missionary in Gibson's conference to a debate, and the missionary had asked Gibson to fill the assignment instead. Watt readily assented. Gibson recorded that "the largest Hall in Bolton was taken capable of holding over 3000 person seated for there was a large gallery besides." There must have been posters all over the city and county. "It created quite an excitement all over the County. The Railroad Co[mpany] between Bolton and Manchester ran special Trains every night of the Discussion."[77] Joseph Eckersley wrote that "the large place was crowded with hearers."[78]

The three-evening debate focused on the Godhead and the signs promised to believers. Gibson commented that Woodman "quoted very few [passages] from the Book [Bible] giving Chapter & verse according to the rules." Although they were quotes, "he quoted some & misquoted others from memory & he was not very well pleased at me for quoting so many & giving chapter & verse where to find them."[79] Watt sent his transcript to the *Millennial Star,* which published it as a pamphlet. The *Star* editor, Orson Pratt, enthusiastically urged, "We have been favoured with a phonographic report of this discussion, by G. D. Watt. . . . The Saints will be much pleased and greatly edified by a perusal of the strong and powerful arguments displayed throughout the whole discussion. . . . If the Saints desire a feast they should purchase and read this discussion."[80]

On August 15, 1850, the First Presidency announced in the *Millennial Star* that George D. Watt and Orson Pratt should come to Utah: "We shall expect them early in 1851, as circumstances will permit," the epistle stated.[81] In the next issue of the *Star,* an editorial by Orson Pratt commended Watt for his service: "Brother Watt has laboured in this country for several years, and has been a blessing among the Saints in many conferences."[82] Watt must have rejoiced when this news reached England. He was going "home," even though he had never been there. Being with the people of God was what mattered. He had, in fact, served his last mission. He would never again preach to unbelievers in "Babylon."

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the church helped a hundred thousand people. The PEF financial ledgers have more like seventeen thousand people, but even they are incomplete, so the number is more like twenty to twenty-five thousand. For the list in the ledgers, see Ronald G. Watt, "Perpetual Emigrating Fund Ledger Index," 1992, Historical Department, LDS Church Archives.

77. Gibson, Diary, 1850, p. 99.
78. Eckersley, Journal and Reminiscence, October 31, 1850.
79. Gibson, Diary, 1850, p. 99.
80. "Discussion," *Millennial Star* 12 (December 15, 1850): 376–77. The cost for this pamphlet was sixpence.
81. "Third General Epistle of the Presidency," *Millennial Star* 12 (August 15, 1850): 245; see also *Frontier Guardian* 2 (June 12, 1850): [2].
82. "Appointments," *Millennial Star* 12 (September 1, 1850): 267.

Watt attended the general conference for the European Mission (primarily the British Saints) held at Carpenters Hall in Manchester in October 1850. He was one of the secretaries for this conference, and the detail of the sermons indicates that he took shorthand throughout the sessions.[83] At that conference, he was released along with seven other conference presidents and two traveling elders.

In mid-December, Orson Pratt sent a circular letter to the mission notifying the members that he and Watt would be leaving on January 31, 1851, aboard the *Ellen Maria*.[84] The ship had been commissioned to take 378 Saints to New Orleans, and Pratt appointed Watt as its president. Because of this responsibility, the church probably paid his passage, but no record of that remains.

Watt expressed his idealistic feelings about his new homeland in a poem, published in the *Millennial Star* as "G. D. Watt's Farewell." It communicates exuberance at returning to the body of the Saints, a new home in a place of liberty. He describes it as a fruitful land, a safe retreat where Brigham is king, no government can vex the Saints, and Jesus Christ will find his people when he begins his millennial reign:

Farewell, we cross the mighty deep,
Not in search of earthly treasure;
We go, a rich reward to reap,
Of heavenly joys; lasting joys; lasting pleasure.

With songs we leave our father-land,
The fondly-cherished scenes of youth,
We go on Zion's heights to stand,
With veterans Saints who've bled for truth.

We go where Ephraim's fruitful vales,
Shall tremble in the mountain breeze;
And serfs oppressed, from all the world,
Shall shout, I'm free, O sweet release.

Where milk and honey, oil and wine,
With corn, and oats, and rye,
And sheep, and oxen, with their kine
Are blessings found in full supply.

Where genius in his mighty power,
Shall with the ore, the rocks and clay,

83. "General Conference," *Millennial Star* 12 (December 15, 1850): 368–70.
84. Orson Pratt to the British Mission members, December 13, 1850, Orson Pratt Collection, LDS Church Archives.

From Frank Graham, compiler, Lancashire One Hundred Years Ago (1968)

The busy harbor at Liverpool

Build mighty temples, sculptured towers,
To rival art in grand display.

Where Brigham, "lion of the Lord,"
Shall roar from Zion's safe retreat,
And kings shall fear, throw down the sword,
And bring their honors to his feet.

Where Christ shall come to greet his Saints,
Bind the devil, wipe their tears,
Restore their dead, end their complaints,
And with them reign a thousand years.[85]

85. "G. D. Watt's Farewell," *Millennial Star* 13 (March 15, 1851): 96.

4

ACROSS THE WIDE ATLANTIC AND ON TO ZION

> I say amen and with all my heart, for after you have done that sir you at once enter into plenty of sea room where you may sail through life with unreefed topsails . . . and sometimes with setting sails you may have to encounter both white squalls and black ones, but if you remain true to Mormonism you will find in it power enough to live in the gale that ever blows.
>
> George D. Watt to Matthews, a sailor, March 16, 1851

George D. Watt's second voyage from Liverpool to Zion in America would take him to the Utah Territory, a place he had never seen before. He had experienced the sea and river voyages, but he would now need to learn the skills of packing a wagon and driving oxen. He knew from reading Orson Pratt's diary that he must travel vast plains, uninhabited barrens, and jagged mountains.[1] This assurance of novelty and, almost certainly, adventure, motivated him to begin a journal that covered from January 28, 1851 to August 14, 1851. Assuredly he planned to publish it, for he exercised his versatile command of English and an almost poetic literary ability in it. In his introductory paragraphs, he explained that "I shall try to keep in view

1. See Orson Pratt, "Interesting Items Concerning the Journeying of the Latter-day Saints From the City of Nauvoo until their Location in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake" *Millennial Star* 11 (December 1, 1849): 362–63 (excerpted from Pratt's journal). The *Millennial Star* serialized the journal, and sections ran from December 1, 1849, to June 15, 1850. Pratt's journal always started on the first page of every issue except for the first one.

the edification of my friends and brethren whom I have left that they may be better prepared to endure the many inconveniences that must be met with any crossing [of] the great waters."[2]

Presumably because of his previous ocean crossing, Orson Pratt had designated Watt as president of the ship's company. Realizing how hazardous the journey was, the British Mission president, who was also the church transportation agent, chartered only the most reliable ships, and not one of their charters crossing the Atlantic Ocean sank. Watt's ship, the *Ellen Maria,* weighed 678 tons and was 151 feet long and 33 feet wide. An American company in Richmond, Maine, had built the ship in 1849, and this was its first transatlantic voyage with Mormon emigrants.[3] Amherst Whitmore, the captain, was "a kind man in his manners and external deportment to the passengers," Watt wrote, "but very hard in his dealings with his fellow men," according to the first mate. The "saints thereto have been blessed by his kindness."[4]

The emigrants' fare paid also for food, which they cooked and consumed aboard the ship. Most ships provided a basic diet of biscuits (hardtack), soup, potatoes, and fish, usually supplemented by salt pork, molasses, butter, and cheese. In the case of the *Ellen Maria,* it appears that the ship supplied the basics, and the mission provided more. Watt had butter, which the captain later purchased.[5] Water was rationed, amounting to usually three quarts per person a day. Stored in wooden barrels, it inevitably tasted stale.[6] Emigrants had to furnish their own mattresses, blankets, and cooking utensils. In 1856 the *Millennial Star* helpfully advised the Saints that, for a few shillings, they could purchase a straw mattress in Liverpool that would last long enough for the sea voyage.[7]

The Mormon companies were generally orderly. If there were problems between passengers and the crew, the captain, whose word was ultimately law, could delegate them back to the company's president to keep tighter discipline. In 1863 novelist Charles Dickens visited the ship *Amazon*

2. George D. Watt, Journal, January 28–August 14, 1851, February 8–9, shorthand, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives) (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, September 2001). Watt did not mean this journal to be a finished product since it contains numerous cross-outs and insertions. I have ignored deletions and insertions except where I needed to add something to complete a thought.
3. For information on the *Ellen Maria,* see Conway B. Sonne, *Ships, Saints, and Mariners: A Maritime Encyclopedia of Mormon Migration, 1830–1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 65–66.
4. Watt, Journal, March 1, January 28, 1851.
5. Ibid., March 15, 1851.
6. Conway B. Sonne, "Sail to Zion," *Ensign,* July 1991, 9–10; see also Robert Owen Day, *The Enoch Train Pioneers: Trek of the First Two Handcart Companies, 1856* (Oviedo, FL: Day to Day Enterprises, 2001), 11–12.
7. "Emigration Department," *Millennial Star* 18 (January 12, 1856): 24–26.

probably two days before it sailed on June 4 from the London docks. It had already taken on its eight hundred Mormon passengers. In Dickens's essay, the captain tells him that even though most of these people did not know each other previously, they established rules and regulations, and "before nine o'clock the ship was as orderly and as quiet as a man-of-war." Dickens wrote, "Nobody is in an ill temper, nobody is the worse for drink, nobody hears an oath or uses a coarse word, nobody appears depressed, nobody is weeping." This list of negatives gave a handy guide to conditions aboard a regular emigrant ship. Later, he said that these Mormons were "the pick and flower of England." As he left the ship, he wrote with almost disbelief, "I went on board their ship to bear testimony against them . . . to my great astonishment they did not deserve it. . . . I went over the Amazon's side, feeling it impossible to deny that so far, some remarkable influence had produced a remarkable result."[8]

The emigrants tried to arrive on the day the captain advertised that the ship would allow passengers to board. It was important not to arrive too early since dockside merchants and innkeepers usually had no scruples about charging the unsophisticated country folks whatever they could gouge from them. Usually two days before departure, the captain lowered the gangway, and the America-bound passengers boarded, thankfully trading the expense and insecurity on land for the cramped quarters aboard ship.

A Liverpool ordinance forbade waiting passengers to have lights on board in the harbor, and thieves took advantage of easy access to the ships, the lack of good lighting, and the fact that most of the passengers were strangers to each other to steal huge amounts from emigrants. William Dunbar, one of the *Ellen Maria*'s Mormons, became the self-appointed, unofficial constable and patrolled for thieves at night. "His energetic, strong, and commanding manner towards the thieves that rushed on board to rob the emigrants of their money and clothing under night's dark mantle saved the unsuspecting saints much sorrow," Watt observed.[9] Thanks to his vigilance, Mormons aboard the *Ellen Maria* lost no property.[10]

Most of the company boarded the *Ellen Maria* on January 30, 1851. According to the ship's roster in the "British Mission Manuscript History," it carried 378 Mormons and 18 non-Mormon passengers, ranging in age from eighty-one to a month-old baby. Most of the men on the *Ellen Maria* were laborers and artisans (16) with various other occupations also represented.[11] Besides his wife and son, Watt's mother, Mary Ann Wood Watt,

8. Charles Dickens, "The Uncommercial Traveller," *All the Year Round,* no. 219 (July 4, 1863): 444–49. Dickens and Watt were born just a few months apart in 1812.
9. Watt, Journal, January 30, 1851.
10. Ibid.
11. Passenger list of the *Ellen Maria,* "British Mission Manuscript History," February 1, 1851, LDS Church Archives; see also passenger lists of the *Ellen Maria,* 1850–56, ship emigration records, holograph, Liverpool Mission Office records, LDS Church Archives. Two of

Liverpool to Salt Lake City

and his twenty-two-year-old half sister, Jane Brown, were with him. Four-year-old Martha Bench, who was also on the ship, later became one of Watt's plural wives.[12]

Watt, Molly, and seven-year-old George boarded on January 28.[13] Most of their luggage went into the hold to await landfall at New Orleans more than two months later. They were allowed to keep a certain amount near their berths such as clothes and other articles which they needed during the journey. Frederick Piercy commented that "the space allowed on ship-board for luggage is ten cubic feet."[14] The poorest found their berths in what was called steerage, a dark, damp, and cramped part of the ship. Sleeping berths here were lined up side by side with only enough space to inch between them and were stacked at least two high. During a storm, the crew locked down the hatches to prevent water from flooding the hold. In a large storm, the captain might lock down all the hatches to

the sailors called themselves mariners.

12. "British Mission Manuscript History," February 1, 1851.
13. Watt, Journal, January 28, 1851. The ship's list in the Liverpool Mission Office records has George D. Watt Jr. as eight years old, but he was only seven. He was born on June 10, 1843. Watt did not comment on shipboard conditions.
14. Frederick H. Piercy, *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley,* edited by Fawn M. Brodie (repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 20.

keep passengers from coming up onto the open deck. Dark, noisy, smelly from seasickness, and a death trap if the ship sank, steerage was a terrifying experience.[15]

Since Watt was one of the leaders, he had space on the second-class deck. As he described it, his family had sleeping quarters along a wall of the ship, and the center of the deck was stacked with boxes, luggage, and other articles.[16] Privacy was almost nonexistent. In their sleeping areas, the emigrants had small lanterns to light their paths. Rules aboard the wooden ship forbade the use of candles.[17] Piercy wrote that "these and other precautions to prevent fire were conceived to be most essential, for in truth, no calamity that can occur is so dreadful as a fire at sea."[18] Either ladders or narrow stairs led up to the main deck.

Air circulation was limited below deck, even when the hatchways were open. Without the possibility of bathing, body odors intensified as the voyage went on. The stale air magnified smells. Most ships only had buckets or chamber pots for toilets, and such facilities were soon overwhelmed by vomiting, diarrhea, and overturned buckets when the ship pitched. According to emigration historian Conway Sonne, Mormon passengers frequently scrubbed their decks, fumigating by sprinkling lime in the living quarters. Their religious leaders also encouraged them to spend time in the open air.[19]

Watt remained alert to forestall any flirtations between the sailors and the Mormon girls. At least twice, he and the other leaders suspected that something was happening, but each time it turned out to be inconsequential. In one case, "it was reported to us that . . . one of the sisters was in the forecastle among the sailors." Arriving at the forecastle, the men "inquired if there were any females there, but discovered we had been misinformed." This upset the sailors: it "aroused the ire of the sailors against us because we kept a strict look out after our sisters and would not let them be led astray." Watt thought that these innocent girls were "not acquainted with the deep wickedness of this class of men." His advice to those who read his account was "let all presidents over companies of saints pay marked attention to this part of their duty, fearing not the frowns of men or the disapprobation of women."[20]

Heavy winds kept the ship in Liverpool harbor on the River Mersey until Saturday, February 1, when they finally turned fair. About noon a tugboat came alongside and pulled the ship into the open sea, where it set sail, first

15. Sonne, "Sail to Zion," 9; see also Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration, 1830–1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 57.
16. Watt, Journal, February 6, 1851.
17. Ibid., February 9, 1851. He makes no mention of pipes or cigars.
18. Piercy, *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley,* 24.
19. Sonne, "Sail to Zion," 8–10.
20. Watt, Journal, February 10, 1851.

through the Irish Sea and then into the Atlantic Ocean. A few of the passengers experienced nausea, but most of them weathered the first days fairly well. However, on the evening of February 6, cross winds caused the ship to roll from side to side and also pitch up and down.

Molly Watt, to avoid being thrown from her upper berth, stationed herself next to a box in the center of the vessel, where there was less motion and she could cling to the ropes lashing down the luggage. Watt, who was now making his third trip across the Atlantic, wrote, "Passed the night not only watching and praying but holding on with my fingernails lest I should suddenly be landed on the floor among pots and pans and boxes that were dancing loose on the deck of a ship." The pitching and yawing were made more unpleasant by the raucous storm sounds: "Outside the wind is heard raging on like the voices of a thousand malignant spirits screaming the requiem of some distant wreck. In it is heard the plaintive cry of an infant mingled with the disagreeable sound of a hundred females, discharging from their discomforted stomachs the provisions they refused to digest and the deep groans of men losing their equilibrium on the bosom of the great deep. . . . This is the kind of vocal and instrumental music old Neptune seems much to delight in."[21]

Watt weathered the rough waters fairly well. He did not complain of seasickness and saw the comic side of two quarts of treacle (molasses) smashing onto the deck. A seaman swabbed up the gooey mess, leaving the wet deck slippery. When a bulldog named Major tried to return to his master, he "found it necessary to hold on with his toenails which by and by was of no use to him." He slipped on all fours in the opposite direction until brought up against some luggage. The dog then tried a more circuitous route but again hit the slick patch and slid in the opposite direction, fetching up against another pile of luggage. "Poor Major looked the picture of despair," Watt summarized. He then explained, "I notice these little incidents because I consider them to be necessary as any, and they portray a voyage across the Atlantic."[22]

The next morning Watt commented that "the scene was at once pitiable and humorous."[23] The passengers had to endure the mess until the following day, when, on calmer seas, they cleaned the deck. The leaders persuaded the weakened passengers to take the sun on the main deck: "Our first duty was to get upon deck all the sick men and families." It was an arduous task: "We had some difficulty in accomplishing this . . . however we got them up except for two." When the passengers emerged from the dark, smelly hold, the fresh air revived them, and "joy beamed upon every countenance."

21. Watt, Journal, [February 6, 1851]; sometimes Watt forgot to put the exact day in his journal. This entry comes in front of February 7.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., February 7, 1851.

Suddenly, the vessel dipped deeply into the sea, and a shower of seawater blew across the deck, drenching the passengers, who quickly retreated to their berths below.

The Mormons held a formal organizational meeting, sustaining Watt in his already-appointed position as the president of the ship's company with John Toone, Thomas Salisbury, Thomas Bickley, and Henry Garner as his counselors.[24] Whether Watt had chosen his own counselors or not, they were an able group. The thirty-seven-year-old Toone had been the secretary of the Liverpool Conference. The other three were young men with Salisbury the oldest at twenty-eight; Bickley was twenty-one, and Garner, only twenty. These men supervised a certain area of the ship and made sure their people had a daily prayer meeting and cleaned the ship.

Orson Pratt also talked to them that day. He "referred to the troubles of those who have to be placed in the steerage. He had three times passed the ocean in the steerage." He had no desire "to be in the same circumstance again." It was his job, though, "to school others placed in similar circumstances." He mentioned other problems that might arise because of the passengers' close proximity: "You will find it important to put up with all the little inconveniences."[25]

The next day was calmer yet. The passengers had recovered from their seasickness and developed hearty appetites. "The saints are all around their galley, anxious to cook breakfast," Watt wrote on February 9. In addition to the staple biscuits and bread, the *Ellen Maria* offered "salt fish, herring, cabbage and onions or pickles of any kind. Apples, lemons, and oranges were much in demand."[26] While they were thronging the ship's galley, Watt described the seascape: the "sea came rolling in majestic swells from the northwest while the surface of the watery mountains and valleys are as smooth as oil. God is seen in his majesty in this world of briny waters."[27]

For the next ten days, the ship made good time at five to eight knots an hour. Then on February 21, the *Ellen Maria* ran into the worst weather of the voyage. Watt describes winds at hurricane speeds, blowing "the sea into a vast succession of hills and valleys." The dark clouds formed in the distance, and the passengers waited helplessly "for the approach of the distant monster which we expect suddenly to pounce upon us without mercy." Keenly observant, he commented on the contrasting beautiful sunset peeping through "the angry blackness which is fast approaching us."

Watt continued writing in his journal, giving a running account of conditions: "Blackness now covers the heavens." The storm "has struck our ship roaring like a thousand thunders through the rigging. Our noble vessel

24. Ibid., February 7–8, 1851.
25. Ibid., February 9, 1851.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.

gently leans to itself as if conscious of the superior force against which she has to contend." Concerned whether the sails could withstand the force of the wind, the first-mate's voice "is heard like that of a child's, midst the thunder giving orders to furl in the four top sails." The sailors moved quickly aloft to roll up the sails: "All hands are now seeking their way up the rigging." Watt watched them moving about, high above the deck, admiring their skill. In fact, even on deck "it would be next to impossible for a landsman to keep his feet. . . . We have lost sight of them in the darkness above. We have now three sails up namely the main top which is under double reef, the spencer, and one of the jib sails. The dark waters beneath us are angered by the merciless winds." Reaching for adequate comparisons, he continued that the ocean waves appeared to be "foaming, roaring, and swelling powers in awful majesty as though they had waged war with the furious element beneath them, while our ship is scuttled along through the deep furrows of the ocean like a thief surrounded by the administrators of justice."[28]

As the storm intensified, the passengers went below. Watt, concerned about the violent tossing, found a rope and tied himself and his family in their berths. Any box or container that was not lashed down was rolling around on the deck. "The men might be seen in their undressed condition chasing their boxes, kettles, bundles, and barrels to secure them again." Nor did he overlook the humorous element of this scene: "When a person thinks he has got his box in his power and at its place, no sooner has he mounted this restless piece of furniture, than the ship gives a lurch, off goes the box like a passenger train carrying the owner with it to another part of the ship."

Watt and Amos Fielding, also a former missionary, had forgotten to tie down their water bottles with this result: "Two water bottles that had not been tied the night before took a notion to dance a reel. A little brown one leaped from its place and danced over the deck. Its large brown neighbor seeing this decided to join in the dance, rolling and tumbling over the deck. Then a provision box introduced its four corners into the reel. This would be called in Scotland a threesome reel." The ending was predictable: the small bottle smashed into the larger one and shivered into pieces, spilling its contents on the deck. A bottle of pickled onions pitched down "to fill up the breach, so down it came to join the dance." The owner put the bottle back, but soon it was again bouncing around. Not long afterward it again found itself on the floor, broken "if not into a thousand pieces into twenty. The onions finding themselves freed from their prison had a fine time at playing rolly polly."[29]

The darkness in steerage tempted one of the passengers to light his candle. Watt wrote that the day after the storm abated, a Welshman "was

28. Ibid., February 21, 1851.
29. Ibid.

put in irons for exposing a naked light in the steerage." To be an example to all others, "he was set on the deck so as to be exposed to all the passengers and a pair of irons put on his wrists." Thereafter, all the passengers made "up their minds to do without candles and be contended with the ship lights."[30]

The storm blew itself out after more than a day and was followed by a slow, mild wind, which fell off until the ship lay becalmed for four days. "All sail is unfurled and flap against the mast," Watt wrote.[31] During the storm, the sailors had, however, caught rain, allowing a more comfortable allotment of water for the rest of the trip. After this storm, Watt's diary describes the voyage lapsing into monotony. The passengers could see nothing but water from horizon to horizon. The daily latitude and longitude readings meant little without external markers. The women busied themselves by knitting or sewing canvas into the tents they would use on the overland trail. All read scriptures, perhaps a few had other books, and a few just enjoyed the sun.

Pratt preached to the company at every opportunity, usually on Sundays. Watt, always practicing his shorthand, recorded four of the longer sermons: February 15, one of the Sundays between the two storms; March 2, a Sunday when the ship was becalmed; March 9, the day when the ship also celebrated the birth of a baby, Frederick Joseph Robbins; and March 16, approximately two weeks before the Mormons arrived in New Orleans.[32]

One Sunday the passengers and crew were amused by a whale that followed them for about two hours. It swam alongside, spouted in front of the vessel, and even dived beneath the ship, appearing on the other side. That day they held their sacrament meeting under an awning rigged to protect them from the sun. Watt "spoke those things that came into his heart. After which Elder Pratt made remarks commending the teachings of the spirit" to the congregation. The congregation enjoyed "a spirit of peace and rejoicing."[33]

On February 9, Pratt presented James Stratten and Frances Clark, both from Cambridge, to the congregation to be married. Since there was no objection, he performed the ceremony, or, as Watt described it in good Anglican language, "Elder Pratt celebrated the ordinance of marriage." Afterward Watt delivered a sermon on how "a company of people in such confined circumstances all ought to act towards each other."[34] Watt also recorded a second marriage on February 23, a day after the second storm had passed, which was solemnized by David Jones between Edward Williams

30. Ibid., February 22, 1851.
31. Ibid., February 26, 1851.
32. George D. Watt, "Discourses of Orson Pratt," 1851, pp. [1–7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20,] shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, January 2001).
33. Watt, Journal, March 23, 1851.
34. Ibid., February 9, 1851.

and Ann Morgans, both from Wales. The passengers held no services on deck that day. Instead, Watt went to the sleeping quarters and "preached to the portion of the passengers in steerage about an hour," where a good spirit prevailed.[35]

At another preaching service, Pratt gave the sermon, and John Toone and Watt administered the sacrament. Watt followed with a discourse on the duties of husbands and wives and the training of children. He confessed, probably with a humorous twinkle, "his limited knowledge on the subject" since he had only one child.[36] The next Sunday Orson Pratt referred to Watt's remarks in his sermon: "I was much delighted by our Brother Watt last Sunday upon the act of bringing up children by husband and wife."[37] On March 21, the third shipboard marriage occurred, with Pratt performing the ceremony for James Turnbull and Mary Brightwell.[38]

Four babies were also born en route. Sadder occasions were four deaths—all children. Eleven days after sailing, the six-month-old daughter of Richard and Susannah Preece from Herefordshire, named Sarah, became the first casualty. "The child was sick before it came on board the ship and was expected to die in Liverpool," Watt wrote. It is not clear what her ailment was.[39] At the end of the service, the little shroud was tipped into the depths of the sea. Five days later, the eleven-week-old daughter of John and Emma Toone died, followed on March 8 by two-year-old toddler George Spiser. The last fatality was Mirantha Althera Pratt, the fifteen-month-old daughter of Orson and Sarah Marinda Pratt, who had been ill most of the trip. Because the ship was only ten days out from New Orleans, her body was preserved in spirits and molasses so she could be buried on land.[40]

The first birth was a son, Frederick Joseph Robbins, born to Henry and Emily Robbins. The second was an unnamed son, born to Sarah Spiser, who had just lost her small son, George. She was traveling without her husband, who had stayed in England. Sarah Wild gave birth to a daughter, whose name included that of the ship: Lillian Ellen Mariah Martha Wild. Just before the ship docked in New Orleans, Sarah Lane delivered a daughter, who was unnamed in Watt's account.[41]

35. Ibid., February 23, 1851.
36. Ibid., March 9, 1851.
37. Watt, "Discourses of Orson Pratt," 1851, p. [8]. This comes from the first extant shorthand notebook from the pen of George D. Watt.
38. Watt, Journal, March 21, 1851. Transcriber LaJean Carruth rendered Mary's last name as Weed, but only two single women aboard ship were named Mary, and no one had the surname of Weed: Mary Shaw was twenty-four, and Mary Brightwell was thirty. Because the bridegroom was thirty-four, Mary Brightwell seems to be the more probable bride.
39. Ibid., February 11, 1851.
40. Ibid., February 16, March 8, 24, 1851.
41. Ibid., March 9, 28; April 2, 1851. The first two children were both born on March 9. Sarah Spiser's child is rather a mystery. Watt mailed a report to the *Millennial Star* that lists the marriages, births, and deaths. He did not record this birth. Sarah Spiser and her

Near the end of the journey across the Atlantic, Watt received a letter from the second mate, whom he refers to only by one name: Matthews. Matthews and Watt must have been friendly from the earliest part of the voyage since Watt had asked him then if he wanted to be baptized. Matthews refused his invitation. He later wrote that he would "try what I can do with my pen upon a subject that has occupied the first place in my mind for a length of time, more especially since we left Liverpool." The subject was Mormonism. In his letter, he recounted two earlier encounters with people of the religion: "About twelve months ago or more I was in London, and one Sabbath I was at a friend's house, where I accidentally met with a [Mormon missionary]." He had a discussion which was close to being argumentative. Later, he met "a young lady of very respectable family connections [who] had embraced the gospel contrary to her parents' wishes." She also explained "Mormon principles" to him. Matthews later tried to find her. He decided that "she valued her soul's salvation above all other things; it was then that the first rays of light began to break through the cloud that hung over me." Lastly of all, "when I heard the testimonies of yourself and Brother Pratt, the wall seemed to vanish before good sound reason and secure proof. Now Mr. Watt (I cannot call you Brother Watt) it is my desire to become a member of the Latter-day Saint Church."[42]

Watt also responded by letter: "Your account which I have just received of how you was first made acquainted with the principles of the gospel of peace gave me much joy." He encouraged Matthews to follow through and be baptized, exercising his now-considerable store of nautical imagery: "I say amen and with all my heart, for after you have done that sir you at once enter into plenty of sea room where you may sail through life with unreefed topsails. . . . and sometimes with setting sails you may have to encounter both white squalls and black ones, but if you remain true to Mormonism you will find in it power enough to live in the gale that ever blows."[43] Whether this sailor ever joined the church is not known; in his letter, he said he intended to go to the Great Salt Lake Valley.

Beginning on March 20, the weather was extremely hot and humid. Watt only went out on the deck in the evening. The ship was approaching the Bahamas. The passengers expected to see "land tomorrow but the wind

children did not come to Utah. The Spisers could have stayed in New Orleans or St. Louis and never come west. The last name is spelled a couple of different ways. The Liverpool Mission Office ship list spelled it Spiser, but Watt spelled it Spizer in the *Millennial Star* report. Watt also does not list the name of Sarah Lane's daughter, and I cannot find them in later records. See "Arrival of the *Ellen Maria* at New Orleans," *Millennial Star* 13 (July 1, 1841): 200–201.

42. Matthews to George D. Watt, n.d. in George D. Watt, Journal, March 16, 1851, shorthand, holograph. Watt attributes the letter to Matthews. Besides identifying the sailor as Matthews, the transcriber, LaJean Carruth, put the letters J/G. Krths/Krts/Krauts[?] at the end of the sailor's letter, which might stand for his other name.

43. Watt, Journal, March 16, 1851.

having become light it is feared we shall be disappointed."[44] The heat made the sleeping quarters so uncomfortable that Watt left his berth and bedded down on some boxes in the center of his quarters, probably in search of better ventilation. Later, he went up to the top deck, and one of the younger women showed him a canvas bed that the captain had made for her from a sail. Eager to try it out, Watt sat and then lay down on it. Within a few minutes, he was surrounded by a group of women who all wanted to try the bed. One of them lay down next to Watt. Although the group was acting in good spirits, Orson Pratt promptly came over and rebuked Watt: "Brother Watt you must allow me to tell you that you are showing the passengers a very bad example and you as the president of the company ought to know better." This criticism stung Watt deeply. He wrote, "Had Elder Pratt taken me to one side and told me his feeling, I should have thanked him and kept a strict watch upon my position whether laying or sitting in the future. Retired to rest much grieved in spirit."[45]

On March 22, for the first time since about February 11, when they had sailed clear of the Irish coast, the emigrants saw land: the mountains of Santo Domingo. Three days later, they were off the coast of Cuba.[46] On the last Sunday aboard the *Ellen Maria*, Pratt gave them "some general instructions how they should act on their arrival at New Orleans." Pratt commissioned Watt "to charter a steam boat for the company." On the evening of April 3, they reached the sandbar at the mouth of the Mississippi, where many ships went aground and were delayed for days. They waited until noon on the fourth, when a steam tugboat came abreast and towed them across the bar. The *Ellen Maria* reached New Orleans two days later. Watt seemed glad to be in the United States once again: "Arrived safe in New Orleans."[47]

New Orleans's history was a succession of French, Spanish, Native American, and Euro-American influences, and its food and architecture reflected this eclectic mix. Mormon convert Jean Rio Baker came on the *George W. Bourne,* leaving Liverpool on January 7 and arriving fifteen days before the *Ellen Maria.* She penned a lively description of the city: "The roads themselves are not kept in order as they are in London, they are not paved. . . . The city stretches on one side of the river for about five miles as near as I could judge, the whole of which length is one continued wharf or levee, as the French have named it. The ships and steamers lie 4 or 5 deep the whole length, and as close as they can be stowed."[48]

44. Ibid., March 20, 1851.
45. Ibid., March 21, 1851.
46. Ibid., March 26, 1851.
47. Ibid., April 6, 1851.
48. Jean Rio Griffiths Baker, "By Windjammer and Prairie Schooner," in *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails 1851,* vol. 3, edited by Kenneth L. Holmes (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1984), 203–81.

In New Orleans, Watt and Orson Pratt chartered the steamboat *Aleck Scott,* which had space for 292 people. Some of the Mormons must have stayed in New Orleans a few days longer and traveled on other boats. Watt had traveled on another steamboat with the same name when he had arrived in 1842. The *Scott* was a large side-wheel paddle boat of 487 tons with one deck, a cabin above, and two stacks. The Mormons left for St. Louis on April 9. The wide Mississippi was always changeable, and the river captains needed daily communication about the conditions.[49]

Later that summer while still on the plains, Watt wrote to his sister, Margaret, and her husband, John Brandreth, living in Preston, almost certainly mailing the letter from Fort Laramie when the company passed it in August. In this lengthy letter of approximately eleven hundred words, replete with vivid and entertaining details, Watt contrasted the ocean and river journeys: "In crossing the sea there is an eternal sameness. Passing up the rivers we were treated to a continual change of scenery of the most beautiful and enchanting degree such as calls to our minds the imagined scenes we have read in fairy tales or seen painted upon the scenery of a theater."[50]

However, Watt did not feel increased security on the river. He linked both "the journey across the sea and up the rivers" as "fraught with many dangers."[51] When the boat made its daily stops to take on wood, the passengers strolled along the river or lay on the grassy banks. Watt was horrified that they allowed their children to wander unsupervised: "Some left their children unprotected." Near disaster happened quickly when the alarm sounded: "Our attention was drawn to the place and we saw William Hawkins, a boy about 10 years of age, the son of James Hawkins, struggling in the water." Everybody stared, unbelieving, when suddenly "James Freeman, a young sailor from the Ellen Maria, boldly leaped into the water and rescued the child from death, a watery grave."[52]

This leg of the journey was eventful. Ann Entwhistle gave birth to a son one day out from New Orleans, which the Entwhistles named after their Mississippi River boat, Alex Scott. Fifty-five-year-old Elizabeth Shelley, who was drawing water from the deck, fell overboard and drowned. Her body was never found, and her husband and eleven children had to continue without her. Watt wrote in his journal that the emigrants should "not to suffer their old women and older men and children to draw water from the rapid stream of the Mississippi."[53]

49. Watt, Journal, April 7, 1851.
50. George D. Watt to John M. and Margaret Watt Brandreth, n.d., ca. August 1851, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, September 2001).
51. Ibid.
52. Watt, Journal, April 10, 1851.
53. Ibid., April 14–15, 1851.

The *Scott* docked in St. Louis on April 15, which was the end of its run. St. Louis was a giant river port, called the "Gateway to the West." A bustling commercial town, it had a population of more than thirty thousand. Jean Rio Baker described St. Louis as "a large and fine city, extending 5 miles along the river side, and about half as far inland." She approved of the markets as "extremely good, they open at four o'clock every morning except Sunday." She wrote that "all kinds of meat, poultry and fish are very cheap. The fish and meat is good, but not so large and fat as in the English markets. Vegetables and fruits are abundant and of great variety. Groceries, wines and spirits, are very cheap."[54]

St. Louis had a large contingent of Mormons. Sunday preaching services were held, as reported by Baker, in the "concert hall in Market Street . . . which holds three thousand persons and I could but feel amazed to see that spacious room filled to overflowing, and the staircase and lobby crowded with those who could not get inside."[55] The Sunday before their departure, Watt's group attended services with Pratt speaking in the morning and Watt in the afternoon.[56]

Watt had about $100, which was not enough to pay his passage up the Missouri River and also buy a wagon and oxen. John Hardy, a fellow English passenger, kindly loaned him £30 ($150), which Watt used to buy his wagon, tent, and provisions: "I feel myself unworthy of this kindness from the hands of God but how good he is to those who have served him in the work of his ministry."[57] Overwhelmed by his gratefulness to God, Watt wrote, "He clothes the lilies of the field. He feeds the wild beasts of the forest and will not suffer his saints to want in good things. When I become this fortunate my heart magnify the name of God who became my friend in a strange land."[58]

Watt's group chartered the *Robert Campbell* for the next leg of their journey. This vessel was 190 feet long and 27 feet wide, slightly shorter than the *Scott*. Joined by fellow Mormons from Cleveland, Ohio, the Saints made up most of the passenger list of two hundred. Some of Watt's former group must have stayed in St. Louis, probably to earn money. Watt stored his newly purchased wagon on the boat.

On April 23, the *Robert Campbell* churned upstream, encountering a sandbar that stretched across the river at the end of the first day. The boat with its passengers and their possessions was too heavy to cross the bar, and so the captain bargained that if he could leave the freight behind, he would transport them to Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri, give them each

54. Baker, "By Windjammer and Prairie Schooner," 228–30.
55. Ibid.
56. Watt, Journal, April 20, 1851.
57. Ibid., April 15, 1851.
58. Ibid.

seven bushels of flour, and return for their goods. They agreed and helped unload their belongings. They reached Kansas City on May 1, and the *Robert Campbell* went back downriver for their things.

Watt realized that they were now in the very county from which the Mormons had been expelled in 1833. He reported that "the man who murdered the little boy at Haun's Mill lives in this place, I am informed, and goes at large boasting of this diabolical murder." They found housing in several places, but many of the passengers stayed with a Mr. Brewster, who was friendly to the Mormons and had a large log and frame building.[59]

One person died while they were waiting for the return of the *Robert Campbell:* Jane Wild, eighty-one, after three weeks of dysentery. They buried her and Orson Pratt's baby, who had died aboard the *Ellen Maria,* in the local graveyard.[60] Almost two weeks later on May 13, the *Statesman,* another steamboat carrying Mormons, arrived and reported that the *Robert Campbell* was stuck on a sandbar downriver. Fifty of the *Campbell*'s passengers, including Orson Pratt, arranged to continue their journey to Kanesville (later Council Bluffs, Iowa) on the *Statesman*. Watt opposed this decision. On May 17, the *Robert Campbell* arrived and picked up the remaining passengers: "The captain was much dissatisfied on hearing that so many of the passengers had left him for he had given them six bushels of flour."[61] On May 21, the captain, disgruntled over losing so many of his passengers to the *Statesman,* dropped off his Mormon passengers after charging them the maximum amount because of his loss.

The Mormons had first built Winter Quarters on the Nebraska side of the river in 1846, but their agreement with the local tribes lasted only two years. In 1848 they relocated across the river and founded Kanesville. A passing traveler in 1849 described the community as "a scrubby town of 80 to 100 log cabins" situated "three miles from the river in a deep hollow."[62] At the height of its existence—about 1852—Kanesville had a population of five thousand.[63]

Jean Rio Baker, who had traveled up the Mississippi and then by wagon across Iowa, reached Kanesville on July 2, 1851 and described it as "quite a pretty town and the surrounding scenery very beautiful."[64] She only stayed there for two days because the last company with John Brown was getting

59. Ibid., May 1, 1851. For the story of what happened at Haun's Mill, see Beth Shumway Moore, *Bones in the Well: The Haun's Mill Massacre, 1838, A Documentary History* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2006).
60. Watt, Journal, May 9–10, 1851.
61. Ibid., May 17, 1851.
62. As quoted in Richard Edmond Bennett, *Mormons at the Missouri, 1846–1852: "And Should We Die"* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 217.
63. Thaddeus A. Culbertson, *Journal of an Expedition to the Mauvaises Terres and the Upper Missouri in 1850* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1952), 29.
64. Baker, "By Windjammer and Prairie Schooner," 258.

ready to leave for Utah. To support its growing population and the emigration trade, Kanesville had a fairly substantial mercantile district, larger than expected for a town of its size.[65] This core of well-patronized and semipermanent merchants formed the genesis of what later developed into a thriving community. Kanesville existed almost exclusively for the purpose of launching Mormon pioneers off on the next leg of their journey across the West's prairies. The presiding church authority in the region was Apostle Orson Hyde, who also edited the *Frontier Guardian*.

Watt was relieved to be at the end of the long and grueling ocean and river journey. However, many storms that spring made Iowa wet and miserable. "The day is wet and very uncomfortable," he wrote.[66] Things did not look good for him. The roads were very "muddy." The previous ten days had plagued Kanesville with almost nonstop rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning. In fact, inclement weather continued with few breaks until sometime in July.[67] On at least one night during the early part of Watt's stay, the thunder and lightning were so severe that, according to Hyde's paper, at times it "appeared to resemble a caldron of molten brass, incessantly pouring its burnished contents in streams, promiscuously toward the earth."[68]

With his wife, son, and mother, and Jane Brown, his half sister, Watt must have thought that he had to have two wagons since he needed one for each family, which meant also oxen for both, and although others had loaned him large amounts, he did not have enough for another wagon and oxen. He had spent everything; now he despaired over his lack of money: "I was without money and had a large amount of luggage to convey to the valley, namely the luggage of two families. One wagon I found to be little to answer my purposes. I must have another wagon or leave part of my folks behind, namely my mother and sister." It is not clear why he felt he needed a second wagon since other families were larger and only used one. Perhaps Molly insisted that Jane and his mother not ride in her wagon. He tried to borrow some money from Orson Hyde from the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF). He even told him he "was sent for by the First Presidency." Hyde told him that "God helps those that help themselves." Hyde probably had run out of his PEF loan fund for the year because he asked Watt to raise more money for that purpose.

Finally, John Hardy loaned him £50 ($250), James Shelley from the *Ellen Maria* loaned him $5, and Samuel Patterson, his teamster, loaned him $16.

65. "Advertisements," *Frontier Guardian* 3 (June 27, 1851), 3–4.
66. Watt, Journal, May 21, 1851.
67. "Suggestion," *Frontier Guardian* 3 (June 27, 1851): 2. The *Guardian* at the end of June printed that it had rained continually for sixty days. For the life of Orson Hyde, who was the leader of Kanesville, see Myrtle Hyde, *Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Agreka Books, 2000), chaps. 13–14.
68. "Miniature View of the Disastrous Effects of the Late Rains," *Frontier Guardian* 3 (June 27, 1851): 3.

Watt then bought another wagon and a yoke of oxen, and he was on his way to the ferry, about three miles from Kanesville. Before even leaving on the journey, Watt was in debt $466, including the sum he had borrowed from Hardy in St. Louis.[69] I have found no records to indicate that he ever repaid it. Hardy had come with him on the *Ellen Maria,* but he does not appear in any records in Utah. Watt must have been exhausted and frustrated over trying to find money, oxen, and a wagon. Then he quarreled with Molly, probably over the attention he was paying to his half sister, Jane. Exactly what Molly took exception to is not known, but the argument was so severe that, smarting from Molly's temper, Watt angrily left the camp on foot.

In the midst of sparsely populated Iowa, he accidentally happened on the house of Robert Williams, one of his missionary companions in Manchester. Williams wrote in his autobiography eight years later that "George came tramping by my house. I was very sick and boy [his son] as well." When Watt walked into his house, he found only a log for a chair and Williams lying sickly on his cot. "Says I George you are welcome to my humble fair." After a short discussion, "George told me of his words with his wife and he remained with me 2 weeks hid up, to try to make his wife better in her feelings for she was a rip with a tongue but a good wife to him and a kind hearted woman." (Watt probably did not spend anymore than a week with Williams.) Watt convinced his old friend to emigrate to Zion and promised to transport Robert and his nine-year-old son, Alfred, in his own wagon.[70]

Probably while at Williams's house, he read the June 11 edition of the *Frontier Guardian.* On the last page, he came across a riddle in poem form entitled "Rebus by Amicus." A rebus is a riddle made up of symbols whose names resemble intended words or syllables. He must have read it carefully.

REBUS
BY AMICUS

Eight letters does my whole contain,
And three my first will spell,
A boundless, wide, sublime do-main;
The veriest child may tell.
It boasts the grandest works of art,
The mightiest earthly power;
To man it wealth, and woe imparts,
Each anxious passing hour.

69. Watt, Journal, May 22, 1851.

70. Robert Williams, Autobiography, 1859, pp. 120–21, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives. It is unclear what happened to Williams's wife. He married her in Nauvoo, but his writing jumps between narrating events and describing religious feelings. He talks about death and seems to connect her and a child in death. He also talks about her in connection with a William Smith and his wife, who had "concealed away my wife." He also comments that he was abused by William Smith and his wife. It's easy to conclude that Williams was not always rational. See Autobiography, pp. 93–100.

My second is a living thing,
A creature useful, strong;
And sometimes wealth and honor brings,
To whom it doth belong.
My whole's a monster that is rarely seen.
My 6 5 7 2, the choicest flower amid the green;
My 1 5 6 8, is painful, tiresome, filthy, mean,
My 3 1 7, an ill-famed brute, indeed, I ween,
My 7 2 8 6, as good a man as e'er has been;
My 4 5 1 8, a garment made without a seam,
My 4 5 2, a tool oft used at morn's first gleam,
My 7 4 5 6 2, a place of wind, of wet and steam,
My 2 3 6, a member useful, truthful, lean.
[An answer requested][71]

Since the author requested a reply, Watt decided that he would solve the rebus. He must have studied it diligently and written down his answer. He then carefully composed his own poem answering the riddle, which was published two weeks later in the *Frontier Guardian*.

ANSWER TO REBUS IN OUR LAST
BY G. D. W.

Your first, the boundless ocean wide
Your second a horse, the Indian's pride;
Your whole a SEA-HORSE
Which solves your rebus, right I ween
Your 4, 5, 1, 8, a scotchman's hose,
Your 6, 5, 7, 2, an English rose,
Your 7, 2, 8, 6 will name a seer;
Your 2, 3, 6, the human ear;
Your 4, 5, 2, a gardener's hoe,
Use it well, your gardens sure to grow,
Your 7, 4, 5, 6, 2, the sea-shore,
Your 1, 5, 6, 8, a painful sore;
Your 3, 1, 7, a slave to his glass,
A poor, silly, simple, drunken ass.

Feeling quite proud of his answer, Watt dropped it off at the newspaper's office, and sure enough Hyde published it.[72] Perhaps Watt, if he saw it, was surprised at his own success.

By the time Watt returned to the emigrant camp, Molly, who had not seen nor had any news about him since he had stalked out in a temper, was perhaps feeling remorseful, rather than angry, and the two reconciled. Now he had to prepare for his journey. Meanwhile, the last company, under the

71. "Rebus," *Frontier Guardian*" 3 (June 11, 1851): 4.
72. "Answer to Rebus in our Last," *Frontier Guardian* 3 (June 27, 1851): 4.

direction of Captain John Brown, was rendezvousing on the plains and hoping to leave early in July.[73] It is possible that Watt's wagon and family were already at Ferryville at the Missouri River crossing when he left them and found Williams. When he returned, someone probably helped him yoke up his oxen, and they crossed the river.

An urban Englishman, Watt had logged thousands of miles of travel by foot, rail, carriage, and ship, but he had never handled oxen before. At the riverbank, probably with Patterson's help, Watt managed to hitch the four yoke of oxen to his wagons. "I drove off, hoping to arrive at the river before the emigration had all left for their journey across the plains," he wrote. The next day one of his oxen was lame, so "I hitched the three yokes of cattle on to one wagon, drove a short distance, and then went back with the cattle and brought up the other wagon." (He later sold the lame ox.) He explained that he was no more than two hours from the camp. His oxen promptly balked and would only move if he yelled at them. He "worked faithfully and shouted at the cattle for two days, and I was almost used up." For unknown reasons, he did not know to drive by using a whip. Then the oxen got stuck in a mud hole; no prodding or coaxing would move them. "I had been coaxing the cattle for an hour, to get them to pull the wagon out, but they seemed perfectly satisfied to stay where they were," he complained.

Sixteen years later, as Watt was returning to Britain, he relived this experience and published it in the *Deseret Evening News*. He cast his experience in a comic light: "I sat down on the bank a little while, to rest and take a calm survey of my situation, when an officer of the company came riding up on the charitable mission of hunting up stragglers. 'Why Brother Watt, what are you doing here?' 'I am trying to go to Zion, but I cannot get these stupid creatures to take the wagon out of that mud.' He took my whip, and out came my wagon, apparently with very little effort."[74] Although the newcomer or greenhorn was a staple character in American humorous writing and Watt used that convention, he also took pains to explain that he was inexperienced, not incompetent. To his sister, he wrote very seriously in 1851, "The Americans have been trained to use oxen to plow, to travel with and for every purpose. Horses are used only to ride. An American feels quite at home with a whip and two or three yoke of oxen by his side." In contrast, "if ever a young man felt himself far from home it is when he has to commence, whip in hand, to drive and manage oxen. This is a lesson of no small magnitude."[75] He also added revealingly, "People do not know

73. "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal," introduction, holograph, LDS Church Archives. The clerk, Preston Thomas, starts by discussing the tardiness of the various groups and then, after the organizational meeting, begins with July 5, 1851.

74. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, February 25, 1867, *Deseret Evening News,* April 3, 1867, 109.

75. Ibid.

what kind of temper they got until they have to drive and manage a team of stupid oxen."[76]

Watt arrived in camp with three yoke and an odd ox. Lyman O. Littlefield, a resident of Kanesville who had been a member of Zion's Camp and a missionary to Britain in the late 1840s, gave him three yoke of young cattle and a cow still giving milk.[77] Altogether now Watt had thirteen oxen—three yoke per wagon—and one milk cow roped on the back.

Watt had expected to travel with Orson Pratt, who was assigned to the James W. Cummings Company. However, the difficulties of finding and then learning to drive his oxen had consumed so much time that the company had left on June 23 while he was still near Kanesville. Shortly before July 4, he learned that John Brown was going to form a company from the "fragments" of those still remaining. "I shall join this company as I am indeed a fragment," he commented. It was comprised of those who had not been able to leave before, including the poorest group of English converts.[78] This company had the great advantage of being captained by John Brown, an experienced frontiersman, who was thirty years old and came from Tennessee.[79]

Brown organized his company at first into three groups of ten: the first ten was captained by Preston Thomas, who later was a probate judge in Utah County; Joseph Chatterley, who in 1853 went to Iron County to mine and process iron, headed the second ten; and the inexperienced Watt was captain of the third. A day after the company was organized, on July 4, Alexander Robbins, who had been the president of the St. Louis Conference, arrived with a small group of twenty-three and asked to be taken into the company. Brown asked a committee, which included Watt, to inspect the wagons, teams, and loads to see "whether all were in a fitting condition for crossing the Plains." The committee recommended that Robbins leave behind five thousand pounds of freight and one wagon. Robbins agreed, and his group was admitted to Brown's company with him serving as captain of this fourth ten.[80]

76. Watt to John and Margaret Brandreth, ca. August 1851.

77. Watt, Journal, May 22, 1851. The last date in his journal before July 4 is May 22. From that date until July, he summarizes what took place, leaving out his experience with Robert Williams.

78. Brigham Young organized the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF) in 1850 to help poor emigrants. The PEF raised money by donations from the generosity of other church members. At first the church loaned money to emigrating families primarily to purchase oxen but expected them to buy their own wagons. The poor, who signed promissory notes for these sums, were expected to repay the rest of their loan with interest once they were established in Utah; these sums were then used to finance the travel of other poor Mormons. See Gustive O. Larson, *Prelude to the Kingdom: Mormon Desert Conquest, A Chapter in American Cooperative Experience* (Francestown, NH: Marshall Jones Company, 1947). This book is an expanded version of his MA thesis on the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company.

79. See "John Brown," in Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia,* vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901): 511–12.

80. "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal," July 5, 1851.

The next day Edwin Rushton, a native of Leeds, arrived with another group of twenty-four, including Jean Rio Baker, and Brown also admitted this group into the company.[81] On July 6, the following day, the company encountered a group of Oregon travelers who had lost some cattle to a stampeding herd of buffalo, and "some of them who had teams sufficient asked the priviledge of joining us."[82]

Brown added the eight wagons and twenty-seven people to the original three groups of ten, which included Watt, and now the company included five captains of ten and 292 people.[83] Watt's responsibility thus grew to a total of forty-nine people, including some non-Mormons as well. The wagon train left on July 7. Realizing that weather could cause a problem, Brown was probably anxious to start since he knew the trip would take at least two and a half months. To his sister Margaret, Watt wrote in August 1851, "We cross these plains in wagons drawn by oxen. We have two large wagons and thirteen head of cattle. We have three yoke of oxen to each wagon and one cow."[84] Samuel Patterson, his teamster, drove one of his wagons, and Watt, who undoubtedly had to take some lessons on driving oxen, drove the other.[85] According to the "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal," he also had a dog that accompanied him to the valley.[86]

The wagon train quickly fell into a daily rhythm on the trail. In Watt's letter to his sister and brother-in-law, he commented, "We sleep in our wagons and eat victuals from the broad prairie table covered with its natural, crazy carpet." They made a steady "fifteen to twenty miles per day six days a week and rest our cattle and our men on the seventh." He sketched a small circle with an opening on the left to illustrate the "corral" formed nightly so "we can drive our cattle in there and protect them from Indians, if there is any danger and also protect ourselves."[87]

According to the diary of Emily Smith Hoyt, who was forty-five years old and traveling with her husband, Samuel, they pulled their wagons into a circle at night, unhitched the oxen, and usually let them graze inside the circle if the grass was sufficient. After about a month, they let the animals graze out of the circle to find enough feed. Those with tents staked them down every night and dug ditches around them in case it rained. Sometime after dinner they chained the oxen to the wagons. If the immigrants slept in

81. Ibid., July 6, 1851.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Watt to John and Margaret Brandreth, ca. August 1851.
85. Williams, Autobiography, pp. 120–21. Williams said that Watt had to drive his own wagon.
86. "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal." Right after July 24, 1851, the clerk records the names of all those who traveled with the company and itemizes their wagons, oxen, cows, horses, and dogs. Watt had no horses, but he had a dog.
87. Watt to John and Margaret Brandreth, ca. August 1851.

their wagons, which the Watt family did, the movement of the oxen during the night jiggled the wagons, interrupting their slumber. Each morning a bugle sounded at daybreak, or else the watchman came round and woke up the teamsters by rapping on the wagons. The teamsters began hollering and calling their animals, usually to wake up the cooks. After breakfast the oxen were yoked and hitched to the wagons, and the company started off.[88] This happened every traveling day, and the Watt family, undoubtedly, became acquainted with this daily routine of the trail.

At first the Nebraska road was wet because of summer rains, and the travelers encountered frequent storms, though not enough to force them to lie over. A few days after the Brown company left, the *Frontier Guardian* reported that "our latest accounts from the plains are favorable: grass is good, and plenty of it, and a superabundance of water."[89] At times the travelers, unable to ford the swollen creeks, had to build bridges. On July 8, one of Watt's oxen, traveling loose, plunged into a swollen stream. A teamster quickly jumped in to stop it and was himself almost swept under until others came to their joint rescue.[90]

Another weather-related adventure occurred on July 17, when the wagon train stopped at a creek. Four of the five groups of ten crossed, but the fifth was still on the east side. "About sunset the heavens looked black and angry and about half past ten a tremendous thundershower struck with vivid and continued lightning," Watt described.[91] The gale-force wind blew down almost all the tents in the camp and sent some of the wagons ten feet from where they had stopped. The lightning, thunder, and hail were terrific. Robert Williams, Watt's former missionary companion, agreed about the terrifying force: "A mighty storm came up, the Laws of Nature angry, it thundered, lightned [lightninged], hailed, and blew, tore the waggon covers off, tents flying up in the air, as if the Laws of Nature was changing."[92]

Watt, even though he was a leader, was so frightened that he refused to leave his wagon bed to help others but instead called on Williams, who was traveling in one of his wagons, for assistance: "Oh! Robert come and save my wagon. I run and held to the cover untill my fingers were numed with Cold[.] I only had my shirt on, as naked as Adam[.] the Hail Pelting my Bear head." He prevented the cover from blowing away and probably spooking the animals in the corral. Williams complained to others about the way Watt treated him. When Watt heard, he approached Williams, "What do you mean by this you Scamp[.] Take your trunk[.]" Williams and his son,

88. Emily Smith Hoyt, Reminiscence and Diary, July 22, 1851, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.
89. "Summary of News &c.," *Frontier Guardian* 3, no. 12 (July 11, 1851): 2.
90. Watt, Journal, July 8, 1851.
91. Ibid., July 17, 1851.
92. Williams, Autobiography, 1859, pp. 120–21.

Alfred, left as Watt's traveling companions. Edwin Rushton invited them to travel with him.[93]

The Brown company members primarily ate flour products with bread and water gravy probably being the staples for the trip, but they varied their diet with game or wild fruit harvested along the trail. About two weeks out on the trail, they sighted buffalo. Although it was a Sunday, the Oregonians "went out and killed five buffalo and left them on the prairie to rot not having the means to bear them away." The next day, July 28, Brown sent out Mormon hunters to kill some buffalo for their meat. This time the Mormons, under the direction of Alexander Robbins, left four carcasses to rot.[94] Disgusted, Watt commented, "This is a sin and a shame" and described how "hundreds of pounds of this meat is left to rot on the plains and be devoured by the wolves which are very plentiful." He did not go on the hunting party, but "I helped cut up a bull about four years old. The buffalo is larger than our common ox considerably and the meat is much finer."[95] He wrote to Margaret and John Brandreth, "Were you to have a buffalo beef steak placed before you on your own table at home and you kept ignorant of it you would say you never ate a more delicious piece of meat in your life."[96]

The travelers saw buffalo continually over the next few days, encountering a gigantic herd on July 30 that surrounded them for at least two days and fifty miles. "The plains were black with these monstrous [creatures] as far as our eyes could see," Watt wrote.[97] They had to stop a few times to let the buffalo go across their path and were unnerved as "large herds from the River Platte galloping at full speed, threatening destruction of our cattle and wagons."[98] Brown finally sent men "forward on horseback to divide the herds that we might pass through the plains."[99]

Despite the real dangers, Watt greatly enjoyed the distinctive scenery of "the endless plains covered with grass and flowers of every grade and hue from the rose to the common unassuming daisy." In buffalo country, their own cattle found the native buffalo grass excellent feed. Close to the streambeds were "thousands of acres of the best kind of rye grass that you have seen grow in the parks of England. Cattle wade into [it] up [to] their bellies."[100]

Slowly but surely, they traveled mile after mile, using the only conveyance they had. On July 9, Watt commented, "After great exertion we reached the

93. Ibid.
94. Watt, Journal, July 27, 1851.
95. Ibid., July 28, 1851.
96. Watt to John and Margaret Brandreth, ca. August 1851.
97. Watt, Journal, July 30, 1851.
98. Watt, Journal, July 27–30, 1851.
99. Watt to John and Margaret Brandreth, ca. August 1851.
100. Ibid.

Platte with worn down teams and worn out bodies. All the camp was in the corral before sun down. Traveled ten miles."[101] A month later, on August 12, they passed Chimney Rock in western Nebraska. On August 16, they reached Fort Laramie in Nebraska Territory (now western Wyoming), their last chance short of Fort Bridger, Wyoming, to mail letters. Here Watt finished writing to his sister, Margaret, and brother-in-law, John Brandreth. He concluded on an appreciative note: "We have been preserved through all these dangers for which we render thanks to our Great Father who art in Heaven."[102]

The experienced Brown seems to have had a goal of traveling a hundred miles a week and, if possible, resting on Sundays. Sometimes, however, the travelers had to move to find better grass for their oxen. On seven of the twelve Sundays, they rested, though on one Sunday, they also repaired wagons. Of the five Sundays they traveled, the farthest they went was thirteen miles, which was almost a full day's trip.[103]

Of the seven Sundays when they rested, only once did they not hold preaching meetings. On August 3, one of the Oregonians traveling with them rose and complimented them on their good order, good feeling, and brotherly kindness toward each other.[104] That night all must have gone to their wagons much cheered and comforted. On one of the Sundays, August 31, Watt preached on what was called "the New Birth," but no diarist explained more than the title.[105] These breaks in the routine, coupled with the spiritual refreshment, probably reinvigorated the company, allowing them to continue their travels with new energy and enthusiasm.

On a trip of this length, the pioneers had to make continual repairs to their wagons, which wore down with the jarring and jolting. The Brown company was not an exception, but it did not need to make lengthy stops for repairs. Iron tires became the company's largest problem; they came loose because the men had fitted them in the rainy weather of Iowa, and, in the dry weather of Wyoming, the wooden wheels shrunk. Watt's own equipment seems to have been relatively sound. He mentions only one breakdown—a wagon tongue—about two weeks out from Kanesville, which he or his teamster repaired.[106]

In August the company passed a couple of Pawnee villages with considerable apprehension. Word had reached them that the James W. Cummings Company, which had left on June 24, had been robbed traveling through Iowa. On August 15, a large number of Indians—men, women,

101. Watt, Journal, July 9, 1851.
102. Watt to John and Margaret Brandreth, ca. August 1851.
103. See both Elias Smith, Journal, LDS Church Archives; and the "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal."
104. Hoyt, Reminiscence and Diary, August 3, 1851.
105. "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal," August 31, 1851.
106. Watt, Journal, July 21, 1851.

and children—approached the company, many of them offering to shake hands. The next day, before the wagons began their onward trek, a large number of Indians came into the camp.[107] Elias Smith apprehensively wrote that the Indians "were thick about our train all day and after we camped."[108] When some of their stock turned up missing, the emigrants immediately concluded that the Pawnees had driven them off, but they found them grazing a short distance west of camp.[109]

Watt's diary ends in mid-August because presumably he had become tired. On August 1, after traveling under a hot sun and on a heavy, sandy road, Watt and the company stopped their animals for lunch at a "splendid spring of cold water about 300 miles from old Winter Quarters."[110] On August 4, he and his mother were ill with unspecified symptoms. Five days later, both he and Molly were ill.[111] He made a point on August 9 to describe the only tree they had seen for miles: "It is destitute of leaves and seems scrubby and unhealthy but it is a tree."[112] On August 10, he commented that they "camped on the banks of a beautiful flowing spring."[113] However, his journal complains even more frequently about the sand that made travel so difficult. He also became discouraged because his stove broke when it fell out of his wagon.[114] At this point, Watt, Molly, and his family had been traveling for more than six months. His energy was sapped, and he was weary. He made his last journal entry on August 13, three days before the company reached Fort Laramie.[115]

Although the Mormons spaced departing wagon trains by at least a few days, bad luck, inefficiency, or weaker animals meant that some clumped together. Sometimes non-Mormon trains also traveled with or near Mormon ones. On August 18, two other wagon trains were traveling with Brown's company. Elias Smith wrote that all the companies were traveling close to each other until you could not tell where one ended and another began: "As we wound over the hills all together we made quite a splendid show."[116] Emily Hoyt observed that there were so many wagons on the trail that they extended as far as a person could see.[117]

In late August near the Sweetwater River, Watt's group encountered ninety Snake River warriors. Preston Thomas wrote apprehensively, "Today we met warriors of the Snake Indians to gether with the Agents of the

107. Hoyt, Reminiscence and Diary, August 15, 1851.
108. Smith, Journal, August 15, 1851.
109. Hoyt, Reminiscence and Diary, August 16, 1851.
110. "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal," August 1, 1851.
111. Watt, Journal, August 4, 10, 1851.
112. Ibid., August 9, 1851.
113. Ibid., August 10, 1851.
114. Ibid., August 3, 1851.
115. Ibid., August 13, 1851.
116. Smith, Journal, August 18, 1851.
117. Hoyt, Reminiscence and Diary, August 18, 1851.

government of the U. States on their way to attend a treaty at Fort Larimie on the first of September next."[118] Jean Rio Baker commented appreciatively, "They made a grand appearance, all on horseback and gayly dressed; some with lances, others with guns or bows and arrows, also a number of ponies carrying tents."[119] Despite the emigrants' anxiety, the company traveled safely the entire distance.

On September 1, the company was at Independence Rock. Nine days later, on September 9, they crossed South Pass, but because of weakened animals, they did not reach Fort Bridger until September 19.[120] About a week and sixty miles out from the Salt Lake Valley, Brown's company moved five miles and waited for Joseph Chatterley's ten to catch up, camping in a mountain valley near Cache Cave. While they were there, Watt and others climbed the hill to the cave, and, with some sharp implement, he carved his name, "G. D. Watt," into the soft sandstone on the west side about waist high as many had done before and hundreds would do after him.[121] It snowed on the overlanders on September 27 but only lightly. They followed the route of the 1847 Mormon vanguard company by starting down Echo Canyon, climbing laboriously up Big Mountain, and then descending Emigration Canyon. On September 28, they camped on the bench at the mouth of the canyon overlooking the Salt Lake Valley. The next day they reached the city. Some found relatives and friends awaiting them, but probably the Watt family did not.

Still, his spirits must have been high: George D. Watt had finally arrived in Zion. He now had not only a spiritual home but a physical one, too. At thirty-nine, the first stage of his life was over. He had served his Lord and his church. Now he was ready to live in Zion, raise a family, and carve out his chosen vocation.

118. Smith, Journal, August 28, 1851.
119. Baker, "By Windjammer and Prairie Schooner," 266.
120. "John Brown Emigrating Company Journal," September 1, 9, 19, 1851.
121. The name is still there; the author saw it on June 17, 2006.

5

LIFE AND TIMES IN UTAH
POLITICS IN THE TERRITORY

> How long we may stay at this point I cannot say, neither does it concern me, I am on the lords business, I am just as ready to return again close on the enemies borders, as to return home, tho I presume my home is as dear to me, and your sweet society, as home and a wifes society can possably be to any mortal . . .
>
> George D. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 14, 1857

George Watt was now in Zion. He had been tested in the mission field and had passed admirably, preaching God's word to thousands. Now he was ready to dwell with the Saints. He had missed the experiences of those who had left Nauvoo, sojourned at Winter Quarters, and traveled on to the Great Salt Lake Valley. He also did not voyage on the ship *Brooklyn* or march with the Mormon Battalion, except vicariously through the prism of the *Millennial Star,* which sometimes distorted and omitted important parts of the story. After reaching Zion, he had a vivid view of the forthcoming Utah War and left a record of the conflict in letters he wrote to his wife Alice. He did not participate directly in Utah's Indian wars or the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but he was working in the church president's office, a useful observation point, when those events occurred. He also knew about them from newspaper accounts or firsthand observers.

While he was on his mission, Watt avidly read the *Millennial Star.* It told him about not only what was happening within the British Mission but also events in the United States and especially the movements in the church.

While still in Britain, he wrote to Willard Richards that Orson Spencer, the editor of the *Millennial Star,* "so completely skims off the cream from all news, both of a home and foreign nature."[1]

In 1846 the Mormon leadership considered leaving the United States for California. Brigham Young and others studied John C. Fremont's report closely and decided to take the Mormons to the Mexican territories. Dutifully, editor Orson Hyde of the *Star* published part of the account of Fremont's expedition to the West over four months.[2]

Watt did not know for some time about the Mormon Battalion recruitment, although he had probably read in the English newspapers about the beginning of the Mexican War, which occurred on April 25, 1846. His first inkling about a group of men going to fight the Mexicans came from a published letter by Orson Hyde in March 1847. Writing as if he were an outsider, Hyde described the atrocities that had happened to the Mormon people and the way that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been killed in "cold blood." Later in his letter, he stated, "They have sent 500 of their most efficient men into the army of the United States. This cripples them very much in prosecuting their journey, as most of these men were teamsters, and had families or friends dependent upon their personal exertions to get along."[3] The *Star* reported what little information it had, but many questions remained.

A month later, Brigham Young wrote more conclusively about the battalion marching to Santa Fe, where the sick left for Pueblo for the winter. This group of men, under James Brown, left for Colorado "accompanied by the laundresses, sick, &c., of the battalion, numbering in all about eighty."[4]

Shortly after this, Watt and Lucius Scovil, another missionary, received letters from individuals in the battalion, and they published them in the *Star.* Watt now knew that "a detachment of 170 of our brethren, including the sick and laundress women are stationed for winter quarters, and reached here [Pueblo] after a journey of fifty-two days, without a guide, not seeing a white man on the routes."[5] Watt did not yet know about the courageous march across the Southwest. He realized that the battalion had

1. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, February 5, 1848, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
2. See the Oregon and California excerpts, "Oregon and California," *Millennial Star* 8 (July 15, 1846): 3–5; (August 1, 1846): 17–19; (August 15, 1846): 33–35; (September 1, 1846): 49–52; (September 15, 1846): 49–52; (October 1, 1846): 65–67; and (October 15, 1846): 81–84. All of these articles have the same title.
3. "Important Concerning the United States of America," *Millennial Star* 9 (March 1, 1847): 65–69.
4. "Letter to Elders Hyde, Pratt, and Taylor," *Millennial Star* 9 (April 1, 1847): 99.
5. "Extracts of Letters from the Camp of Israel, North America. Addressed to L.N. Scovil and G. D. Watt," *Millennial Star* 9 (April 1, 1847): 133–34. There were 159 men and 30 women sent to Pueblo.

arrived in California when the *Star* reported on July 1, 1847, that General Kearny "was joined about the 9th of January, at San Diego, by Lieu-Colonel Cooke, with the battalion of Mormons under their command. Great praise is bestowed on Col. Cooke, for the condition in which he brought his command in. It is said that all his men were in fine health, with their arms as bright as when they set out on the march."[6] Unbeknownst to Watt, the main group had left the Rio Grande River about ninety miles north of El Paso and traveled southwest through present-day Arizona, marching over parched soil and rough terrain to Tucson. Under Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, they arrived in San Diego on January 29, 1847, emaciated and weather worn.

The *Millennial Star* published an official order of Cooke in January 1848, summarizing the journey of the battalion: "Without a guide who had traversed them, we have ventured into trackless prairies, where water was not found for several marches . . . we have discovered and made a road of great value to our country." He praised the men for their valor: "Thus volunteers, you have exhibited some high and essential qualities of veterans."[7]

From the *Millennial Star,* Watt also heard details about Winter Quarters. In 1847 Brigham Young wrote his followers in the British Isles that on the banks of the Missouri River, "we have upwards of 700 houses in our miniature city, composed mostly of logs in the body, covered with puncheon, straw and dirt."[8]

The editors also explained about the ship *Brooklyn*. Watt knew previously that Samuel Brannan had taken a group of Mormons from New York City who were now sailing to California around South America and Cape Horn at its tip. The *Star* editorialized about the wonder of California: "The few scores of emigrants on board the *Brooklyn* are but a fraction of the immense number on their way thither." On February 1, 1847, the *Millennial Star* reported that the *Brooklyn* had come into port.[9] Watt did not know that the ship had left on February 4, 1846, with 220 Mormons and sailed around Cape Horn to the Juan Fernández Islands, where they had taken on provisions. They then had traveled to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), landing at Oahu, before finally crossing the Pacific to San Francisco, where they disembarked at the end of July 1846.[10]

6. "Various Extracts from the American Papers," *Millennial Star* 9 (July 1, 1847): 200. The *Star* reported that the Battalion came in on January 9, but they did not arrive until January 29, 1847.
7. "Mormon Battalion," *Millennial Star* 10 (January 1, 1848): 23–24.
8. "Letter to Elders Hyde, Pratt, and Taylor," 97–98.
9. "Good News from Afar," *Millennial Star* 9 (February 1, 1847): 38–40.
10. See Kenneth N. Owens, *Gold Rush Saints: California Mormons and the Great Rush for Riches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 31–42. Owens has drawn from several accounts, both published and unpublished, to tell the story of the Mormons participating in the gold rush.

The *Brooklyn* Saints settled in San Francisco or traveled farther north, founding the town of New Hope on the Stanislaus River. Brannan left shortly, crossed the Sierra Nevada, and found the Mormon vanguard company on June 30 on the Green River, but Brigham Young would not follow him back to California. The vanguard party arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley on July 23–24, 1847, where the pioneers began to build a city. The Mormon Battalion sick detachment came a few days later. The *Star* also reported that "the other 350 soldiers are discharged in California."[11]

The *Millennial Star* did not say that many remained in California to work for a season and bring back supplies to Salt Lake City. A few of the battalion's members, including James S. Brown, Azariah Smith, and Henry Bigler, helped build a mill on the American River at Sonoma for John Sutter and his partner, James Marshall. The publication did inform its readers on November 1, 1848, "The discovery of gold on the branches of the Sacramento river seems to be confirmed by many witnesses. . . . It is reported that this discovery was made by the Mormons."[12] Probably later Watt heard that on January 4, 1848, Marshall had discovered the glittering metal, and nearby were James S. Brown and Henry Bigler, both returning members of the battalion. The Mormons finished the mill, but they received no pay from Sutter, who was ruined by the gold mania. In April the battalion boys left California for Utah. Most of the *Brooklyn* Saints had preceded them.[13]

The *Millennial Star* reported the progress of Young's vanguard company as they left their temporary home in Nebraska and journeyed to the Great Salt Lake Valley much more thoroughly than the other events. About seven months after Brigham Young and his party arrived, the *Millennial Star* published a Thomas Bullock letter that briefly described their journey, their arrival, ploughing, and irrigation of their newly planted crops.[14] In November 1848, John Taylor, who came with a later company, arriving on October 5, wrote, "The valley in which we reside lays between the Great Salt Lake and the Utah lakes, in latitude 41E longitude 112E. It is from 60 to 70 miles long and from 20 to 30 wide; there is a range of mountains running on each side of the valley north and south, the tops of which are perpetually covered with snow."[15]

The best information about the Mormons' new settlement until Watt observed it came from the first three general epistles of the First Presidency, as reprinted in the *Millennial Star*. They told him that food was scarce in the valley: "In the former part of February, the bishops took an inventory of the breadstuff in the valley, when it was reported that there was little more

11. "Letter from Elder Orson Hyde," *Millennial Star* 9 (September 15, 1847): 271.
12. "November 1, 1848, Salt Lake," *Millennial Star* 10 (November 1, 1848): 330
13. See Owens, *Gold Rush Saints,* chaps. 2–5, pp. 57–199.
14. "Letter from Thomas Bullock," *Millennial Star* 10 (March 15, 1848): 116–17.
15. "Address to the Saints," *Millennial Star* 10 (November 1, 1848): 324–26.

than three-fourths of a pound per day for each soul, until the fifth of July." The crickets also appeared, "but large flocks of plover have already come among them." That report must not have discouraged Watt. The *Star* also described the valley and the church organization by the settlers: "The valley is settled for twenty miles south and forty miles north of the city. The city is divided into nineteen wards . . . and over each is ordained a bishop."[16] Both the second and third general epistles expressed concern about the Saints going after gold in California.[17] Ute Indians, resisting Mormon settlement of the richest part of their homeland, had also caused problems: "The Utah Lake Indians . . . have been very hostile, killed many scores of our cattle, stole horses, waylaid and shot at the brethren at Utah."[18] Even with these negatives, Watt anxiously looked forward to crossing the ocean and the plains and coming to Utah. Much had taken place in the years he was gone. He had kept track of the actions of the church through the *Millennial Star*. Now he could share the experiences of the main body of his religious compatriots.

On September 29, 1851, Watt and his family traveled the last few miles down Emigration Canyon and rolled into Salt Lake City. It appeared to be only a little more than a mile from the canyon, but the distance was deceiving, for they found that more than five miles separated the two spots. As they descended from the bluff, they also saw several creeks dotted with cottonwood trees that wound through the valley. The city was partially surrounded by a wall composed of adobe brick, built for protection against the Indians but never completed. They also noticed that water flowed through the ditches that lined the streets.

In the temple block, workmen were busy constructing the Tabernacle, located on the southwest corner. To the east of that building was the Bowery, an open structure, covered with branches that shaded the audience during a hot summer day. To the north and a little east, the builders had started to construct the temple. The other large buildings in the city included a three-story tithing office, the Council House used for church and government administrative meetings, and Brigham Young's white house. When Watt arrived, there were three stores: Livingston and Kinkead, Reese Brothers, and Thomas S. Williams.[19]

In 1855 Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, Frenchmen who had been all over the world, came to town. They commented on the cleanliness of the city and the industriousness of the people: "The masons were at work building,

16. "Important from the Great Salt Lake," *Millennial Star* 11 (August 1, 1849): 227–32.
17. "Important from Salt Lake City," *Millennial Star* 12 (April 15, 1850): 118–22.
18. "Third General Epistle of the Presidency," *Millennial Star* 12 (August 1850): 241–46.
19. There are a number of early articles about the experiences of the immigrants. See "Fifth General Epistle," *Millennial Star* 13 (July 15, 1851): 209–13; "Ethan Crandall Diary," *Minnesota History* 20 (September 1939): 348–49. Also see "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," September 30, 1855, pp. 5–7, LDS Church Archives.

carpenters squaring timber, gardeners digging or watering, . . . gunsmiths making or repairing rifles; in a word, all descriptions of artisans and workmen of every kind."[20] These workmen were helping to build the various public and church buildings in this new city.

The Mormon pioneers had discovered nothing they perceived as permanent Indian dwellings, but the Utes, Shoshones, and Gosiutes who lived in the basin of the Great Salt Lake used seasonal, temporary structures for shelter. When they first arrived, the Mormons built a fort to protect themselves against the Native Americans; it was located between Third and Fourth South and Third and Fourth West in present-day Salt Lake City. When they had no trouble, they moved out to lots and built their homes. They looked upon the Indian presence as an opportunity to convert and civilize. However, the Indians did not feel and act benevolently toward these invaders. Mormon settlers were taking their land, and in return they thought they could take, or steal as far as the Mormons were concerned, cattle and other things as a sort of tax. The newcomers reacted to thieving Indians violently, killing several of them. In 1851 Brigham Young, realizing that violence would not effect a solution, advised the settlers to treat the Indians kindly and not kill them, but he also encouraged settlers to defend themselves and authorized the territorial militia to pursue and punish Ute and other Indian warriors.[21]

During the first war with the Utes, members of the Pahvant band on the lower Sevier River in October 1853 massacred a party of seven, led by Captain John W. Gunnison of the Corps of Topographical Engineers. Gunnison had assisted in exploring Utah Lake and the Jordan River.[22] Finally, Chief Walkara tired of war and sought peace. The war ended on May 11, 1854, when Brigham Young and Walkara met on Chicken Creek in Juab County and settled the hostilities.[23]

To farm, these new settlers diverted the mountain streams into canals, which brought the water to their fields. The Mormons, plagued by crickets that devoured crops, fought them as best they could, usually uselessly.[24] From 1855 to 1857, grasshoppers devastated the acreage, and most Utah farmers from Springville to Brigham City lost major portions of their coming harvest. Joseph Eckersley, who lived in Lehi, said that the grasshoppers were so plentiful that they darkened the sun for hours as they flew past in vast clouds.[25] Watt undoubtedly lost most of his garden during that time. Utah had grasshoppers many times after that but never as many as during

20. See Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City* (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), 197.
21. Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1996), 109–115.
22. "Journal History," October 26, 1853, pp. 1–4.
23. Ibid., May 30, 1854.
24. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place*, 102–3.
25. Joseph Eckersley, Journal and Reminiscence, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

those years of the early and mid-1850s. Everybody, including the Watt family, suffered from lack of food.

In the midst of these years of want and starvation, the Mormons also experienced a period of religious reform: the Mormon Reformation. Jedediah Grant, a member of the First Presidency, preached a sermon about repentance and baptism for the remission of sins in Kaysville in September 1856, and most of the congregation accepted his challenge and were rebaptized. Thereafter, Brigham Young and especially Grant fervently called the people to repent from their sins, and many others followed into the waters of baptism. Watt must also have been rebaptized, although there is no record of it.[26] Later, Grant formulated the catechism, which included questions on prayer, stealing, taking intoxicating drink, and paying tithes. The visiting teachers interrogated their families each month about these issues. The zealous part of the reformation ended with Grant's death on December 1, 1856, a few months after it had started.[27]

Immigrant trains bringing new converts continued to come into Utah during the late summer and early fall months.[28] In 1856 the Mormon leadership designed handcarts that could be pulled, thus allowing more people to come across the plains less expensively. A disaster struck two handcart companies and a wagon company that year. The James G. Willie and Edward Martin handcart companies and the W.B. Hodgett and John A. Hunt wagon train with more than a thousand people left Florence, Nebraska, late, and early snowstorms hit them in Wyoming, causing hardship and death. When Brigham Young received word of their plight, he dismissed the October General Conference and called for volunteers to carry food and provisions into Wyoming to help. Watt was in the Tabernacle when Young made his announcement. He did not rush to their aid, but let younger and more able men do that.[29]

Shortly after their rescue, Watt recognized Josiah Rogerson's mother, who had been a member of James Fielding's congregation at Vauxhall Chapel in Preston, England, and more recently a member of the Edward Martin handcart company, as she and her family were driving along Main Street. Rogerson said that "soon we were unloaded and taken into his adobe building—his home. . . . We had a dinner there, that Sunday, warm and steaming, the relish and enjoyment of which we cannot describe as it was

26. There is a record of only a few of the people who were rebaptized during this period.
27. See Paul H. Peterson, "The Mormon Reformation" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981).
28. For the best description of the handcart experience, see LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856–1860* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1960).
29. For the most recent version for the Martin and Willie Company's see Will Bagley, "'One Long Funeral March': A Revisionist's View of the Mormon Handcart Disasters," Journal of Mormon History (Winter 2009) 35: 50–116.

the second taste of light bread and the first real meal of vegetable stew that we had tasted since leaving Iowa City five months before."[30] They probably enjoyed a delightful evening, and Watt undoubtedly asked many questions about people in Preston and the Rogersons' horrific journey.

After the Mexican War, this small group of religious outsiders was now in the United States. At first the Mormons petitioned Congress for territorial status. Then, realizing the limitations and conflicts they would have in a territorial government, the Mormon leadership agreed to draft a constitution for the State of Deseret. It would have encompassed all of present-day Utah, most of Nevada, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. Senator Stephen A. Douglas from Illinois presented the Mormon petition for statehood. During this period, Congress was bickering over whether the new territories should be free or slave. The congressmen tabled the Mormon request for statehood. They passed an all-encompassing program called the Compromise of 1850, allowing California into the union as a free state and creating the territories of New Mexico and Utah without mentioning slavery. The Mormons lost their grandiose vision of Deseret as a large geographical state. With a territorial government, they also lost their ability to govern their own affairs. President Millard Fillmore appointed a combination of outsiders and local people to fill the territorial offices.

The Utah War began with the creation of the Utah Territory in 1850. President Millard Fillmore appointed Brigham Young governor of the territory and superintendent of Indian affairs. To take care of the judicial system, Fillmore appointed judges who were non-Mormons. Many of these did not understand the Mormons, especially the practice of polygamy. Judge Perry E. Brocchus was the first to upset and belittle the Mormons. Convinced that the territory was controlled by church elite, Brocchus denounced the practice of polygamy in a conference. Young demanded an apology. Brocchus shortly thereafter left Utah, spreading news in the East about the sins of the Mormons.[31]

The tremors created by federal officials continued with the appointment of William Wormer Drummond as a judge. He annulled the proceedings of the Mormon-controlled probate courts and accused the Mormons of being in opposition to the United States. As the controversy intensified, Drummond returned to the Midwest and began his own campaign against the Saints and everything they practiced, especially polygamy. These so-called runaway judges convinced the federal government that the Mormons were in rebellion and something needed to be done.[32] President James

30. "Martin's Handcart Company Had Troubles the Whole Way," *Salt Lake Herald-Republican,* November 29, 1914, 7.
31. Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960), 22–25.
32. Donald R. Moorman with Gene A. Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War*

Buchanan appointed a new governor, Alfred Cumming, a Georgian, and dispatched an army by mid-June of 1857 to support him.[33]

On July 24, 1857, Mormons had gathered up Big Cottonwood Canyon to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their coming into the Great Salt Lake Valley. Watt was also in the canyon, reporting the events for the *Deseret News*. During the day, four riders delivered the message that the U. S. Army was traveling to Salt Lake City to put down a rebellion. Twenty-five hundred men of the United States Army were on their way by command of President Buchanan, escorting Alfred Cumming.[34] Brigham Young ordered the Mormons to arm themselves. He declared martial law and called out the militia, the Nauvoo Legion, which he asked to build defenses so they could withstand the federal army. Watt was in Salt Lake City until the end of August, when he volunteered for the militia and left for Wyoming. He took with him his two guns, one a revolving pistol, and the other a .38 caliber, eight-inch-barrel, Volcanic lever-action pistol. He intended to use them, if necessary, to defend his life and the Mormon people.[35]

In the meantime, the federal army plodded on its way toward Utah.[36] By the end of August, the army was at Devil's Gate on the Sweetwater River on the high plains of Wyoming, closely watched by the Mormon troops. Watt joined eighty-five citizen soldiers of the Fourteenth Ward, and the Nauvoo Legion leadership assigned them to the first division under Colonel Robert Burton.[37] Burton had taken the cavalry as far as Devil's Gate, but the infantry did not venture that far east. By the end of September, the Burton unit encamped two miles south of Fort Bridger in southwestern Wyoming.[38]

Watt wrote three letters to his wife Alice (only two are extant), describing what was happening. In the first letter, dated October 5, 1857, he mentioned that the United States troops had camped at Hams Fork about

(Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992) 6–15.

33. LeRoy R. Hafen, *The Utah Expedition, 1857–1859: A Documentary Account of the United States Military Movement under Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, and the Resistance by Brigham Young and the Mormon Nauvoo Legion* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 319.
34. Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons,* 20.
35. The Volcanic lever-action pistol is still in the family.
36. For the point of view of one of the soldiers, see Jesse A. Gove, *The Utah Expedition, 1857–1858: Letters of Capt. Jesse A. Gove, 10*th *Inf., U.S.A., of Concord, N. H. to Mrs. Gove, and Special Correspondence of the* New York Herald, New Hampshire Historical Society Collections 12 (Concord, NH: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1928). For another article on the federal side, see William P. MacKinnon, "'Unquestionably Authentic and Correct in Every Detail': Probing John I. Ginn and His Remarkable Utah War Story," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (Fall 2004), 322–42. The most recent account is a documentary edition by William P. MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point: A Documentary History of the Utah War to 1858,* part 1 (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2008).
37. Nauvoo Legion records, 1852–58, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
38. General Daniel Wells and Brigham Young exchanged numerous letters. See Daniel Wells, incoming correspondence, and Brigham Young, outgoing correspondence, Brigham Young papers, LDS Church Archives.

thirty-five miles north of Fort Bridger. In the meantime, Mormon cavalrymen under Lot Smith had burned three supply trains.[39] Watt wrote that five from his company had reported that they had burned seventy-six wagons loaded with clothing and arms. He mentioned that "a company of our boys rode right into their correl, and even struck the guards with their leathers, slapping their animals, and yelling like Indians but all to no purpose." He told Alice that a detachment of "our boys" reported that the "enemy is on the alert, their animals are well secured, hobbled and chained, making it imposable to stampede them." He did not "know what the future will reveal but it is certain that all will go well for Israel. . . . The Lord will give us the victory over our enemies and strike Terror to the hearts of those who thirst for the blood of the prophets of God."[40]

Watt had not outfitted himself for the cold mountain weather. He had left the valley with a pair of boots, but he had done more walking than he expected, and now he needed new boots because the ones he had were "parting soul from the body," which must have caused lameness. He asked Alice to have brother Godsal make him a new pair, and "if you can by any means send them to me." He also told her that he needed a new pair of mittens. He had brought a pair of gloves that he had received from his mother. He had exchanged those for a pair of warm mittens, but he had lost one mitten and given the other away.[41]

He commented that "camp life in the capacity of soldiers is a hard life, . . . there are scenes highly interesting and amusing the one somewhat ballances the other. We have plenty of beef and flour, but no salt, nor cooking utensils." He was sure she would find it interesting to see how they cooked their food. He told her that for plates they used wood "chips when we can find them." Watt said, "The meat is roasted over a large camp fire, each man holding his steak on the pointed end of a green willow stick, the cooked portion is then cut off. The remainder is cooked again in the same way and so on until it is all cooked and eaten." The men mixed flour with water, rolled it into yard-long lengths around a stick, and "then held before the fire until cooked."[42]

Watt had not even had time to harvest his garden: "If you can hire any person to gather my garden, do so." He was not sure when he would return, so "if you can trade peaches or flour for wood do so, it may be winter before I get home." Her added burdens concerned him: "Our present circumstances

39. For the story of the suppliers and the damage the Utah militia did, almost bankrupting them, see Raymond W. and Mary Lund Settle, *War Drums and Wagon Wheels: The Story of Russell, Majors and Waddell* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

40. George D. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 5, 1857, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

41. Ibid. I can find no brother Godsal in the territory. There was a John Godsall in Iowa City, who was ready to come to Utah.

42. Ibid.

throws a little more weight upon you than otherwise would have been, but my Dear have a mans heart in you for a little while, and you can do much to help me while I am fighting for your safety and for the good of Israel." He was convinced that "the Lord will show his power at his own time and in his own way, I am satisfied that all depends upon our obedience to our leaders, faith in our God and union among ourselves." Convinced that they were defending truth and right, his prayer was "may God help me to be brave and valient in the defence of everything that is dear to me and to you." His request was "give us your prayer." In his parting sentences, he sent his love to her father and mother, and his mother, and "all the little boys and girls. God bless and preserve us both in life until we again shall meet amen."[43]

Some of the U. S. Army units began to move toward northern Idaho. Colonel Burton and his troops followed them. The federal troops later retreated back to their original Wyoming campsite. Two weeks later, Watt reported that he had traveled constantly. He had been "traveling over fortie bottoms and saleratus plains, climing mountains and threading canyons, passing through hair breadth escapes." He had once been riding in a baggage wagon when it had gone down a "deep declevity, the wagon and its load, with 4 loaded guns all around me being turned upon me, smashing the wagon bows to a thousand pieces." He had also narrowly escaped being blown up by gunpowder when "Geo. Spencer one of our mess had his powder flask in his pocket with a 100 rounds of powder in it, also some matches which ignited and exploded the powder blowing the flask into a thousand pieces, enveloping every person near him in smoke and flame."[44] Spencer amazingly must not have been injured in that explosion.[45]

General Wells now ordered Burton's unit south to a defensible point in Echo Canyon on the main transportation artery to the Great Salt Lake Valley. By the middle of October, Watt was only about thirty miles away from Salt Lake City or, as he said, "about one days ride from the beloved City and the dear association in it." The Nauvoo Legion, with Watt's participation, had burned Fort Bridger and also the forage around the fort so the army could not feed its animals. Watt had "escaped every danger without scratch or hurt, how great are the mercies of our God!" He thought that they had thoroughly confused and befuddled their adversary: "Our tracks may be seen for hundreds of miles around our enemies camp."[46]

Watt thought it would take only five hundred men to defend Echo Canyon. He saw the dams that his fellow legionnaires built and the rock placements at the top of the canyons, where they could shoot at the passing

43. Ibid.
44. George D. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 14, 1857, holograph, Watt Papers.
45. If this story is true, it is surprising that George Spencer was not killed along with all those around him.
46. Watt to Alice Whittaker Watt, October 14, 1857.

soldiers. He said, "They have grade rock defences with port holes on every point commanding a good rifle range of the road for a distance of over a mile, they have dug diches clear across the canyon, and have it so fixed that they can stop the water and make a dam large enough to drown both horse and rider." Watt was convinced that the Mormons could withstand the U.S. Army: "All hope of their ever passing this point is totaly extinguished." So there "is nothing now left for them but to lay down their arms, and search for winter quarters, retreat eastward, or remain where they are, to perish in the snows of winter."[47]

He told Alice that he was ready to stay for some time: "How long we may stay at this point I cannot say, neither does it concern me, I am on the lords business, I am just as ready to return again close on the enemies borders, as to return home." He continued, "Tho I presume my home is as dear to me, and your sweet society, as home and a wifes society can possably be to any mortal, it is to defend such endearments that I am here, ready if necessary to pour out our blood like water for them, for our holy religion, and for national liberty." He said that such feelings had inflamed his own bosom "since I have been out on this campaign to such an extent as to create a longing desire to meet the enemy, face to face and with deadly weapons try the contest."[48]

He had received no mail from home, which concerned him. He was "perfectly ignorant as [to] the state of your health and the health of your friends." She had not sent him any letters. "I have stood with cracking ears expecting every next name would be G. D. Watt but as yet I have not had the satisfaction of receiving a single line from my friends. . . . I must say that I felt for a time forsaken and friendless." Letters had come for almost every man in the unit except him. "I had just come in from a long and tedious days journey, was hungery—weary—and worn—and dirty, and on the top of this no letter for me, I felt for a moment as tho nobody cared for me; but I knew better at the same time." He said he knew she had added responsibilities and then begged her to "drop me a line." He advised Alice not to have brother Godsal make that pair of boots since "my feet is on the ground and has been, but I can get along now, I think until the end of the campaign."[49]

Brigham Young ordered Colonel Burton's weary troops to return to Salt Lake, and they were home by October 18.[50] Watt returned to Salt Lake City with the other men, and he probably hurried to have brother Godsal or someone repair his boots just in case he was ordered back up the canyon. On October 25, he was in the Tabernacle reporting the meetings again. Many of Burton's men returned to the canyon about that time, but Watt did not. A few weeks later, a large snowstorm hit the area, which kept the U.

47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Robert T. Burton, Diary, October 18, 1857, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

S. soldiers in their winter quarters for the rest of the season. The Nauvoo Legion released most of its men to return home. Watt remained in the valley until February 1858. For another six weeks after that, he was probably again in the mountains.[51]

In the meantime, Colonel Thomas Kane had approached President Buchanan about mediating the end of the war, and Buchanan agreed. Not a church member, Kane had known the Mormons since mobs expelled them from Nauvoo. Kane traveled on a ship to Panama, quickly crossed the isthmus, and caught another ship to California. When he arrived in Utah, he convinced Brigham Young that he should travel to the soldiers' camp. Upon arriving at the camp, he persuaded Cumming that the Mormons would accept him as governor, and the two of them left to visit with Young. Kane was a catalyst to end the war and bring peace.[52]

The agreement between Young and Cumming allowed the army to enter Great Salt Lake Valley but not camp there. Cumming guaranteed that the army would not molest the Mormons, but Young, not entirely convinced, ordered the Mormons to vacate Salt Lake City and move south.[53] He wanted each ward north of Provo to leave as an entire body and assigned each one a special location from Provo south to Fillmore. The movement into Utah Valley began during the latter part of March. Watt remained in Salt Lake City through the April conference and was still there until sometime near the end of May, when the other clerks in the office moved. He by then had three wives, three children, and his mother to transport. The move south involved an estimated thirty thousand people.[54] The population of Provo swelled from four thousand to as many as fifteen.[55] Watt probably camped on the Provo River bottoms near the town of Provo. The Mormons had planted their crops in Salt Lake, and some of the men returned to take care of them periodically.

The U.S. Army marched through a deserted Salt Lake City on June 26. General Albert Sidney Johnston marched his troops south and west of the city and there established Camp Floyd in Cedar Valley, about thirty-five

51. Even though there are meetings in the Tabernacle and on Temple Square, Watt is not in attendance. He does not take any reports in that period of time. I surmise that the Nauvoo Legion had called him back to active service up the canyon.

52. For the heroics of Thomas L. Kane, see Richard D. Poll, *Quixotic Mediator: Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War* (Ogden UT: Weber State College Press, 1984). A more recent book is Matthew J. Grow, *"Liberty to the Downtrodden": Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

53. See Richard D. Poll, "The Move South," *BYU Studies* 29 (Fall 1989): 66–88.

54. For a Mormon point of view on the expedition, see Richard D. Poll and Ralph W. Hansen, "Buchanan's Blunder, the Utah War, 1857–1858," *Military Affairs* 25 (Fall 1961), 121–31. For the estimate, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 186. In this book, Arrington estimated that thirty thousand people moved into Utah Valley and points south. In *Brigham Young, American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 266, he estimated thirty-five thousand.

55. See Poll, "The Move South," 80.

miles south of Salt Lake City, near the town of Fairfield. A few days after the passage of the army, President Young and his family left Provo and returned to the Beehive and Lion Houses. Others straggled north when they were able. The Mormon pioneers had suffered famine and now had left their homes out of fear of an invading United States Army.[56] It is not known when Watt returned, but it is possible he brought his families back by the middle of July. He was in his usual place when General Conference opened on October 6. His garden had prospered at least in part. He exhibited some cabbages at the Deseret territorial fair that year.[57]

Federal judges continued to confront the Mormons. In 1858 Judge John Cradlebaugh, who had come with Governor Cumming, attempted to bring to justice men who had committed three murders in Springville. He finally asked General Johnston for men to accompany him to Provo, where he accrued a mass of evidence against the mayor and even arrested him for obstructing justice but later released him. The tension between the army and the local people intensified because of Cradlebaugh's activities. Finally, both the army and Cradlebaugh left, retreating back to Camp Floyd without satisfying the courts of justice.[58]

During the Utah War, a wagon train comprised primarily of Arkansans led by Alexander Fancher and John T. Baker journeyed south through Utah. On September 11, a Mormon militia unit from Cedar City, along with a few Indians, attacked the party at Mountain Meadows about thirty-five miles west and south of Cedar City, killing possibly 120 emigrants.[59]

In 1859 Cradlebaugh with a contingent of soldiers traveled to Mountain Meadows, where they beheld the clothes and bones of those who had been murdered. Watt observed that same site less than a decade later. Cradlebaugh, protected by the army, took his investigation to Cedar City. Attorney General Jeremiah S. Black ordered the federal troops back to Camp Floyd, forcing Cradlebaugh to end his investigation. Two decades later, one man—John D. Lee—was punished for crimes committed at Mountain Meadows.[60] The army remained at Camp Floyd, later Crittenden, until 1861, when President Abraham Lincoln called the men back to the East Coast to fight in the Civil War.[61] Watt would have heard much about Judge Cradlebaugh, whom Mormon leaders considered a nemesis, while he worked in the president's office.

56. Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons,* 55–60.
57. "Journal History," October 6, 1858.
58. Moorman and Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons,* 102–22.
59. For an analysis of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, see Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1950); and Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002). The most recent work is Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
60. Moorman, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons,* 123–50.
61. For background material on the recall, see Alexander, *Utah the Right Place, 138.*

In 1862 a California volunteer unit under Colonel, later General, Patrick Edward Connor replaced the regular army men. Connor established a military base at Fort Douglas, a few miles east of Salt Lake City. He came to Utah ostensibly to protect the immigrants on the overland trail from Indians but also wanted to control the Mormons. Watt encountered an example of the way Connor kept his eye on the Mormons in 1866. Brigham Young asked him in August to investigate a small "lumber shanty" north of the Beehive House on the bluff. Watt walked up there from his home and found a woman by the name of Mrs. Ryan with her children. She told him that the family received a hundred dollars a month from the United States Army at Fort Douglas for taking care of the place and reporting their observations of what was taking place at President Young's office.[62]

Connor encouraged prospecting because he felt that it would attract a great number of non-Mormons to Utah Territory, thus undermining the power of the Saints. When a group of Mormons discovered silver in Bingham Canyon, Connor helped them organize a mining district. Some of Connor's soldiers also discovered silver and gold ore in the Wasatch Mountains. Connor established a smelter at Stockton, west of the Oquirrh Mountains. By 1870 the smelter had produced more than a million dollars worth of gold, silver, and lead. The establishment of mines in the Salt Lake Valley inspired Watt to write an economic essay concerning agriculture and supply and demand.[63]

The Native Americans continued to trouble the non-Indian population of Utah. The end of the war with Walkara's Utes did not erase conflicts between settlers and the Indians. The federal government desired to gather the Utes on the Uintah Reservation. To convince them to move, Oliver H. Irish, Utah superintendent of Indian affairs, negotiated with the Utes to give up the rights to their lost lands.[64] Most moved, but a small number of the northern Utes under the leadership of Antonga (Black Hawk) began to make forays against the whites, stealing cattle that they sold in New Mexico and killing white men in some instances.[65] The men of central and southern Utah joined the Nauvoo Legion and fought the Indians in this war. Watt did not join the militia to fight the Indians during the Black Hawk War in the 1860s, although he knew about the conflict since it affected everyone in the territory. In 1866 James A. Ivie walked into the office and wanted the president to read what he had done in the war, so Watt carefully wrote it

62. "Testimony Concerning Instructions of Officers at Camp Douglas," August 9, 1866, holograph, Young Papers.
63. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place,* 148–49.
64. After World War II, the Indian Claims Commission ordered payment for the confiscated lands. In the negotiations initiated by Irish, the two sides had settled for a dollar amount that extended for more than fifty years, but the Senate of the United States never ratified it.
65. For the best book on the subject, see John Alton Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998).

down in shorthand and then transcribed it for Young. Ivie related how he, some men from Round Valley, and a group of Fillmore men chased a band of Indians who were stealing cattle and horses to the Sevier River. When he returned to his settlement Captain Henry McArthur issued orders "to know no friendly Indians until peace was made." He mentioned that the next morning an Indian came into town alone. The bishop asked Ivie and another man to get him. Ivie rode out and spotted the Indian running away and shot him. He justified the death by saying that he had done it to protect the settlement and he was only doing his duty. At the end of the fourth page Watt wrote, "The above is exactly as James A. Ivie made the statement to me."[66] The war finally ended in 1867, when Black Hawk sued for peace.

Non-Mormons came only slowly to Utah and the Salt Lake Valley. The first Protestant minister, Norman McLeod, a Congregationalist, arrived in January 1865. McLeod, who was a bitter anti-Mormon, found enough Protestants in the city to establish a Sunday school. To raise money for a church, he lectured in California and Nevada. Early in 1866, he constructed his church in Salt Lake City. In March 1866, he left the city, and his Sunday school declined drastically.[67]

The first Catholics came to Utah in 1862 with the California Volunteers, although the first permanent Catholic priest, Edward Kelly, did not arrive until 1866, and Brigham Young allowed him to use the old Tabernacle for mass. Young helped Father Kelly purchase land for a convent, where he expected to establish a Catholic school.[68] He soon began to remodel an adobe building on the property. One morning he found a note that threatened, "I warn you not to proceed any further in this business. Your chapel will not be allowed to stand." Father Kelly went to Brigham Young to find out what was happening. Young had Watt read the note aloud. Then he told Kelly that this letter had not come from any of his people. Both Watt and Heber C. Kimball concurred. Young assured Kelly that he should proceed with his church and school: "You are welcome to stay and labor here as long as you choose. And when you are ready to commence building your school, I will give you $500."[69] Sometime in December, the archbishop transferred Kelly back to California, and Salt Lake City had only itinerant Catholic priests until sometime in the 1870s.

During the latter part of 1867, Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, the Episcopalian missionary bishop for Montana, Idaho, and Utah, arrived in Salt Lake City

66. "Statement of James A. Ivie at President Young's Office," August 13, 1866, holograph, Depositions, Young Papers.
67. Robert Joseph Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 35–36.
68. For background on the relationship between Kelly and Young, see James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 340–41.
69. "Concerning Brigham Young," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, March 14, 1867, 1.

and established a church, the first permanent non-Mormon church in Utah. He called upon Brigham Young, and they had a pleasant conversation. Tuttle commented, "We were most civilly and courteously treated in this call, but I was not asked to call again." He also established a school, St. Mark's, with sixteen pupils on July 1.[70]

Territorial governors continued to have problems with their Mormon citizens. Some of them, like Alfred Cumming, diligently tried to get along with the Mormons. Stephen Harding, a former church member during the Kirtland period, drew rancor and loathing from the Mormons. In 1860 President Abraham Lincoln appointed him as the new governor of Utah Territory. At first the Mormons had great hope that Harding would understand and be fair to them, but he detested them and their teachings of polygamy. He wanted to prosecute the Mormons with the Morrill Act, which outlawed bigamy in the territories.[71] Harding sent to Congress bills to limit the power of the Mormon-controlled probate courts, allow the marshals to summon any people they desired for jurors, and have the governor appoint all militia officers. Watt witnessed all of this and shared at first the hope and later the aversion for Harding. The Mormons, becoming disgusted with the governor, protested. In 1863 they held a mass meeting in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, petitioning for Harding's removal. Watt took shorthand reports in that meeting. Albert Carrington, another clerk, read the messages from the journals of the legislature that outlined Harding's supposed crimes.[72]

Even though President Lincoln viewed the Mormons as misguided, he perceived them as loyal to the union and did not actively seek prosecution of the Morrill Act. As he told T. B. H. Stenhouse, when he was a youth in Illinois and they were clearing a field and found a log too large to move, they "ploughed around it." That was what he intended to do with the Mormons.[73] He kept that pledge while he was president. Shortly after that statement, Lincoln made Harding the chief justice of the Colorado Territory and appointed James Duane Doty, who earlier had been Utah superintendent of Indian affairs, to be the next governor. The Mormons approved of Doty because of his favorable relations with them previously.[74] While Doty was governor, Watt became the foreman of the grand jury in March 1865, thus fulfilling a civic responsibility.[75]

70. See Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, *Missionary to the Moutain West: Reminiscences of Episcopal Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle, 1866—1886* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 110–13; also see Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah,* 34–36, 152.
71. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place,* 147.
72. "Journal History," March 3, 1863,1–3.
73. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place,* 147.
74. Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah,* 13–16.
75. James Doty to George D. Watt, March 21, 1865, microfilm of holograph, James Doty correspondence, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.

6

REPORTER FOR ZION

> You can lead me but you cannot intimidate me: while a kind word from your lips vibrates through my soul like the sweetest sounds of harmony. I am calm—my attachment to you is unchanging, and am ready to fulfil all your wishes that do not cut off the possability of my providing the reasonable comforts of life for my family, when I can, being aware at the same time, that you are also mortal; and heir to many of its imperfections.
>
> George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 29, 1852

After arriving in the territory, Watt had to make a living and support his family. His chosen field of stenography would be confirmed as his profession but not without some controversy. When the problems ended, he had a strong and definite place in President Brigham Young's office and status among the people of Zion.

Unlike most of the immigrants who left to become farmers in the rural areas, Watt sought other avenues for employment in the new city. He had no desire to farm for his living. He wanted a position as a stenographer, but those positions were almost unknown. He also wished to make money from a bloodstone he had that supposedly had healing powers. The stone allegedly strengthened the immune system and prevented infections.[1] According to family tradition, Captain James Cook had obtained it from

1. See http://www.gemstonetherapy.com/gem_summaries/bloodstone; and also http://www.crystal-cure.com/bloodstone-gem.html, available online, for more information on bloodstones.

a South Pacific island during the eighteenth century. In the latter part of November, Watt advertised that he had this stone that cured all internal bleeding. He claimed it was a never-failing remedy without medicine. At the end of the ad, he added the phrase, "No cure, no pay," and mentioned that he could be found at the tithing office.[2] At least one person responded. By that time, Watt was heavily involved in creating the Deseret Alphabet, and he referred the individual to Brigham Young, who now had the stone. It is not known why he gave it to Young. Watt must have had some doubts about its healing powers. He said, "I think this is a good case to try the efficacy which tradition has given to it."[3]

Finding full-time employment was difficult for Watt. He had started teaching shorthand classes, as he had done in Nauvoo, but teaching was a temporary situation. President Young had seen the practicality of shorthand in Nauvoo, but he did not see an immediate need for it in Salt Lake City. He had Thomas Bullock as his secretary, and he recorded summaries of the sermons. Watt still had no steady employment to provide for his family, so he requested a ten-dollar loan from Daniel Wells. He needed it, he said, to purchase some comforts for his family and pay a school tax. Wells loaned Watt the money.[4]

In the latter part of December, Watt reported in the *Deseret News* about the Christmas festivities in the city.[5] Because of this report, Willard Richards, who was the editor, advised him to use his skill to benefit the newspaper. His job was to record and transcribe sermons from shorthand so the newspaper could publish them. Neither Watt nor Richards discussed how he was to be paid. Essentially he was a freelance reporter who would earn his keep by the articles—the speeches—he published in the newspaper. Watt was sure that Richards would take care of his needs, but nothing was spelled out. Watt started work for Richards during the first part of January in 1852.

On the first day of the new year, Watt also began teaching a class in Pitman shorthand. His students included Brigham Young, Thomas Bullock, Thomas W. Ellerbeck, William C. Staines, Nathaniel H. Felt, Albert Carrington, and Daniel Wells, some of the most influential men in Salt Lake City. He probably received a dollar from each student. To prepare for this course, Watt wrote and published his own exercise book, a shortened version of the Pitman manual. He included within it instructions in phonography and

2. "Notice," *Deseret News,* November 29, 1851, 8. Belief in bloodstones' curative powers was not part of the Mormon faith.
3. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., shorthand (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006), holograph, George D. Watt Papers, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
4. George D. Watt to Daniel Wells, January 4, 1852, holograph, Daniel Wells Papers, LDS Church Archives.
5. "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," December 26, 1851, LDS Church Archives.

some lessons.[6] Young began to practice shortly after his first lesson, and on January 5, he spent all day with his shorthand studies.[7]

Watt also had to report the speeches of the church authorities on Sunday. Two church meetings were held every Sunday on Temple Square, originally under the Bowery. In March 1852, shortly after Watt arrived, the church finished the adobe Tabernacle, located on the southwest corner of Temple Square. It was a large structure capable of seating about twenty-five hundred people.[8] The Bowery continued to be used during the hot summer months. Watt faithfully reported the church meetings at both places. These Sunday meetings were entertainment and spiritual rejuvenation for the Mormons. They began with congregational hymns and prayer and included the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Missionaries also reported about their work. At these meetings, Watt compiled full stenographic reports for the *Deseret News*.[9]

Sometime before the April General Conference of 1852, Brigham Young appointed Watt to be the stenographic recorder for the entire meeting. He faithfully recorded the speeches of the conference. Now he had the same position that he had held in Nauvoo with the responsibility to record the sermons of the church authorities for the edification of all the members. Joseph Smith, the first church president, had never had a stenographic reporter. His published sermons were created sometimes from several individuals taking, comparing, and merging their notes. Because of Watt, President Young's sermons were recorded verbatim, written as he spoke.[10]

Watt took some of his shorthand notes in pencil but wrote mostly in ink. He began his earliest existing notebook in 1851 with Orson Pratt's sermons on the ship *Ellen Maria*. His first few notebooks, which were purchased, were bound at the top and opened like a modern stenographic book. Later, he cut the paper himself, folded it on the top, and then sewed it on the fold. When he subsequently transcribed a sermon, he ran a line down the page. Only about 20 to 30 percent of the sermons he recorded were ever transcribed, but many of Brigham Young's were. During the first few years, Watt put the names of the prominent speakers on the outside of every volume. These sermons gave important spiritual information to the Saints.[11]

6. See G. D. Watt, *Exercises in Phonography* (Salt Lake City: W. Richards, printer, 1851). The only extant copy the author knows about is in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
7. "Journal History," January 5, 1852.
8. The adobe Tabernacle sat where the Assembly Hall is located today.
9. Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 196.
10. Ibid.
11. See George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives. There are four archive boxes of untranscribed sermons in his papers in the church archives. Most of the sermons Watt recorded were never published or even summarized in written form.

Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Old Salt Lake Tabernacle with bowery where Watt took shorthand, ca. 1860.

A written confrontation soon began between Willard Richards and George D. Watt. Richards was a very important person in Salt Lake City. He was the postmaster as well as the editor of the *Deseret News*. More importantly, Richards was second counselor in the First Presidency of the church. As a member of this elite group in an authoritarian society, he was someone not to be taken lightly. In the Mormon world, very few dared to speak against authority, even for personal reasons. If an individual spoke out or acted contrary to orders, he was usually considered to be working against the church and on his way to apostasy.[12]

Watt continued to report meetings throughout the spring and summer of 1852. Because he was the General Conference reporter, he received a wage for this work, but that was only for the conferences that the church held twice a year. His greatest responsibility was recording sermons for the *Deseret News,* but the editor, Willard Richards, had not paid him. He was able to obtain some produce and other items at the church general tithing store but could not pay for all of them.

Richards considered Watt a freelance reporter, and he thought he was supposed to help Watt with goods, rather than cash. However, he had never communicated that information to Watt, who was totally dependent upon his pen. He could not be a farmer or a merchant. He had accumulated a debt of more than five hundred dollars at the tithing store before Richards stopped him from borrowing any more goods. Richards felt that Watt, at times, was difficult to find. He thought he should be at his desk, working; for

12. See Willard Richards to Brigham Young, December 8, 1853, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives. An earlier version of the confrontation between Watt and Richards appeared in Ronald G. Watt, "The Beginnings of the *Journal of Discourses:* A Confrontation between George D. Watt and Willard Richards," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 75 (Spring 2007): 134–48.

some reason, Richards was unaware that Watt's wife, Molly, was ill. However, it is possible that he might not have cared anyway; perhaps only producing a newspaper and having Watt's phonographic reports mattered to him. The two men communicated, but it was never enough for Richards, who was gregarious and loved conversing. Watt, who was more reserved, could present his views more quickly and succinctly in writing than speaking.

In 1852 Orson Pratt announced in a speech that the Mormons were now openly practicing polygamy. So that Watt could earn some income, President Young agreed that he could publish a pamphlet of Pratt's speech on August 29 announcing celestial marriage and also two speeches of Young's. Before Watt could do anything, however, Richards published an extra edition of the *Deseret News* on September 17 that contained these very items, offered them to emigrating agents in New Orleans and St. Louis, and also began selling them in the Salt Lake Valley.[13] By taking this action, Richards deprived Watt of any income. Through an intermediary, he offered Watt twenty-five pamphlets to sell so he could keep the money from them, but Watt felt robbed and knew that he was unlikely to make any money on these because of their earlier publication. He wrote Brigham Young, informing him "that I refused his magnanimous offer and felt myself insulted; perhaps I did wrong in saying this. If I did I am ready to make all the restitution that is wanted."[14] Watt then tried to talk to Richards, but the strong-minded man would not listen to him. Richards later remarked that he had noticed a foreign spirit in Watt lately, "foreign from the spirit which dwells in the bosom of the Eternal Father."[15]

Watt deliberated about what he should do and even went up City Creek Canyon to pray. He wanted Richards to understand his point of view but not through an oral exchange. So he began a written communication that became very heated. The letters reveal that Watt was desperately trying to find a solution to his monetary problems and thought Richards had wronged him by publishing the reports and robbing him of the income from them. It did not matter to him that Richards was a member of the First Presidency. For his part, Richards felt that Watt had insulted him and needed to be disciplined quickly and thoroughly. Afterward both men probably wished they had never said some of the things they did, but they could not take them back. As Richards wrote, "When a man talks, his words may be forgotten but when [he] writes, he writes for eternity, and your letter is laid up for the archives of Eternity."[16]

13. Willard Richards to General Horace S. Eldredge and Major John Brady, September 17, 1852, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.
14. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., shorthand, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, August 2000). Within the letter, Watt wrote that the day before was September 22, so the letter was written on September 23, 1852.
15. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, September 26, 1852, holograph, Richards Papers. Richards kept a copy of it the letter; the original is in the Watt Papers.
16. Ibid.

Watt agonized over what he should say. He wanted to be clear and coherent, but he also wanted to be truthful. He composed an undated letter in shorthand and then edited it.[17] The first half was a justification of his reasons for writing the letter. He wanted Richards to understand that he had an unchanging loyalty to him, "connected by the common ties of friendship to say nothing of the holy relationship that exists between you and me."[18]

On the second page, Watt began to explain the situation as he saw it. He said that Richards's position as revealed in the *Deseret News* was "God helps them that help themselves." Watt then explained what that meant to him: I understand the saying to mean, 'that every man shall reap the reward due to his labor, whether it be much or little.'" He said that he had a family to support; "this I wish to do, and this I will do by the blessing of the Almighty." His wife, though, was sick with diarrhea, and "I have nothing to give her, but bread and water."[19]

Watt said that he had spent a lot of time writing and transcribing the sermons and had received nothing for his work: "I cannot help feel that you have not acted to me like a Bro.[Brother] let alone a father." At the end of the letter, he tried to make sure his feelings were clear: "I have no enmity in my heart, I love you but I cannot tamely submit to have the fruits of my labor taken from me alltogether, when it is right by every just law that I should enjoy them."[20]

Richards received the letter the same day Watt sent it but did not look at it until late that evening. After reading it, Richards was incensed and chagrined. He felt that his spiritual son had accused him of robbery. Interestingly he thought he could solve the problem by just writing back to Watt and informing him that he had not done his duty. He sat down the next day and penned a three-page letter. Richards was especially perturbed that Watt had not only written a letter but sent it through a public channel—the post office—where anybody could have read it. He complained about the wasted time and effort: ". . . spend one fifth of a day, according to your own computation of time, to write to me, . . . five minutes friendly conversation could have given a better understanding of any thing you wished to know, than your fifth of a day in writing, and my whole day (which I have not time to spend) in answering. I say such a course of conduct would have been a little surprizing to me, had I been ignorant of the frailties of human nature, and of the wiles of the devil." He then complained that Watt had

17. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 24, 1852, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, August 2000).
18. Ibid. In Nauvoo Richards and Watt had gone through a ceremony where Richards had spiritually adopted Watt and his wife as his children, so when Watt refers to him as his father, he means that ceremony.
19. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 24, 1852, holograph, Richards Papers. The underlining is in the original. In his shorthand version, Watt said Molly was dying.
20. Ibid.

submitted very few speeches to him for publication and then only when Richards had tracked him down. The reporter had not been at the most important meetings and so had failed the people in Zion; even though much was expected of him, he had only lived up to these expectations in "a small measure." [21]

Richards said that he thought that Watt was on the road to apostasy. Some of Watt's statements, Richards wrote, were written "through the influence of a delusive & false spirit, foreign from the regions of light & intelligence; which has strove to accompany you in some degree for some time past. However you may have been ignorant of it." Finally, he requested Watt to see him often and "learn what is wanted of you in your calling, by the same Spirit which dictates my course, and you shall prosper; your wants shall be supplied; your name shall be had in honorable remembrance by the saints, and you shall go forth into the presence of the Father in the Eternal Worlds."[22]

After Richards signed the letter, he reread Watt's letter and became even angrier, so he added almost two pages of postscript. He said few men had entered the scene of public life more auspiciously than Watt, but the reporter had failed. At some of the most important times when Watt should have been reporting speeches, he could not be found, "and messengers have ransacked the city for him in vain." Richards commented that Watt had already run up a bill of five hundred dollars at the general tithing store, and Richards was going to keep him from going in debt another hundred dollars. He then summarized his position: "You find fault with me in your letter; and when I offered you a quarter of hundred of Pamphlets, out of my own free will & purse, worth $12.50 and which you might have sold for cash & helped yourself & your 'sick wife' before this, you refused the offer, and yet you complain your 'wife is sick,' and needs comforts, & you have no means to get them; & yet represent that I am no better than purloining your treasures, or defrauding you of your rights."[23]

Richards took offense at Watt's statement that his behavior differed from President Young's: "My course has been dictated and controled by my President; and when you find fault with my course you find fault with my God; and that ground is very slippery, and if you don't get off it quickly, you will find it hard work to stand." Ironically, he sent his letter back through the post office—the same way that Watt had sent his.[24]

Watt waited a few days before replying. He had considered talking to Richards but could not. He did not want to back down, however, and so he responded with another letter.

21. Richards to George D. Watt, September 26, 1852.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.

He began by telling Richards that he had previously written because his writing was more effective than a face-to-face conversation. He would not feel alarmed when his writing was brought from "the archives of eternity and examined. I do not write under the influence of an irritated brain but in sole coolness, fully believing that what I write is true." Watt said Richards had implied that he had helped qualify him for his position at the *News,* but he was not aware Richards had done so. He had qualified himself "by dint of determined application, suffering, and study. If I have not merit and ability in myself, aided by the holy spirit, to use in the scale of greatness, in the estimation of this church, and in the estimation of God and angels, your influence or the influence of any other person in heaven or on earth, will profit me nothing; and a man must be placed in a very unenviable situation, who would use his influence to install an unfit person (naturally so) in any station of honor or trust."[25]

Watt said what he was guilty of was not providing for his loved ones: "If it is a spirit foreign from that which dwells in the bosom of the eternal Father—if it is a failure of human nature—a while of the devil to seek diligently and honourably to provide for the wants of those who look to me for a subsistence, then I plead guilty to that which you judge me." He wanted to be rewarded for his work: "I want to know what is mine as clearly as I know what is yours,—when I work temporaly, I want to know how I am to be rewarded temporaly, for it is I must confess very little satisfaction to me to work upon the principle of being rewarded in the resurrection, though that may be well enough, if everybody else worked so."[26]

Watt said he was not aware of any speeches that Richards had wanted and he had not done, except for two, "which he was unable to report." He had sat in one place for so long that his hand "refused to fufil its office." He could only think of one important occasion when he had been absent: at that time, "I was in the City Creek Canyon praying, pouring out my soul before the Lord in heaven, to whom I made known my complaints." In the afternoon, he was at his post again, fulfilling the wishes of Governor Young. "Do not make me worse than what I am." Since Richards had not paid him, Watt did not need to account to him for his time. Watt had given Richards his reports "and have put hundreds of dollars in your pocket, but you did not employ me to write twelve hours per day, and seven days a week." Watt believed that by publishing those speeches himself he could have paid his printer's bill. He said he was sorry that people had been disappointed in him, "having only been gratified in 'a very small measure'"; then Watt sarcastically wrote, "Thank you kindly for this encouragement, and the great credit you give me throughout your whole communication for what I have done, though I admit it is but little."[27]

25. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 29, 1852, holograph, Richards Papers.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.

Watt said he thought that Richards was trying to intimidate him: "I have written my honest mind Bro. Willard, I cannot be intimidated by being told that I have 'sliped down.' I only ask for the enjoyment of my common rights with other men. I am not now aware that freedom of speach (whether verbaly or in writing) is always a shure sign of a man possessing a bad spirit, neither do I write thinking that I can change your mind and thoughts conserning me." He used the analogy of a team of horses when he said, "I am willing to work 'shoulder to shoulder' with you and feel unworthy of such an honor." He ended his letter with the entreaty, "You can lead me but you cannot intimidate me: while a kind word from your lips vibrates through my soul like the sweetest sounds of harmony. I am calm—my attachment to you is unchanging, and am ready to fulfil all your wishes that do not cut off the possability of my providing the reasonable comforts of life for my family."[28]

The relationship between the two men was seriously disrupted. Richards would not even talk to Watt. Watt tried to mend the frayed friendship by taking down the blessing of Richards's newborn son on October 10, which he later gave to Richards, who continued to think that Watt had wronged him. To provide for his family, Watt obtained employment as the reporter for the Utah Legislative Council, the senate of that period. The work must have been frustrating for Watt because it was not verbatim reports, but rather bills drafted by the territorial legislature and written into the books by the clerk, so Watt spent his time copying. He also wrote letters for Anthony Babbit, the secretary to the legislature, and here he discovered another skill, as amanuensis that could be used in a regular office. He recorded some of the speeches and reports of the committee in shorthand, although the transcribed versions have not survived. After the 1853 to 1854 session, the legislative leaders decided they did not need a reporter and did not rehire him.[29]

After the confrontation with Richards, Watt continued to take down reports at Sunday meetings, but he did not give his transcribed notes to Richards to publish in the *News*. He sent only the verbatim accounts of the speeches at the April and October General Conference for publication since he was the official reporter. There were other men who could be reporters, but no one except George D. Watt had the skill, patience, or dedication for reporting the conference speeches.

Watt's potential employment must have been on the mind of Brigham Young. Finally, Watt wrote a letter to Young early in May 1853. He suggested that he be allowed to prepare "a few of your sermons which have not yet been in print with Elder P. P. Pratt's two discourses at the conference

28. Ibid.

29. Legislative session records, sessions 2 and 3, 1853–54, microfilm of holographs, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City; also see shorthand notes, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

on the spirit world and birthright to send to England for publication in the form of a magazine of about 150 or 200 pages to sell." He suggested that part of the profit go to satisfy his economic necessities and the rest be used for Young's purposes.[30] Almost immediately his suggestion brought assent from the members of the First Presidency. It would enable Brigham Young and the First Presidency to have the written word to send to the members of the church and the missionaries. The next day Young notified Watt of the First Presidency's agreement, and Watt began transcribing and editing sermons.

On May 25 and 26, Young spent most of his time examining the written discourses.[31] On June 1, 1853, the First Presidency officially granted Watt the privilege of preparing and publishing Young's discourses in magazine-like form, recognizing that "Elder George D. Watt, by our counsel, spent much time in the midst of poverty and hardships to acquire the art of reporting in Phonography which he has faithfully and fully accomplished."[32] Since publication would be less expensive in England, the sermons were to be sent to Liverpool as Watt had suggested.[33] All the profits from the venture would go to Watt, who would also take care of all the costs. The First Presidency encouraged all church members to purchase the journal for Elder Watt's benefit.[34]

Watt now had a permanent income and a place of employment. More importantly for the church, the *Journal of Discourses* was a watershed, essentially the beginnings of a worldwide publication. Even though the *Journal of Discourses* was a private venture, it was an official church publication and the most important source of President Young's and other church authorities' sermons. Watt also joined other clerks in the First Presidency's office. Albert Carrington was Brigham Young's clerk and attended to his correspondence. Thomas Bullock, an early convert from England, was also there.[35]

Watt was now ready to mend his broken relationship with Willard Richards. In August 1853, Watt wrote to Richards, offering to give him several sermons that would interest the people of the territory. Richards

30. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, May 3, 1853, shorthand draft, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, September 2004). In his first volume, he published some of Young's sermons and also several others from church authorities, including two entitled "Spiritual Communications" and "Heirship and Priesthood" by Parley P. Pratt, which are probably the talks he refers to in the letter on the spirit world and birthright.
31. Brigham Young, Office Journal, May 25–26, 1853, vol. 8, p. 23, holograph, Young Papers.
32. "Letter from the First Presidency to Elder Samuel W. Richards and the Saints Abroad," June 1, 1853, in Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: R. James, printer, 1853), 1:5.
33. Thomas Ellerbeck, Journal, May 4, 1853, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
34. "Letter from the First Presidency to Elder Samuel W. Richards," June 1, 1853, 1:5.
35. For an interesting account of the clerk's work in the nineteenth century, see Thomas Augst, *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

wrote back, "That I have long been desirous of publishing many sermons that you have, you are well aware, for I have told you so repeatedly, and would send one to press the P.M. if I had it." He again repeated his request that Watt send him copies of any important sermons that would be valuable for the *Deseret News* "and which ought to be preserved in the Archives of the Church as matter of history, and you shall in no wise lose your reward."[36]

Watt must have taken the speeches over to Richards shortly thereafter because he began to publish the past speeches of President Young and other church authorities. He even added an extra page to the *Deseret News* to do so. In November the *Deseret News* announced that Watt's service as a reporter was available not only to the *News* but anybody who wanted correct reports, and "if the brethren will employ him, and sustain him in his employment, time will prove it a blessing to all concerned."[37] Watt's reactions after Richards's last letter seem to have made him realize that Watt was indeed his friend and spiritual son. The healing process had begun. Thereafter, the two men worked closely together.

Richards had been ill with palsy for some time, but it was not severe enough to restrict his work. However, in the fall of 1853, it became worse, and Richards was confined to bed for days at a time. On September 15, Watt rubbed his body, presumably with a type of liniment oil.[38] By the end of January 1854, his condition had deteriorated to the point where he was unable to distinguish any of his associates. He lingered until March 11, when he died. The next day Watt reported the funeral and burial of his adopted father, friend, and sometimes tormentor. He ended the report commenting that at the gravesite, Orson Hyde and Heber C. Kimball had made a few remarks and then the mourners had retired, "leaving the remains of one of the best and greatest men that ever trod the earth, to sleep in peace, until he shall awake to immortality and eternal life. May the witness of his life be our pattern that we may be as illustrious in death."[39]

With permission to publish speeches of the church authorities, Watt needed to concentrate on the *Journal of Discourses*. The process of publishing each volume was laborious. He needed to be at all the meetings, recording the speeches in shorthand. Then, with the help of President Young, he chose the talks that would be transcribed. In the first volume, twenty-six of the fifty-three sermons were by Young. Heber C. Kimball and Parley P. Pratt had the next most sermons published with six each. In the second volume, Brigham Young had composed seventeen of the fifty-six

36. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, August 16, 1853, holograph, Watt Papers.
37. "Thursday, November 24, 1853," *Deseret News*, November 24, 1853, 3: 2.
38. Historian's Office, Journal, September 15, 1853, holograph, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives.
39. "Journal History," March 12, 1854.

sermons. Young's sermons were spoken without notes and from memory. The phonographer had to work very hard to keep up with each speaker. Watt grew accustomed to the delivery style and speed of each speaker. If Young was not the first speaker, Watt sometimes did not arrive at the Tabernacle on time, and when he arrived late for the meeting, he slipped into his desk very quietly. On July 2, 1854, he noted in his shorthand notes, "Phineas Young spoke but I was too late to report it." At the same meeting, Young called upon Watt to speak.[40]

After he recorded the speeches, Watt transcribed them word for word, spending many hours at his desk. Next he read the sermons to those who gave them, and they corrected them. Sometimes Thomas Bullock read Watt's transcribed sermons, and Watt corrected them again. Albert Carrington copy-edited them, and then Watt sent the final collection of sermons by post to Liverpool for publication.[41] The president of the British Mission also wrote a short preface. The sermons first came out in pamphlet, serial form and were sold to church members both in Britain and Utah by subscription. The publication of the *Journal of Discourses* meant that the sermons of the Mormon leaders were some of the first religious works to be available for potential world consumption. It helped both the missionary effort and membership.

Watt sent the first sermons for the *Journal of Discourses* to Liverpool in 1853, and Samuel Richards, the mission president, had them printed by the regular printer, R. James at 39 Castle Street. Each number of the *Journal of Discourses* was sixteen pages, published semimonthly, and sold for two pennies. The mission office printed ten thousand of them, the usual number it published.[42] Watt sent about four letters of transcribed and corrected sermons each year. The process kept him busy.

The accounts were added and entered onto the British financial books for approximately half of the first volume—numbers one to sixteen—in June 1854. The bookkeeper credited Watt's account for £1,000, about $5,600. The printing bill was £320 5s., or $1,792. At first Watt paid £100 in tithing—$560—but later corrected that in August 1855 to £60, 15s.—$341.60.[43] Watt's venture as the publisher of the *Journal of Discourses* made him a prosperous man, at least for the time.

40. George D. Watt, shorthand notes, 1854, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2001). Watt's shorthand notes reveal that he came in late and left early at times. It's unclear whether this was a chronic habit or not. He was always there for Brigham Young's sermons.

41. About ten years later, Watt sent a personal letter to England by post and also a copy by a missionary. The *Journal of Discourses* could have been handled the same way.

42. The small issues were meant to be bound together as a book. If a sermon did not end in one issue, it was continued in a second one.

43. After his expenses, Watt figured that he had made $3,416; thus, he paid tithing on his profit or net, not on his gross.

By the end of 1854, the British Mission had completed the second half of the first volume. The mission printed its usual ten thousand copies. Many of the subscribers had ordered theirs by entire volumes, and these were now bound and distributed. As was the custom of the mission and the requirement by law, four copies were sent to Stationer's Hall in London for copyright purposes and one copy to the British Museum. Originally twenty copies—later twenty-four—bound with calf leather with gilded edges were sent to Utah as gifts to church authorities. With the income derived from sales, Watt paid some of his outstanding debts and purchased a few items he felt he needed like some earthenware dishes.[44]

In 1855 John V. Long became the second reporter for church meetings. Long was an Englishman and had learned the art of Pitman shorthand in England. Watt did not ask the First Presidency for someone to assist him. Brigham Young gave Long temporary work and was not planning to employ him full time. Young also gave him a house, and the church supplied him with some provisions from the tithing storehouse. When Long came back to obtain more provisions, Archibald Hill, upon Young's orders, prevented him from drawing any more. Long wrote a letter to Young, telling him that he needed work from the church so he could support his family. In August 1856, Young told Long that he was not aware of being under any obligation to support him and his family. However, Long was still free to choose any vocation he wanted. He said he desired to remain a stenographer for the meetings. They finally compromised when Young agreed that Long would become a freelance reporter for the *Deseret News* and be paid for each report published. Long continued to report talks of church authorities for about twelve years. Each man recorded different talks, and Watt no longer needed to attend every meeting. For part of a year in 1857, another man, Leo Hawkins, also helped report on church meetings.[45]

Some people hired Watt to provide verbatim reports of blessings of babies or other important family gatherings. The coroner also asked him to record the minutes of an inquest.[46] Watt took stenographic shorthand notes of letters requested by Young. He also kept the president's office journal for Young in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

Watt continued attending other important meetings during these early years. He reported on the proceedings of the July 4 and 24 celebrations of 1856 and even gave one of the toasts at the latter. The celebration on July

44. George D. Watt account, Trustee-in-Trust, ledger A, 1850–55, holograph, Trustee-in-Trust Records, 1849–1915, LDS Church Archives.

45. John V. Long to Brigham Young, August 14, 1856, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers; Brigham Young to John V. Long, August 14, 1856, microfilm of holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.

46. "Coroners Inquest upon the Body of William Cook," October 8, 1858, holograph, Young Papers.

24 was the largest one that year. The Mormons celebrated their arrival in the valley with verse, speeches, and dancing.

In the mid-1850s, a number of societies and associations were organized. George D. Watt joined many of them and often became their reporter or secretary. At the end of March 1852, the proprietors of the Big Field, where most of the farms were located, met in the Territorial Hall. They appointed Watt as the secretary of their meetings. They discussed water problems and the types of grain that would produce the best crop.[47] In July of that year, he also took minutes at a special meeting of the public-works employees, an association that had been organized two years previously.[48] At these meetings, Watt listened to reports of work and probably the need for better salaries. In 1853 he became the secretary to the Board of Regents at the University of Deseret. This institution was busy organizing some type of education for the territory's citizens and became heavily involved in creating the Deseret Alphabet. The officials of the church and territory continually called upon Watt to take minutes of special meetings, such as the ones to establish a daily mail route between Utah and California.

He was the secretary of the Universal Scientific Society, the corresponding secretary of the fruit association called the Pomological Society and later the Deseret Horticultural Society, and the reporter for the Deseret Typographical Association. He was also the secretary for a number of years to the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society that had responsibility for the territorial fairs. All of these organizations were part of the new city as independent citizens gathered together to learn about science, growing and processing fruit, and the political process.

Watt continued to teach shorthand. In the church archives are a few pages by a young lady by the name of Ellie Smith, who wrote notes to Watt about her lessons and practiced her skill or, as she termed it, "science" in 1862. She carefully sealed up her lessons and mailed them to him. He usually answered her notes in his flowing style of shorthand. Her shorthand was very stiff and carefully written and probably took her as long to write as longhand. She thanked "Brother Watt . . . for your kind encouragement for it braces me up very much even if I do make some ridiculous mistakes." At times she quoted a verse or poem and then wrote it in shorthand. On one lesson after her practicing, he wrote out the words and then underlined his advice, "Write by Sound."[49]

George D. Watt thought that he was financially set for life, but the accounting challenges of the *Journal of Discourses* were more difficult than

47. "Journal History," March 25, 1852.
48. Ibid., July 30, 1852.
49. Ellie S. Smith, shorthand notes, 1862, holograph, Watt Papers. Since she used a nickname, it is hard to know who she was.

he had anticipated. In November 1854, the British Mission staff sent a thousand books of the first volume of the *Journal of Discourses,* with approximately a third bound, by the ship *Clara Wheeler* to New Orleans. Shipping and publication costs and duty at New Orleans totaled $1,110. For Watt to break even, he needed to sell every copy for at least $1.12 per volume. He sold them for $1.25 each.[50]

At first the British Mission office printed 10,000 volumes of the *Journal of Discourses* each time, but it soon discovered that it could not sell the entire inventory. Consequently, for the second volume, it cut the number in half to 5,000, but that was still too many. For volume three, the number printed was reduced another 1,000, and the next volume was cut 300 more to a total of 3,700 per publication. Since Watt was the publisher, he was also responsible for the unsold copies left in the Liverpool office. By 1858 more than 2,000 unbound volumes of the *Journal of Discourses* remained in the office, and there were 108,615 odd numbers that would have equaled almost another 4,500 volumes.[51]

As a result, Watt soon ran into personal financial difficulty. Within a year, his account in Liverpool was more than used up, and he was in the red. In October 1855, Franklin D. Richards, who was the president of the British Mission, wrote Watt that his account was overdrawn. He also wrote Brigham Young and told him that Watt had overdrawn his account by £352, which would take him two years to repay.[52] Young replied that Watt was the publisher, and he had no intention of interfering with him at present.[53] Richards and Young had no more correspondence about this subject. The sales must have covered Watt's debts.

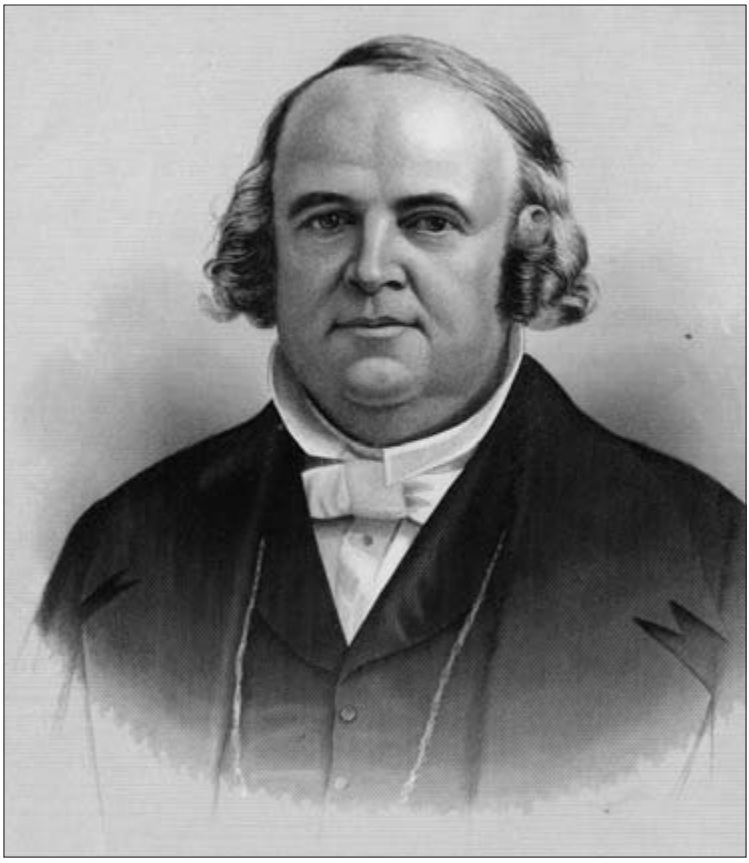
The British Mission also ran into financial difficulties with other publications. In 1860 George Q. Cannon, newly appointed apostle and the new president, recommended that the office purchase a press and undertake its own printing. He also asked Brigham Young what should be done with all the unsold copies of publications on hand. Young replied that the bound volumes should be sent to Salt Lake City to be sold and the tracts should

50. George D. Watt account, ledger A, 1850–55. The charge for the cases, the forms, and the insurance was almost half of the £23, 1 shilling, shipping cost. The *Clara Wheeler* charged 15 shillings for the freight cost to New Orleans. Duties consumed the rest of the amount. The mission financial ledger also accounted for a little more than £16 for the freight costs from St. Louis to Salt Lake City.

51. George D. Watt account, Trustee-in-Trust, ledger C, 1858–60, holograph, Trustee-in-Trust Records, LDS Church Archives. Because a majority of the unsold issues were from the first two volumes, they were especially devastating to Watt. A total of 1,400 volumes and 102,765 odd numbers remained from those first two volumes.

52. Franklin D. Richards to Brigham Young, October 6, 1855, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

53. Brigham Young to Franklin D. Richards, November 29, 1855, microfilm of holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Willard Richards

either be sold as wastepaper or given away.[54] The *Journal of Discourses* was to continue but now as an official publication. Thereafter, Young placed Watt on the church payroll.

54. For the best explanation of early Mormon pamphleteering and better control over publication in the British Mission office, see David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering," *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 35–49. For Brigham Young's reply to Cannon, see Young to George Q. Cannon, May 15, November 12, 1861, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.

7

DESERET ALPHABET

> As all organized things, from a grain of sand to a world, is composed of a congregation of isolated atoms, so language is composed of an assemblage of simple, pure sounds. It has therefore occurred to me, very forcably, that an alphabet should contain just as many letters as there are simple-pure atoms of sound.
>
> George D. Watt to Brigham Young, August 21, 1854

It seems peculiar that Brigham Young and the Mormons, people involved in building a religious community in the American West, would create an orthographic reform movement to change the alphabet and the form of the written word. This initiative captivated George D. Watt for fifteen years. He was its instructor and phonetic expert. His skill and training were vital and needed.

Alphabetical reformers existed before and after Brigham Young. Benjamin Franklin, while serving as a diplomat in London, designed a new alphabet in 1768. He interested his friend Noah Webster, compiler of the dictionary, in orthographic reform. The greatest reformer of the nineteenth century was Sir Isaac Pitman, who published his findings in 1837. He devised a shorthand called phonography and a longhand cursive alphabet called phonotype. The world accepted his shorthand but not the longhand alphabet. In 1887 Dr. Ludwig L. Zamenhof, a Polish physician, published Esperanto, based on twenty-eight letters and sixteen grammar rules, with no exceptions.[1] Sometime after the formation of the Deseret Alphabet,

1. See "Esperanto, The International Language that Works!" available online at http://

Melville Dewey, the inventor of the Dewey Decimal System, favored a form of simplified spelling that he published early in the twentieth century.[2]

Young's quest to reform the English alphabet sprang from his desire to convert the entire world to a new gospel. Essentially he believed the Mormon people would be the catalyst to reform all aspects of life. Altering the means of communication could, as few other practical elements, effect a transformation in society. Watt became involved because of his knowledge of Pitman shorthand. Now for the first time, he had to expand his mind and become more fluid in thinking about letters and sounds. Also he learned how to work with a group interested in educating the youth of the territory: the Board of Regents of the University of Deseret.

George D. Watt spent more time with the Board of Regents than any other group during his life in Utah. He began this relationship in 1852 shortly after his return to Utah and then became the secretary for the board the following year. The legislature for the provisional State of Deseret passed an ordinance on February 28, 1850, that provided for a chancellor and twelve regents. The primary purpose of the board was to create a university. The University of Nauvoo was the model for the new one. Orson Spencer, who had been the chancellor of the University of Nauvoo, became the first chancellor of the University of Deseret. The university first started in a private house on November 11, 1850, and later moved to the Thirteenth Ward schoolhouse. The Board of Regents employed Dr. Cyrus Collins to prepare teachers in the elementary or common schools. Later, the board hired Orson Pratt to teach astronomy and math. By the second term, it had become coeducational and had forty students altogether. In March 1852, the legislature for what was now Utah Territory withdrew funding for the university, and it closed its doors.[3] It did not revive as a school for students until 1867.

The board continued functioning, supervising education throughout Utah.[4] It appointed a superintendent of common schools, Elias Smith, and a librarian, William Staines.[5] An education system of sorts sprang up throughout Utah almost spontaneously. Shortly after the first wagon trains arrived, teachers began advertising for students, and classes were started for youth.

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www.esperanto-usa.org/about_eo.html, ELNA Home Page.

2. "Benjamin Franklin," available online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin; "Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey," available online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melvil_Dewey.
3. Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2002), chap. 8; "The Parent School," *Deseret News,* February 8, 1851, 7: 223; also see John Clifton Moffitt, *The History of Public Education in Utah* (n.p., 1946), chap. 5.
4. See Sharon G. Pugsley, "The Board of Regents of the University of Utah, 1850–1920: Historical Development and Prosopography" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1984).
5. Moffitt, *The History of Public Education in Utah,* 82, 375. The new territorial legislature legalized the acts of the provisional State of Deseret legislature on October 4, 1851.

Within a short time, many of the Mormon wards had also established schools. The Board of Regents felt that these schools should have some type of supervision, so the chancellor instructed the regents to visit them. George A. Smith, one of the regents, visited the Provo schools in December of that year.[6]

The board also guided the creation of the new alphabet. Watt had worked with a type of phonetic orthography since approximately 1840, when he had learned Pitman's phonographic shorthand with its forty different letters. He had taught shorthand and Pitman's longhand phonetic alphabet—phonotype—to Brigham Young and others in Nauvoo.

After the Mormons arrived in Great Salt Lake Valley, Young, leading a now-isolated and largely independent community, again became interested in revising the alphabet and assigned that task to the Board of Regents of the University of Deseret. Young, with his limited education, considered that English orthography was difficult and needed change.[7] On March 20, 1850, W. W. Phelps, who was assigned to present an alphabet to the regents, explained his method of simplifying the language. His alphabetical symbols did not look like the Latin ones, and they were not related to Pitman shorthand. Phelps's alphabet pleased Young. However, because he had learned about Pitman's longhand alphabet—phonotype—years before from Watt, Young questioned why the Latin alphabet would not be acceptable if some letters that were not sounded were omitted. He also raised the question of using phonography. At its next meeting, the board agreed to study the problem more carefully before taking further action.[8]

Young released Watt from his mission early in 1851 so he could help with this needed reform. In November some board members spoke of errors in the present alphabet and desired a change so pupils might understand the system more rapidly. Near the end of December, Young and Watt discussed very briefly the Mormon leader's views on English orthography. Watt penned a one-page answer about the sounds of *C, S,* and *K.* He used several examples of words such as *sent* and *cent,* and *site, cite,* and *sight* to show similarities and differences. He felt that the letter *C* should be excluded from the alphabet. At the end of the letter, he wrote, "The experience and practice of many years, by thousands who write Phonography and read phonotipy, has not made them sensible of any inconsistency through this use

6. Ibid., 66, 118.
7. See Brigham Young, Journals, holographs, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). Especially look at the first three journals before he arrived in Nauvoo, which are in his handwriting. The Nauvoo one was written by a clerk.
8. University of Deseret Board of Regents, meeting minutes, March–April 1850, holograph, LDS Church Archives. The board said that it wanted a simple and plain language and admired the beauty of Indian speech, which seemed that way to them. The discussion for the Deseret Alphabet centered on a written language, whereas the discussion about Indian languages focused on a spoken one. At times, though, Brigham Young intermixed written with spoken.

of those letters." So resumed Watt's process of teaching Young about the English language.[9]

During the April General Conference in 1852, Young spoke about education, focusing a portion of his sermon on reform of the English language. Using a typical Pitman argument, he stated that one letter should not have several pronunciations: "If there were one set of words to convey one set of ideas," he stated, "it would put an end to the ambiguity which often mystifies the ideas given in the languages now spoken. Then when a great man delivered a lecture upon any subject, we could understand his words."[10]

The revision process was slow. Little was done for months at a time because of the priorities of the agrarian society. The regents met a year later on April 12, 1853. Present were Brigham Young, Willard Richards, Jedediah M. Grant, chancellor-elect Orson Hyde, Albert Carrington, W. W. Phelps, John Taylor, George A. Smith, Ezra T. Benson, Wilford Woodruff, Franklin D. Richards, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, John Vance, who would be a regent in 1854, and George D. Watt. Not a member of the board, Watt was there because of the topic under discussion.[11] Brigham Young and Willard Richards, who also were not regents, had major roles in this reform. Watt now became associated with some of the most important and brightest people in Utah. He began an intellectual process that benefited him the rest of his life.

At the meeting on April 12, "Brother John Vance presented a new type of system of writing the consonants and vowels of his own discovery of the characters to those sounds commonly used in phonography."[12] The following year, in a letter to Brigham Young, Watt discussed Vance's "amalgamation principle," which brought two sounds of some letters under one symbol.[13] The board concluded that Vance's system took half the amount of writing as contemporary English and double the amount of space as phonography. Because of the diversity of the board, the debate centered on either reducing the number of characters or having one letter for each sound. Those who wanted fewer characters sided with Vance. Because of his Pitman training, Watt could not endorse Vance's new alphabet because it opposed all the

9. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, December 23, 1851, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

10. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1854–86), 1:71.

11. Vance remains a mystery figure in the introduction of orthographic reform to Utah. He was very prominent in the beginning of the alphabet reform, but little is known about him. Born November 8, 1794, in Tennessee, he spent some of his early life in Illinois, where he was introduced to the Mormon Church, and he arrived in Utah with the Jedediah M. Grant company on October 2, 1847. He served as a bishop at Winter Quarters, a counselor to Bishop William G. Perkins of the Seventh Ward, a member of the high council, a school commissioner, and a justice of the peace.

12. University of Deseret Board of Regents, meeting minutes, April 12, 1853, holograph.

13. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, August 21, 1854, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

rules of Pitman shorthand that stressed one sound for one letter, although he could listen to what Vance had to say and understand it. In his August 1854 letter to Young, Watt commented that Vance's alphabetic thinking was so prevalent among the board members that he had not had enough freedom to work on the alphabet:. "I candidly confess that I never did like the present construction of the alphabet. I was not left as free as I could have wished to be in the construction of it: for you remember that Bro. Vanses amalgamation principle captivated the whole board, including myself."[14]

Young, however, was not convinced Pitman's phonotype was the answer. At the next board meeting on September 20, 1853, he said that phonography and a system of hieroglyphics would provide a good method of instruction for children. A month later, on October 27, the board, on a motion from Daniel H. Wells, appointed Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, and George D. Watt as a committee to present a new alphabet to the board. The committee worked diligently, and Watt dominated the discussions because of his phonetic training. Ten days later, Pratt, speaking for the group, presented an alphabet to the board, calling it "Pitman's phonographic alphabet in small letters." The new alphabet of forty characters, each with a distinct sound, was actually Pitman's phonotype.[15]

A few days later, the board elected Watt as the secretary and approved the Pitman forty-character phonotype alphabet. The members of the board began pronouncing each letter and practicing it on the blackboard. Watt was now fascinated by this new alphabet and diligently practiced it. He was sure that Pitman's phonotype would be selected for the orthographic reform.[16] Then the board only accepted thirty-eight characters. The two letters left out were the ones for the *u* diphthong in *mule,* and the *oi* diphthong in *oil.* They also changed a number of characters or glyphs, but the alphabet was still Latin based and fairly easy to read.[17]

On November 24, 1853, an unknown author in the *Deseret News* editorialized that the debate on the new alphabet among the Board of Regents centered on whether to retain the old Latin alphabet and add a few characters for other sounds or to design a new set of alphabetical symbols. This article also indicated that the eventual reform would enable the apostles in Salt Lake City to speak so that every "nation and language will forthwith understand them," meaning perhaps that one written language ostensibly representing

14. Ibid.
15. Phonotype was written without capital letters, although it did have similar punctuation as the Latin alphabet. It also had all the sounds of Pitman shorthand and looked similar to the regular Latin alphabet. Since it was phonetic, it only included the letters that sounded and did not have double letters such as the *R* in *carried.*
16. George D. Watt, shorthand notes, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives. Pitman had devised this alphabet in 1837 and had even printed a Bible in it.
17. Kenneth R. Beesley, "The Deseret Alphabet in Unicode," photocopy in author's possession.

universal sounds would enable everyone to understand the published word.[18]

After reading this article, Willard Richards, who had only attended a few meetings because of illness, went to the meeting five days later. He was obviously disappointed with the committee's work. He complimented them on their attempt to establish a phonetic alphabet, but he emphasized that they should create all new letters, stating that the old characters jumbled with the new ones—Pitman's phonotype— would only confuse the learner. He was in favor of one letter for one sound. Orson Spencer, W. W. Phelps, and Jedediah Grant agreed. Watt, who had faced the overpowering Richards before, mentioned that the committee had been instructed to retain as many of the old alphabet letters as possible. Woodruff told the board that if it found fault with the committee's alphabet, it should present a better one. Near the end of the meeting, Young walked in and quickly grasped the importance of the discussion. He said that he did not see any difficulty in creating a new alphabet, thereby agreeing with Richards's suggestion. The inscription on the reverse side of the display sheet made by the alphabet-formulating committee reads, in Watt's handwriting and phonotype, "rejactad"—rejected.[19]

Young wanted to get more information from Richards, so he asked him what he felt about the new alphabet. Early in December Richards wrote back to him:. "My answer is I like it well, because I believe the committee and Regency have done the best they could to the present time, and I think they have done much to promote a unity of sounds, whereby we can communicate our ideas without so much writing and printing as hitherto; and I feel that much credit is due to Bros. Vance and Watt, for their labors, and the blessings of heaven which have rested on them." Richards summarized, "Pitman has done much to help our reporters, and credit to whom credit is due, but he has not perfected an English or any other alphabet." He suggested that they use straight lines and circles in a variety of ways to devise a new alphabet. "Now Beloved Prest. excuse me for my plainness. If I have spoken amiss pardon me, for you know when I speak, I speak what God or the Devil gives me, there is no half heart about this boy, never was, and God grant there never may be."[20]

The detailed Board of Regent's minutes end with the November 29 meeting. However, a short summary of later minutes provides some insight into what happened thereafter. Between November 22 and the end of December, the committee devised an alphabet completely different from the English one. Because of his knowledge of Pitman shorthand and the English alphabet, Watt became the major figure in revising the orthography,

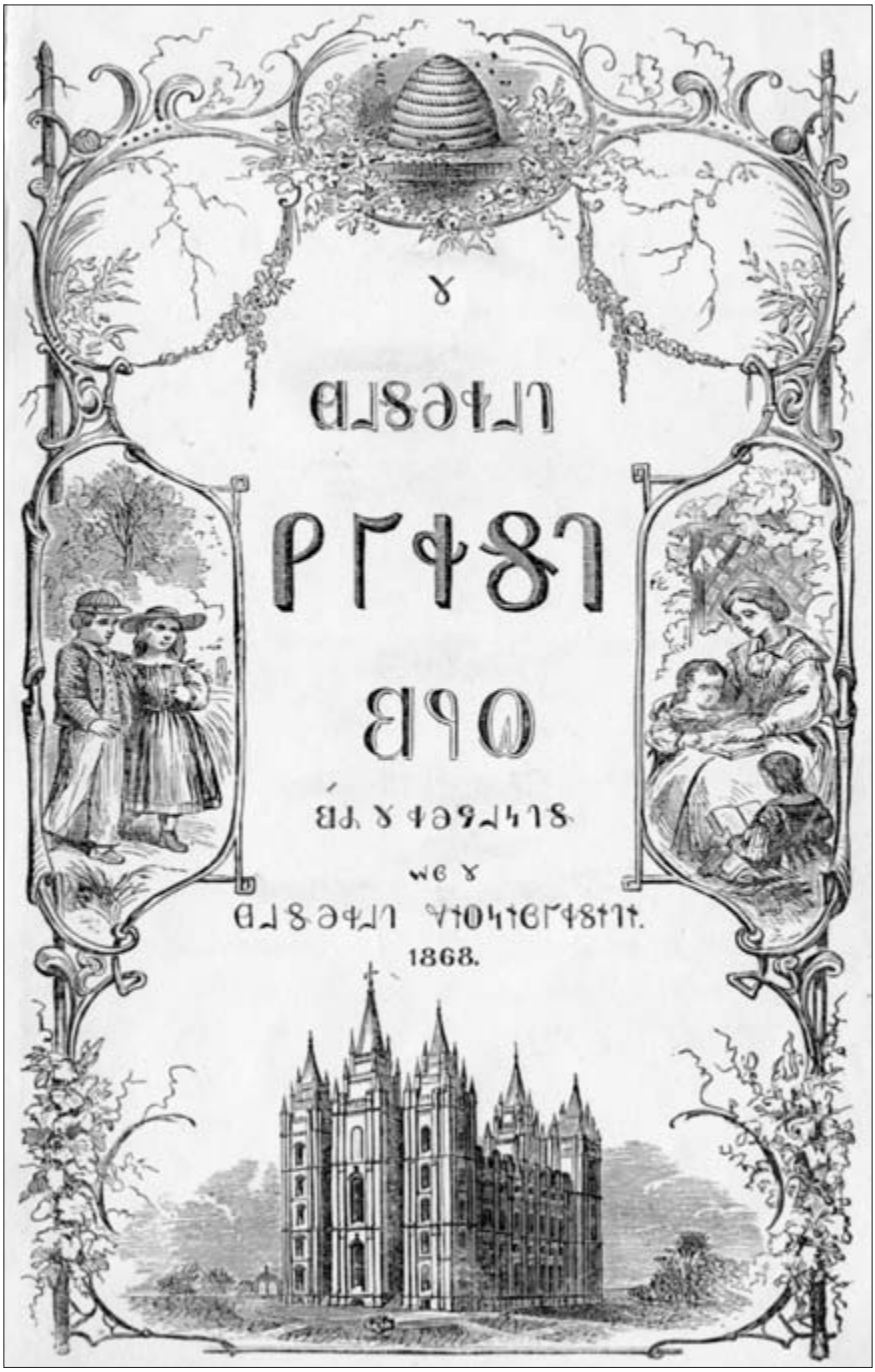
18. "The Board of Regency," *Deseret News,* November 24, 1853, 87.
19. University of Deseret Board of Regents, meeting minutes, November 29, 1853. These minutes are written in phonotype.
20. Willard Richards to Brigham Young, December 8, 1853, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers. Underlining is in original.

and he and probably Pratt worked that entire month on the alphabet. The summary minutes simply state, "From November 18 to December 22, the board labored and investigated the matter of a new alphabet diligently, then they adopted unanimously the alphabet presented by their committee. The same is now denominated the Deseret Alphabet."[21] The symbols came from Watt's imagination, his knowledge of Pitman's phonography and phonotype, and perhaps some help from an ancient alphabet as shown in *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*.[22]

Many of the letters appear to be Latin with a different twist. The *O, W, S,* and *C* are definitely Latin, although the *C* is pronounced *che*, and the *S* has a *zhe* sound. The *E* is an upside-down, lowercase *E*. The symbol representing *OO* is an *O* with a line through it, which is also a phonotype letter. The *Y* appears to have an extra loop in it. The *B* is simply a backwards uppercase *B*. The *T* is a lowercase, upside down, and has no cross through it. The *D* is uppercase, backwards, and has an extra loop. The *G* or *J* is lowercase, the loop does not come together on the top, and the bottom of the letter has a straight line instead of a curve. With the *F,* Watt simply made a loop connecting the top quarter circle with the line and not extending it. The *S* is a fancy letter that connects the bottom to the top with a line. The *L* is lowercase with a half loop on the bottom. The *N* is stylized, and the *eng* sound is a backward *N*. The *P* is an *L* turned upside down and backward, and the *eth* sound is a capital *L*. The *H* looks like a 6 or a capital *G* with no extension on the line in the middle. The letter for *M* is a backward *C*.

Watt borrowed the *a, ah, aw, oo, ow, i, k, g, v,* uppercase *I,* and *the* symbols from Pitman's phonotype, although at times he turned them on their sides or put the loops in other places; sometimes different sounds were applied to some of the letters in the Deseret Alphabet. The short sounds of *i, e, a, o, u,* and *oo* appear to be Pitman shorthand symbols. The resemblance is very strong because of the straight lines and the half curves that are prevalent in phonography. Watt used symbols that were different but still within his realm of experience to devise the alphabet. Thus, the alphabet Watt created was also what Richards wanted: an entirely new alphabet, one that did not resemble the old Latin alphabet in any way.[23] Also the new Deseret Alphabet only had printed letters, not cursive ones.

21. "Summary of Board of Regents Minutes," November 18–December 22, 1853, typescript, LDS Church Archives.
22. Ibid.
23. The difference between the Deseret alphabet and the Latin one brought about its death. The Saints could not recognize what the symbols meant, whereas phonotype was similar enough to the Latin alphabet to be recognizable. George D. Watt in a letter to Ben Pitman in 1864 said that "it was however discovered that it involved too great an expenditure of time and mental exertion to memorize the letters and unlearn that alphabet and its orthography"; Watt to Ben Pitman, March 21, 1864, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005).



Courtesy of LDS Church History Library

Title page of Deseret Alphabet first primer

3

Long Sounds.

Letter.	Name.		Sound.
𐑱	e	as in	*eat.*
𐑺	a	"	*ate.*
𐑸	ah	"	*art.*
𐑷	aw	"	*aught.*
𐑴	o	"	*oat.*
𐑵	oo	"	*ooze.*

Short Sounds of the above.

𐑦		as in	*it.*
𐑧		"	*et.*
𐑨		"	*at.*
𐑪		"	*ot.*
𐑳		"	*ut.*
𐑫		"	*book.*

Double Sounds.

𐑲	i	as in	*ice.*
𐑬	ow	"	*owl.*
𐑘	ye		
𐑢	woo		
𐑓	h		

Letter.	Name.	Sound.
𐑐	p	
𐑚	b	
𐑑	t	
𐑛	d	
𐑗	che	as in *chee*se.
𐑜	g	
𐑒	k	
𐑜	ga	...as in...*ga*te.
𐑓	f	
𐑝	v	
𐑞	eth	..as in .*th*igh.
𐑠	the	" *th*y
𐑕	s	
𐑟	z	
𐑖	esh	..as in..fle*sh*.
𐑡	zhe	" vision.
𐑻	ur	" bu*r*n.
𐑤	l	
𐑥	m	
𐑯	n	
𐑙	eng	.as in.le*ng*th.

Courtesy of LDS Church History Library

Deseret Alphabet letters with English translations, 1868

On January 30, 1854, Parley P. Pratt, who had been on the committee with Watt, wrote to Orson Pratt, telling him, "We have invented a new alfabet for the English language." He then showed Orson examples of the letters, even some cursive ones. He excitedly stated, "This alfabet will write Spanish, Hebrew, Greek, and with the addition of a few more letters, all the languages of the earth. We shall put it out as a standard as soon as we get the type."[24] The *Deseret News* announced the new alphabet on January 19, 1854.[25] Willard Richards's poor health prevented him from attending another board meeting. His death in March 1854 finalized the formulation of the alphabet. Young, who greatly admired the fiery and tireless Richards, probably considered the alphabet to be his greatest monument.

The Board of Regents met periodically until the spring of 1854, when President Young ordered type to be made for the new characters for publishing; then the new type was exhibited to the board on a chart. The letters were probably made from wooden type.[26] For a while in 1854 and 1855, the board tried a forty-letter alphabet that appeared in W. W. Phelps's *Deseret Almanac*.[27] In April the board appointed John Taylor and Watt to act as a committee on pronunciation in preparation for the first reader. On June 6, 1854, Watt recorded the minutes of a valleywide bishops' meeting in cursive Deseret Alphabet.[28]

After several months, Watt suggested to Brigham Young in August ways to improve the alphabet because "it is not the most expeditious method of writing and printing, but on the conterary it retards the hand in its onward course." Using a scientific argument, he continued, "As all organized things, from a grain of sand to a world, is composed of a congregation of isolated atoms, so language is composed of an assemblage of simple, pure sounds." He observed then that "an alphabet should contain just as many letters as there are simple-pure atoms of sound. . . . In my investigations I have tried to rid myself of all prepossessed opinions, and have arrayed my former views before the tribunal of an unbiased mind, seeking diligently for unaloyed truth."[29] He then proposed a new alphabet of thirty-three letters, showing examples written in cursive to Brigham Young. Using the first psalm as an example, he laid out the forty-letter 1854 Deseret Alphabet side by side with his proposed thirty-three-letter

24. Parley P. Pratt to Orson Pratt, January 30, 1854, holograph, Orson Pratt Correspondence, LDS Church Archives.
25. "Regents," *Deseret News*, January 19, 1854, 10.
26. Beesley, "The Deseret Alphabet in Unicode," 16–17.
27. See William W. Phelps, *Deseret Almanac for the Year 1855* (Salt Lake City: Arience Brewer, printer, 1855), 26.
28. "Bishops Meeting," June 6, 1854, holograph, Young Papers; George D. Watt to Brigham Young, June 6, 1854, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
29. Watt to Brigham Young, August 21, 1854.

modification. He also added a sample of Pitman's phonotype.[30] Young did not approve the changes.

After the harvest, the Board of Regents convened again. In the November 29 meeting, there was a discussion of the alphabet. Young felt it should be taught to the youth. As to the Latin or English system of the alphabet, he said, "It is the old thing over and over, and it belongs to that class of beings spoken of that are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Jedediah Grant and Orson Hyde proposed that the teachers should learn it.[31] Following up on that suggestion, the board held a meeting with some teachers in December. Watt discussed that in the present English orthography, one alphabetical symbol sometimes represented several sounds. He used many examples, but the lecture apparently bored most of the teachers.[32] They were more interested in discussing English than in learning his aphabet. "The Board and the teachers," Watt said, "met according to appointment, but the mystic beauties of the English Grammar, and the higher branches of English literature that carry us aloft among the planets and fixed stars to wonder in sublime ignorance occupied the evening and the Deseret Alphabet was left like a distant sun to twinkle in the August shadows that were cast over it."[33]

When the Board of Regents meetings recommenced a few months later, Young had decided that the alphabet needed to have public exposure. In a series of educational meetings of different societies, Young chose Watt to promote the Deseret Alphabet. First, he selected the Deseret Theological Institute, which convened on June 6, 1855, where Watt gave his lecture. He gave illustrations of the alphabet, showing its benefits, and told the attendees that "all great men who contemplated atoms, suns, moon began their education by studying the simple letters of an alphabet." He then demonstrated the way that the Deseret Alphabet simplified the language.[34]

Depending on what was needed for these various groups, Watt could give one of two lectures. In the first, he discussed the principle of language and that some letters had more than one sound. To him words were vehicles "of ideas between man and man when they are within hearing of each other." He compared these elementary sounds: "as wind from the bellows is essential to the music of the organ, so language acts upon the throat in making the sounds of the human voice." He thought that each element of sound "should never have but one meaning or name and that name should be the vocal sound itself." To him the letters of "the Deseret Alphabet are all vowels, Why? because they are sounds which can be heard, and can be made

30. Ibid.
31. University of Deseret Board of Regents, meeting minutes, November 29, 1854, typescript.
32. George D. Watt, essay no. 1 on the Deseret Alphabet, holograph, Watt Papers.
33. University of Deseret Board of Regents, meeting minutes, December 16, 1854.
34. Watt, Essay no. 1 on the Deseret Alphabet.

without the will of another sound." He finished the lecture with the observation, "Hoping that I have made my ideas sufficiently clear to your understandings and with thanks for your kind attention I will take my seat."[35]

In his second lecture, he showed the difference between the alphabetical sounds of the English alphabet and the Deseret Alphabet, where each sound represented a single letter. He quoted from Alexander John Ellis and Lindley Murray supporting his thesis. Ellis, an English philologist and music theorist, had done extensive work in the science of sound. Murray, born in Pennsylvania and a lawyer, was a grammarian. Watt probably had his book entitled the *English Reader.* This lecture was more complicated and needed greater explanation.[36]

Continuing to promote the new alphabet in July, Watt introduced the subject at a meeting of the Deseret Typographical Association. The members discussed the topic and appointed Watt, W. W. Phelps, and James McKnight, one of the members of the association, to draft a resolution to present to the association. The next month Watt presented their resolution supporting the Deseret Alphabet and asking him to teach the association members. The resolution passed unanimously, and Watt announced he would begin his instructions on the following Thursday.[37]

Presumably he returned the following Thursday to begin his class, although the newspaper did not mention it. He returned also in October 1854 to a meeting where Robert L. Campbell, who later became the territorial superintendent, read a lecture on the Deseret Alphabet. Between July and December 1854, Watt must have been busy teaching others, especially elementary teachers. On February 5, 1855, Barnum B. Messenger, who had been on the high council in Iowa, began to teach the clerks in the historian's office the new alphabet.[38] John B. Milner from Provo also taught it.[39]

Sometime during the 1850s, Gustave Louis Edward Henriod, a young man who had been converted in France in 1851, helped Watt. He mentioned that most of the British converts were mechanics and laborers and not qualified teachers. However, he felt that Watt was one of those people who could teach. He wrote that Watt was one of the originators of the alphabet. "Bold, intelligent, untiring and persevering, he was well qualified to lead and teach the system," he concluded.[40]

35. Ibid.
36. George D. Watt, essay no. 2 on the Deseret Alphabet, holograph, Watt Papers. The first page and the last page of this lecture are missing.
37. "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," August 2, 1855, LDS Church Archives.
38. Historian's Office, Journal, February 5, 1855, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives.
39. "Journal History," March 11, 1855. See also Moffitt, *The History of Public Education in Utah*, 52–63.
40. "Biography of Gustave Louis Edward Henriod," photocopy of typescript, LDS Church Archives.

To promote the reformed alphabet, the Board of Regents needed to publish books in the new orthography. At the beginning of January 1856, the regents spent most of their time discussing publication of the new alphabet. The board appointed Watt, Wilford Woodruff, and Samuel W. Richards to prepare books and report at the next meeting. The committee spent the first day arranging the alphabet into syllables and words and writing them on paper to help with pronunciation.[41] In February they began to prepare a course of spelling books. They also considered writing some of the Indian languages, especially Cherokee, into Deseret. At the next meeting, most of the discussion centered on publishing first- and second-grade readers. They also began to compose stories for the books, forty-eight lessons altogether.[42]

Being a member of the committee, Watt contributed his writings to the book. He wrote at least ten essays on various subjects. His compositions show his thinking about the way his essays would benefit the children of Zion. They also displayed his knowledge of geography and history. His first lesson was "Cruelty to Insects Condemned," where he described a boy who enjoyed pulling body parts off flies and crushing them to death. His teacher finally showed him under a microscope a very interesting and beautiful animal with "lively eyes encircled with silver hairs. . . . The whole body ornamented with plumes and decorations." Finally, the teacher told the boy that it was "a poor fly which had been the victim of his wanton cruelty."[43]

In another essay, "The Noble Basket Maker," the aristocrat father of a daughter made her nobleman suitor learn a trade—basket weaving—before he could marry her. They lived happily for a few years until wars in the Palatinate in Germany made them flee. The young nobleman then supported the whole family, including his father-in-law, by making baskets "and enjoyed the highest satisfaction of contributing, by his own industry, to the happiness of connections doubly endeared to him by their misfortunes." Watt also wrote on "Tenderness to Mothers," "Love between Brothers and Sisters," and "Filial Love." In the latter, he said, "Be grateful to thy father, for he gave thee life, and to thy mother, for she sustained thee . . . give ear to their admonition for it proceeds from love." He also wrote on "Gratitude."[44]

One day Watt hastily wrote out another lesson in Deseret Alphabet. He entitled it, "A Chapter out of My Head in the Absence of the Bible." He commented that human beings can know their physical, temporal world quite well, but the spiritual world or the afterlife is not entirely comprehensible, nor should it be: "When men fully understand the visible world, they

41. Samuel W. Richards, Journal, February 4, 5, 8, 1856, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
42. Ibid., February 11, 13–16, 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28; March 11, 17, 1856.
43. "Lessons for the Deseret Reader Carefully Celected by G. D. Watt," holograph, Watt Papers.
44. Ibid.

will then become acquainted with the laws and influences that will prepare them for the study of the world invisible."[45]

The committee met again the following week with the Board of Regents, who approved their work. The board appointed Daniel Wells, Albert Carrington, and William Willis to assist them in creating lessons. Wells later became a counselor in the First Presidency, Carrington was a clerk in the office, and Willis had recently returned from a mission to India. Willis and Woodruff became the main writers. The committee then began intensive work to finish the books. They wrote on such topics as pioneers, the Mormon Battalion, buffalo bullfights, grizzly bears, Utah Territory, and Salt Lake Valley.[46] As the editor, Watt made corrections on what was called the "Catechism."[47]

Early the next year Young asked Apostle Erastus Snow, who was in New York City on a mission, to have the alphabet type made and sent to Salt Lake City the following year.[48] Because Snow heard that the federal government was sending troops to Utah, he abandoned the project and came home as quickly as possible. In April Young asked Horace Eldredge in St. Louis to obtain printer's type, which he did.[49] In October an unknown New York newspaper published a story about the Deseret Alphabet, which it called the Mormon alphabet, and then printed all of the forty letters, which had been sent by the type foundry in St. Louis. The newspaper did not know what the letters represented but felt that they would prevent others from knowing and understanding the Mormons.[50]

After this early beginning and enthusiasm, very little happened on the alphabet in 1857 because of the expeditionary force that the U. S. Army sent to Utah to put down a supposed rebellion. Young and the Mormons had to use every resource possible to prevent the army from reaching Utah that fall. Sometime after the arranged truce, the Board of Regents, because of Watt's diligence, came up with a manuscript edition of the first reader.[51] Finally on November 29, 1858, the Board of Regents began meeting again. Brigham Young, D. H. Wells, Orson Hyde, Wilford Woodruff, George A.

45. George D. Watt, "A Chapter out of My Head in the Absence of the Bible," holograph, Watt Papers.
46. "Deseret Alphabet," *Deseret News,* vol. 5 (December 26, 1855): 331; Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898,* typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–85) 5: 399. Draft articles for primer, Watt Papers.
47. Samuel W. Richards, Journal, February–March 1856.
48. Brigham Young to Erastus Snow, January 3, 1857, microfilm of holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.
49. Brigham Young to Horace Eldredge, April 1, 1857, microfilm of holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.
50. "A New Phase in New York Mormonism—the Deseret Alphabet," unknown New York newspaper article, October 1857, CR 100 91 #7, Historian's Office newspaper file, LDS Church Archives. On another page, a Missouri newspaper claims that the *Missouri Democrat* has printed an example of the alphabet.
51. George D. Watt, manuscript of first reader, 1858, holograph, Watt Papers. The reader was never published.

Smith, Joseph A. Young, and Watt began to revise the Deseret primer. Watt exhibited the Deseret characters on a large black chalkboard.[52]

On a page in his 1858 shorthand notebook, Watt penned seven types of books that needed to be published to make the Deseret Alphabet successful in the Utah education system: first, a simple reader with a few lessons for beginners; second, a reader that had essays primarily on the "history and journeyings of the Saints [and] anecdotes such as Bros. Woodruff & Richards were getting up." The third item was the Book of Mormon in the Deseret Alphabet in chapters and verses. The fourth was "Reader-Campbell's Collection," presumably Robert Lang Campbell's lessons, which were more difficult essays. The fifth volume was an "Elocutionary or Rhetorical reader." The sixth was a speller or "definer," and the seventh, a small dictionary. With the publication of all of these books, the Deseret Alphabet would be ready for the children of Zion to learn—something that never happened.[53]

Early in December, the Board of Regents met again. Watt gave a lecture on the Deseret Alphabet and read several lessons from the first schoolbook. The board then decided on the correct pronunciation of a word. When the regents took up the alphabet again in March of 1859, they considered what they should use for capital letters. Then Orson Pratt reported on the progress that he and Watt had made in copying the words of *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* into the Deseret Alphabet to create a speller and pronunciation guide.

At the following meeting, Chancellor Pratt told the regents he had abandoned writing the Deseret Alphabet dictionary because he did not have the time and his eyes did not allow him to do such close work. Robert L. Campbell considered the dictionary almost an impossible task and felt that Pratt and Watt should spend their time on juvenile readers and a concise speller. Later in the evening, Brigham Young suggested that the regents should publish a juvenile reader, a Book of Mormon, and a speller/dictionary. Furthermore, Young stated that Pratt and Watt should employ clerks and supervise them. The regents appointed a committee to find clerks.[54] Young hired young men to work on the dictionary, and in less than a month, Watt reported that President Young had dismissed all of them. Apparently

52. Historian's Office, Journal, November 29, 1858. That same day Brigham Young wrote to Frederick Edward Schonfield that the Mormons had obtained the matrices, molds, punches, etc. for making the type and hoped that they would soon have a small book in print. In the same letter, he told Schonfield the main reason for constructing a new alphabet. He said, "It is believed, [that] it would represent every sound used and, in fact, [is] a step and partial return to a pure language which has been promised unto us in the latterday." Young to Frederick Edward Schonfield, November 29, 1858, microfilm of holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.

53. George D. Watt, shorthand notes, 1858, holograph, Watt Papers. Actually the authors were successful in accomplishing the first three: they published a first- and second-grade reader and the Book of Mormon. These volumes did not come out until 1868 and 1869, however.

54. University of Deseret Board of Regents, meeting minutes, March 21, 1859.

Young was concerned about the funds to pay them, and perhaps they did not work as diligently as he wished. Young thought that creating the dictionary was women's work.[55]

Early in June 1859, Marian J. Shelton, who had been preaching the Mormon gospel to the Hopi Indians, reported to Young about his mission. Young asked Watt to teach Shelton the Deseret Alphabet to see whether the Indian and Spanish languages were compatible with Deseret. After a short instruction period, Shelton assured President Young that both languages could be written in it.[56] Later, Shelton and a fellow missionary to the Hopis, Thales H. Haskell, began writing their missionary journals in Deseret. A few years earlier Watt had studied the Cherokee alphabet. He gained his knowledge from a volume of the *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge* that had been published in 1835 that he must have had in his possession.[57] He discovered that a Cherokee by the name of Guess (Sequoyah) had devised a written alphabet as early as 1821. Watt commented about this invention in a letter to the *Deseret News,* "The same principle of truth, eternal truth, was no doubt discovered by the ancients in the same way Guess discovered it. . . . Language is based upon but a few elementary sounds, and that marks appropriated to such would supply the means of writing them in all their combinations to make words." He thought that "the inconsistencies of English orthography are infinite."[58]

The study and use of the new alphabet also spread into southern Utah. One gravestone in the Cedar City cemetery—the headstone of John T. Morris—was printed almost entirely in Deseret. Also the clerks in Parowan wrote their minutes in the new alphabet. Many people taught this new alphabet throughout Utah.[59]

In this continual teaching process, Watt gave the clerks in the president's office a lesson on the Deseret Alphabet. Brigham Young also had the manuscript history of the church at the historian's office written in the alphabet. In 1859 Thomas Ellerbeck also began recording Brigham Young's "Financial Ledger C" in Deseret. That same year the board discovered the type made by the St. Louis firm in 1857, so articles could be printed. On February 16,

55. Historian's Office, Journal, April 18, 1859. There is no evidence that Young hired women to do the work.
56. "Journal History," June 4, 1859.
57. *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge,* vol. 2 (Boston: Bewick Company, 1836). Watt mistakenly called it the *American Magazine of Useful Knowledge;* the issue that he had was edited by Nathaniel Hawthorne.
58. "The Cherokee Alphabet," *Deseret News,* December 26, 1855, 3. Watt was incorrect when he said that Guess had invented the Cherokee alphabet. Sequoyah (1776–1843) invented it. Watt also mentions that there is an article about the Cherokee alphabet in the *American Annals of Education.* It was printed in Boston by Otis, Broaders, and Company in 1832 and later in 1838–39.
59. Larry Ray Wintersteen, "A History of the Deseret Alphabet" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970), 44.

the *Deseret News* printed a text from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter five: the Sermon on the Mount. The newspapers printed similar Bible texts almost weekly until May 1860.[60] Young, however, did not like the type because it was too wide, and these articles eventually ended. In February 1860, Watt, already aware of the possibilities of transcribing Spanish and some Indian languages into Deseret, lectured on applying the alphabet to the "inhabitants of Oceania," the people of the Pacific Ocean.[61]

Progress implementing the alphabet was encouraging. The Board of Regents and Watt had spread the word about the new alphabet throughout the territory. Many instructors had taught classes throughout Utah. The *Deseret News* had printed articles about and in the new alphabet. Without a published book, though, no real progress could occur. Watt had worked the hardest and longest on the alphabet, but very little had been accomplished. He must have felt frustrated.

In 1862 the new superintendent of schools for the territory, Robert L. Campbell, presented to Brigham Young a manuscript of a first reader for elementary students in the standard orthography. Young rejected it, saying, "He would not consent to have his type, ink or paper used to print such trash."[62] Even after Young's negative reaction, Campbell must have thought the primer in the Latin alphabet was important, for it was published the following year.[63] It was not until 1864 that the Board of Regents met again to discuss the alphabet. On March 18, Young asked the regents to compare phonotype as now used for printing by Ben Pitman of Cincinnati with the Deseret characters. Ten days later, at the time designated as early candlelight, Watt and John V. Long, his fellow phonographic reporter, exhibited examples of Pitman's phonotype and the Deseret Alphabet on a blackboard.[64] On behalf of the board, Watt wrote a letter to Pitman requesting a catalog containing the prices of fonts for phonotype. He received the catalogs, but by this time, the board had reversed itself and decided to continue with the Deseret Alphabet. Watt then wrote to Pitman, asking if his company could produce a good font for the alphabet or he could recommend another printing company.[65] Presumably Pitman replied that he

60. Kenneth R. Beesley, "Typesetting the Deseret Alphabet with Latex and Metafont," unpublished paper, copy in author's possession. The staff in the president's office must have put the St. Louis type in a box when they moved during the Utah War; they did not unpack it until 1859.
61. Historian's Office, Journal, February 20, 1860.
62. "Journal History," May 22, 1862; see also Beesley, "Typesetting Deseret Alphabet with Latex and Metafont.
63. See *The Deseret Primer Containing Lessons for Juveniles* (Salt Lake City: Elias Smith, Publisher, 1863.) Thirty-four of the thirty-five lessons in this primer were also included in the Deseret first primer, published in the Deseret Alphabet in 1869.
64. University of Deseret Board of Regents, meeting minutes, March 28, 1864.
65. George D. Watt to Ben Pitman, March 21, May 3, 1864, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005).

could not; neither did he know another place that could produce the fonts for the Deseret Alphabet. Two years later, in December 1866, Watt and George Q. Cannon, who later became a member of the First Presidency, reported to the Board of Regents during President Young's absence that he had talked about the possibility of using Pitman's alphabet because "he was unable to get punches and matrices for the Deseret Alphabet, that would make nice letters."[66]

Young now had doubts about using the Deseret Alphabet. His mercurial mind reverted to phonotype. He knew that he could find the type for Pitman's longhand alphabet in either Cincinnati or Britain. He talked with the regents about the possibility of using phonotype instead of the Deseret Alphabet. These regents had been appointed by other territorial governors and felt no allegiance to Young, however, and rejected this proposal. Young, frustrated because he had not obtained any books printed in Deseret, persisted in promoting phonotype. In 1867 Watt went to England, and Young instructed him to obtain fonts and type. Watt was unsuccessful in acquiring any printing fonts from England but requested Ben Pitman of the Phonetic Institute of Cincinnati to send Young a catalog of prices. When Watt returned from his mission that same year, he found a pamphlet in New York entitled the *Standard Phonographic Visitor* by Andrew Graham and a copy of the *Phonetic Spelling Book,* which he sent to Young. Watt was sure that Graham's system was superior to Pitman's.[67]

Robert L. Campbell then convinced Young that it was possible to print readers in Deseret characters. In one of Watt's last shorthand notebooks in 1868, he included four lines in cursive Deseret, interspersed with a few words in English script as if he was trying to recall how to spell some words in this written language that he had not used for some time.[68]

In 1867 the University of Deseret revived and once again offered classes. On January 1, 1868, Watt began to teach phonography and the Deseret Alphabet in the Mercantile Department. He said, "The class, by application, in a few months could acquire with facility the corresponding style of phonography, and as reporters were scarce in the Territory, he hoped that quite a number then before him would qualify themselves to act as reporters."[69] Shortly after that, he became instrumental in starting a Phonographic Society.[70] John B. Milner taught in Utah Valley, and George Burgon, who had been on a mission to Britain a few years earlier, taught from Farmington to Willard. The *Deseret Evening News* reported that classes

66. Historian's Office, Journal, December 3, 1866.
67. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, June 25, 1867, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
68. George D. Watt, shorthand notes, 1868, holograph, Watt Papers.
69. "Council House," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* January 2, 1868, 3.
70. "Journal History," January 27, 1868.

were also held in Cache Valley.[71] Younger men, such as David W. Evans, began to take the art seriously.

Campbell continued to support revising English orthography. He spoke about it in his territorial school reports during the 1860s. He insisted that the Deseret Alphabet would bless the children of the territory.[72] After Watt left Brigham Young's employ, the Board of Regents, because of Campbell's support, finally succeeded in publishing two small primers, the first part of the Book of Mormon, and eventually the entire Book of Mormon in Deseret Alphabet. Young officially announced these accomplishments from the pulpit of the new Tabernacle on October 8, 1869. Undoubtedly he felt a great relief. The children of Zion finally had a book to read, and his work, started in the 1840s with Watt's classes on Pitman shorthand, had finally come to fruition. These four volumes, however, were the only ones ever published in Deseret. Neither the church nor the university regents published the Bible, which was in manuscript form. Even the four volumes already published were never distributed and thus never used. In the next few years, the two greatest supporters of the alphabet died, Robert L. Campbell in 1872 and Brigham Young in 1877. His dream of a new alphabet died with him. No other church president had the idea of revising the English alphabet.

Watt's role in this attempt to invent a new orthography was essential. His phonographic training and the many classes he taught inspired the church leadership to think about revising the alphabet and giving one symbol to one sound. He first promoted phonotype, and then, after the Board of Regents rejected it, he devised new characters. He taught the new alphabet to many people. A willing advocate, he spent many hours writing primers, dictionaries, and spellers and showing how the words were pronounced. At one point, the knowledge of the Deseret Alphabet had spread from town to town. Without the published word, however, the church and educational leaders found it difficult to sustain this enthusiasm. The Deseret Alphabet was still part of Watt's life as late as 1868, the year he left the president's office. He had written many exercises for a juvenile reader years before, but Orson Pratt, who wrote up the final exercises, did not use the ones that Watt had worked on more than fifteen years earlier. The hopes of the Board of Regents in the 1850s for a new alphabet all came to naught, but it remained part of a sense of mission that Brigham Young and the Mormons had, only one aspect of their attempt to change the world.

71. *Deseret Evening News,* January 27, 1868, as quoted in Moffitt, *The History of Public Education in Utah,* 56.

72. Moffitt, *The History of Public Education in Utah,* 58–59.

8

FAMILY AND LIFE IN SALT LAKE CITY

> I offer myself to you, if you can in return give me this love, and with it yourself, which offering would be prized by me above the glittering and perishable treasures of the earth.
>
> George D. Watt to Elizabeth Golightly, 1858

Between the time that George D. Watt left Nauvoo in 1846 and he returned to the Great Salt Lake Valley from England in 1851, Mormons had begun to practice polygamy openly. Mormonism taught that a man could not be saved in the hereafter without a posterity. The larger the posterity, the larger one's kingdom would be, and for this reason, the Mormons practiced polygamy. When Watt arrived in Utah, he had a sickly wife and only one surviving son. Knowing about the principle of plural marriage, he determined to take another wife. Over about a decade and a half, he added five women to his household. He even proposed to a few women who turned him down. He had disappointments and heartache in his family life with the death of his first wife and the divorce of his second. Like most men who married polygamously, Watt chose plural wives much younger than he was. How did he persuade them to accept him instead of a much younger man? His letters give us revealing answers to this important question.[1]

1. For a study that concentrates on polygamy after the manifesto, see B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992). Hardy has since focused his studies on polygamy during the time of its greatest prominence in Utah. See Hardy, "That 'Same Old Question of Polygamy and Polygamous Living:' Some Recent Findings Regarding Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Mormon Polygamy," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 73 (Summer 2005): 212–24. For

Watt had married Molly Gregson, his first wife, on June 13, 1835, before hearing anything about Mormonism. Molly had three children: James, Willard, and George D. Watt Jr. Both Willard and James died in Illinois in 1843.

Apostle Willard Richards probably told Watt about the secret "principle" sometime in 1845. He did not take a plural wife then. Instead, he requested that he be allowed to return to Britain on a mission. If he had any doubts about this commandment, after proselytizing for the church and being continually associated with other missionaries, he readied himself to follow it.[2] His first opportunity to marry plurally came from a completely unexpected source. Jane Brown, his half sister, must have admired her older half brother. Born in 1828, she had lived with their mother in Preston. They had very little association with each other until Watt returned to Preston in 1847. It is difficult to discern what attracted him to her in what the world considered to be an incestuous relationship. Jane and Watt were in close contact on the journey to the Salt Lake Valley, where she noticed "his manly bearing his untireing kindness and unshaken faithfulness as a Brother and a friend."[3] During the trek to Salt Lake City, they began to see each other differently than as just brother and sister.

When they arrived in Salt Lake in September 1851, Brigham Young noticed Jane's beauty. Within months he asked Watt to propose marriage to Jane for him. She responded to Young's proposal with a letter delivered by her mother. She wrote that Watt had made her acquainted "with your counsil tutching our union whitch alass is unfavourable to the same." Then she revealed that Watt had won her love, and she felt it impossible to love someone else. She had given her heart to Watt and wanted no other man to take her through life. If required to marry Young, she wanted the privilege of having that marriage binding only until her death and then to be with Watt in eternity.[4] She said she would abide by Young's council, but if she married

a demographic study, see Lowell "Ben" Bennion, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880: 'Dixie' versus Davis Stake"; and Larry Logue, "A Time of Marriage: Monogamy and Polygamy in a Utah Town," both in *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 3–42. Two other studies worth mentioning are Dean L. May, "People on the Mormon Frontier: Kanab's Families of 1874," *Journal of Family History* 1, no. 2 (1976): 169–89; and Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001). The most recent work on the subject is a documentary by Hardy, ed., *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy: Its Origin, Practice, and Demise,* vol. 9 of *Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2007). Polygamy or plural marriage was practiced in the LDS Church from about 1844 until shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century.

2. Robert Williams, Autobiography, 1859, pp. 120–21, microfilm of holograph, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
3. Jane Brown to Brigham Young, n.d., incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives..
4. Ibid. The Mormons believed that marriage performed in a temple was eternal. However,

him, she would "consider myself condemned to suffer under the effects of an Eternal dissapointment."[5]

At first Young must have rejected the idea of half siblings marrying because he pondered the request for some time. However, nowhere in latter-day scripture did it say that a brother could not marry a sister. Besides, Adam's sons had married their sisters, and some of the other biblical prophets had also married sisters or close relatives. It was a difficult decision for Young to make. Because of Jane's letter, he finally allowed her and Watt to marry. He felt this marriage was an exception, rather than a rule. The two lovers were finally married on January 5, 1852, the same day Watt officiated in the endowment.[6] In the next few years, they had three children: Joseph, Robert, and Margaret Elizabeth, the last born on October 21, 1857.

To provide properly for his family, Watt needed to acquire homes for his wives, for he thought that acquiring land and marrying went hand-in-hand. He tried to provide each wife with a separate home, an ideal he could not always fulfill. He also involved himself in a limited way with land deals for the financial benefit of his family. It is difficult to determine when he first bought property. He found a lot in the middle of block 69 on West Temple Street, two blocks south of Temple Square in the Fourteenth Ward.[7] He built an adobe house on this property.[8] He was a neighbor to Thomas Bullock, a clerk in President Young's office; Moses Whittaker, who died in 1852; and Stephen Longstroth, father of his later plural wife Alice.

His two wives, Molly and Jane, lived in the same adobe house on West Temple Street. His mother, Mary Ann, also had a room there. In the Mormon culture, the first wife had special privileges; she managed the household affairs. Jane, who wanted that authority, soon began to assert herself over the sickly Molly because she was a half sister to her husband. Molly could not tolerate a rival in the same house, so Watt finally rented another house. Then, when the landlord asked him to leave, he purchased a lot and house in the Fifteenth Ward just west of the West Temple property and settled Jane

in certain circumstances, the union of couples who had been married in a temple could be limited to earthly life. Jane turned this concept around, saying she was willing to marry Brigham Young now but wanted to be with Watt in the afterlife.

5. Ibid. This letter to Brigham Young was probably not written by Jane Brown but by Mary Ann Brown, her mother. Jane could not write. The anti-Mormons said that Brigham Young did marry her, but he found that he had damaged goods. In other words, she was pregnant with Watt's child, so Young gave her back to Watt. However, there is no documentation that Brigham Young ever married Jane Brown, and Joseph A. Watt, Jane and George's first son, was born on November 8, 1852, more than nine months after their marriage.

6. Endowment House sealings, January 5, 1852, microfilm of holograph, reel no. 0183393, Special Collections, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Family History Library).

7. Block 69 is situated between First South and Second South Streets and close to Main and West Temple Streets. Later, it became prime commercial property.

8. There are no original property records for this transaction.

and his mother there so he could be near both families.[9] He also had some land southwest of the city in the Fourteenth Ward pasture, near the Jordan River, where he grazed a few animals.[10]

Watt acquired a third wife at twelve noon on December 11, 1853, when he married Alice Longstroth Whittaker in the Endowment House.[11] She was the daughter of Stephen Longstroth and Ann Gill and the former wife of Moses Whittaker, who had died on February 11, 1852.[12] She had no children in her first marriage and none with Watt, either. Alice inherited Moses Whittaker's land, which was near Second South on Main Street, not far from Watt's other homes.[13]

One night before that marriage, Watt walked her home, but she did not allow him to come into her house. He told her in a letter, "When you informed me I could not go into the house to spend an hour with you and bade me good night and that too in such a careless tone . . . a gloom of grief passed over me." He wanted her to know how much she meant to him: "You have touched the tenderest courts of my nature, you have become mingled up with my very existence." He thought that she did not reciprocate his love. "Why friend you cannot imagine the distress of mind, the bitterness of the pain it gives to me if this pure unsophisticated love that knaws [at] my heart if you speak or act towards me as though my feelings are not real or if you consider they are to treat it as foolishness or esteem it as wickedness." He felt better the next morning: "I hail the break of merry morning. My body and mind is invigorated with balmy sleep and . . . gratitude to God for his daily mercy."[14] It is possible that this letter convinced Alice to marry him. The land from this marriage added considerably to his estate. He now had three wives and three lots.

In September 1855, David Mustard, who had immigrated from Britain two years earlier, offered to purchase his property in the Fifteenth Ward. Watt now needed a new place for Jane and his mother. He proposed to Young that he take the money from his account in Liverpool and have the Church Public Works employees construct a building on Alice's Main Street property that could double as a commercial place. For some unknown reason, this

9. Nelson Winch Green, *Fifteen Years among the Mormons* (New York: H. Dayton, 1859), 8; George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., shorthand, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006).
10. Salt Lake County Recorder, transfer sheets, p. 1, reel 2, vol. 1, microfilm of holograph, Samuel W. Richards Collection, LDS Church Archives. Names of Stockholders in the field that was called, in the Slew survey, the first block west of the Bakers road, Watt Papers.
11. Endowment House sealings, December 11, 1853, microfilm of holograph, reel no. 0183393, Special Collections, Family History Library.
12. Alice Longstroth married Moses Whittaker in 1846 in Nauvoo.
13. The lot was 1¼ acres.
14. George D. Watt to Alice Longstroth Whittaker, n.d., ca. 1853, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth 2005).

extra building in his mind meant greater prosperity, which he desired, for he wrote Young that he did not want to be "selfish, avaricious, or covetous," but he was a little ambitious. He wanted to see others prosper and get rich, but "I would like to follow in their wake when it is time for me." However, if his time never came "to possess the things of this world," he did not care. "For I am rich in one way, in the hope the gospel gives."[15] Young must have given him permission to go ahead. However, because Molly was sick, he procrastinated building this house. Instead, he must have sold the house in the Fifteenth Ward and moved Jane and his mother into Molly's home.

Sometime late in 1855, Molly became so ill that she was no longer able to care for herself. On January 10, 1856, she died.[16] In a letter to his sister in Britain eight years later, Watt explained, "She died of consumption which she received by taking a severe cold that settled upon her lungs and which she could not have overcome. She was like an infant when her spirit departed and died without a motion of a muscle." Molly was forty-six in January 1856. She had contracted tuberculosis while working in the textile factories of Preston. Her only living son, George D. Jr., was thirteen when his mother died. Alice prepared her body for burial. Watt glorified her accomplishments: "She had crossed the great waters four times with me, passed with me through sickness, hardship, sorrow, and death; wandered with me over plains and sandy deserts, crossed the Rocky Mountain and then will be saying 'I will be your companion in heaven.'"[17] Robert Williams, who had crossed the plains with Watt, remembered that Molly was a kind-hearted and a good wife to Watt, in spite of her hot temper; "she was a rip with a tongue."[18] About ten years after her death, Watt wrote that Molly had her weaknesses and failings, but "she was filled with integrity, truthfulness, and honesty." She loved her husband and children and was a "clean, hard working woman."[19] To his sister, he passionately declared that "the tie that tied us together was not broken asunder by her death as is the case when you married."[20]

15. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., ca. 1855, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers; Salt Lake County Recorder's Office, Land and Property Records, book A, p. 53, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archvies. The original of this record is in the Salt Lake County Recorder's Office. Perhaps Watt had plans to start a store or at least rent the building to a merchant.
16. Historian's Office, Journal, January 11, 1856, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives. The entry reads, "Sister G. D. Watt died last evening." See also "News from Utah," *Millennial Star*" 18 (May 24, 1856): 335. The article does not mention the date when she died.
17. George D. Watt to Margaret Brandreth, n.d., ca. 1863, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers. It is not known where Molly was buried, although it was probably in the new cemetery just north and east of the city, now known as the Salt Lake City Cemetery.
18. Williams, Autobiography, 1859, pp. 120–21, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives; Watt to Margaret Brandreth, n.d., ca. 1863.
19. Watt to Margaret Brandreth, n.d. ca. 1863.
20. Ibid.

Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Alice Longstroth Whittaker Watt, third wife

By the mid-1850s, East Temple Street, later known as Main Street, was becoming a commercial center. Watt found that Alice's lot was valuable land. He could lease or sell small portions and make a profit. Sometime in 1856, he leased land to Job Taylor Smith, who built a small adobe building for his wife's hat-making store.[21] In August 1858, he sold the southwest corner of Alice's lot, 55 feet deep with a 20-foot front, to Gilbert Clements, who lived in the Fourteenth Ward, and a year later, Clements bought another 21½ feet.[22] In November 1860, Robert C. Sharkey, who had just returned from Nevada, acquired a lot that had 17 feet of frontage on Main Street and

21. Job Taylor Smith, Autobiography, typescript, LDS Church Archives; "Lease to Peter Stubbs from George D. Watt," December, unknown year, Watt Papers.
22. Salt Lake County Recorder's Office, Land and Property Records, book B, p. 57–58, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

was 165 foot deep from Watt on the north side of Alice's property.[23] William Nixon, a merchant in Salt Lake City, bought Watt's lot on West Temple Street that adjoined his larger yard.[24]

In 1860 Watt leased some land that contained a shop that had been used as a saddler or paint store to John Tobin for eight dollars a month. A soldier under the command of Captain John W. Gunnison, Tobin converted to the LDS Church in Salt Lake City and later married Sarah Jane Rich, the eldest child of Apostle Charles C. Rich. Tobin included a five-and-a-half-foot passageway in the lease, unbeknownst to Watt. When Watt found out, he desired it back and finally had it returned by a probate-court decision in 1865.[25]

Perhaps because he worked in the president's office, where people discussed plural marriage, Watt became interested in taking yet another wife. In 1859, a year after he purchased four lots in the Avenues, he turned his attention to Elizabeth Golightly, a young lady he had known for several years. She was the daughter of Richard Golightly, who ran the Globe Bakery.[26] Watt courted Elizabeth by visiting her at her parents' home, and she enjoyed his company. She had also been courted by a younger man and prayed fervently to know which one to accept. Watt finally asked her father if he could ask her to marry him. He consented, and so in typical George D. Watt fashion, he wrote her a letter: "I offer myself to you, if you can in return give me this love, and with it yourself, which offering would be prized by me above the glittering and perishable treasures of earth." He told her that he had visited her often: "You have seen me as I am, and you may have formed an opinion of me detrimental to the fulfilment of my wishes." He had not tried to deceive her by false appearances. "I have my weaknesses, but if the love and purity of the soul remains unimpared, the weaknesses of the flesh are always pardonable. With such a love I can love you. If you can give me in return such an affection it will cover a multitude of faults, and make us happy in each other." He begged to know how she felt: "I would like to know

23. Ibid., pp.227–228, LDS Church Archives.
24. Ibid., p. 165. He first offered the land for sale in the *Mountaineer*, April 7, 1860, p. 131.
25. *Indenture: John Tobin to Henry E. Bowring,* April 10, 1850, Probate Court, Salt Lake County, case files, series 373, box 8, folder 98, microfilm of holograph, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City; *Eviction: Bradford Leonard vs. John Tobin,* December 16, 1859, Probate Court, Salt Lake County, case files, series 373, box 6, folder 156, microfilm of holograph, Utah State Archives; bill of sale, holograph, business papers, Charles C. Rich Papers, LDS Church Archives. An exact copy of the lease is contained in this folder. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., holograph, Watt Papers. Sarah Tobin vs. John Tobin Judgement, Probate Court, Salt Lake County, series 373, box 7, fd 134, Reels 14-16, microfilm of holograph, Utah State Archives. The court charged William Howard, who had purchased the lease from Tobin, and Watt half the court fees, which totaled five dollars each; copy of the court fees in the Watt Papers.
26. For the wives already in the marriage, their husband courting a younger woman often caused friction.

your mind upon this matter." He thought that "if my visits as a suiter may not be allowed I may cease forthwith to trouble you, and to deceive myself with expectations that can never be realized." If she turned him down, he would "continue my few and far between visits as an old friend and Bro."[27] Perhaps this letter convinced Elizabeth to marry Watt. She became his legal wife on July 23, 1859, in the Endowment House.[28] She was eighteen years old, and he was forty-seven.[29]

Since Watt again had a third wife, he needed a home for her. Elizabeth lived with Alice until her home was finished, about two years later. Watt decided to build a house on his property in the Avenues that he had purchased the year before. The house, as finally constructed, was a large two-and-a-half-story frame home with a pitched roof and an attached room on the back that was used as a summer kitchen. It was plenty large enough for one wife and her family but probably crowded with more.[30] Watt may have had his oldest son and his wife living there for a short time. Periodically he took in boarders at either this house or the place on Main Street.[31] By mid-1865, he and Elizabeth had three children: one son and two daughters.

Well before that time, Watt's family had begun to fracture. Difficulties between him and Jane probably started soon after their marriage. In an undated shorthand letter in the middle of his stenographic book for 1852, he wrote to Brigham Young concerning a fit of anger he had had toward Jane and her reaction about his decision about a wagon: "I hate . . . to trouble with any of my affairs as you have more weighty matters to engross your attention. I, however, crave your indulgences for a moment while I lay before you an affair that is very grievous to me."[32] That morning one of Brigham Young's nephews had asked Watt if he could borrow his wagon to help take a family south. Watt told him he could; Jane disagreed. After the man left, "she commenced to abuse me with low language and called the wagon and covers hers. I told her it was mine and I should do as I pleased with it. She called me a liar and shouted at me like a blackguard that the neighbors heard." He later "lost command of my temper which caused me to break some cups and saucers." Jane immediately "went out to the wagon and began to tear the covers off, cutting the ropes with a knife." He did not stop her. "Brother Brigham I have lived in hell with her ever since this

27. George D. Watt to Elizabeth Golightly, 1858, holograph, Watt Papers.
28. Endowment House sealings, July 23, 1859, microfilm of holograph, reel no. 1267010, Special Collections, Family History Library.
29. Elizabeth must have been acknowledged as Watt's legal wife since her name was on the probate record when he died.
30. It is very probable that his next wife, Sarah Ann Harter Watt, moved in with Elizabeth for a short time. His last wife, Martha Bench Watt, also lived with Elizabeth.
31. "Notice of Mr. John B. Foster," *Deseret News,* July 13, 1864, 13: 331.
32. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., in an 1852 shorthand notebook, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005). It is possible that he wrote this letter several years later and was using paper he had available.

Author's Collection

Elizabeth Golightly Watt, fourth wife

gospel came to us."[33] He determined "that I will not live in such close quarters with it any more or at least until she humbles herself before the Lord and to her husband."[34]

Perhaps his frustration lasted only a short time, and they both made amends to each other. Jane, however, disliked a polygamous household. If

33. When he says "this gospel came to us," perhaps he means the principle of plural marriage that enabled him to marry Jane.

34. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., in an 1852 shorthand notebook. It is possible that Jane's relationship to Watt as his half sister kept her from being accepted into Salt Lake City society.

she had to endure that relationship, she wanted to have all the privileges of the first wife. Watt continued to frustrate her plan when he married Alice Whittaker. His marriage to Elizabeth Golightly was simply the final blow. Jane had negative feelings about Alice. She began to demean Watt and make things unpleasant. She even involved their common mother in her schemes. After several years of this treatment, Watt and Jane separated. He supported her but not enough according to her. He avoided her because "I did not wish to come into contact with an unreasonable devil."[35] Finally in 1863, after being separated for two or three years, Jane applied to Brigham Young for a divorce. The president told Watt what she wanted.[36]

Watt wrote her that he would gratify her wish, but he did not desire that path, even though President Young urged him to consent. He still loved her and wanted her back, but he wanted her to alter her course toward him and his family: "I desire of you first to cease speaking evil of me and circulating falsehoods; second, I wish you to contradict those scandalous stories which you have circulated about Alice and seek her forgiveness." He emphatically stated, "I wish you to cut the acquaintance of the company you have kept who are your advisors and who have succeeded so well to embitter your mind against me and the rest of my family." Finally, he wished her to live "a humble and faithful life before the Lord, and strive to make a loving wife to me the rest of your days and all shall again be right between us." He thought she had "passed through a bitter experience in trying to devil me." He admonished her to pray humbly and then "will repentance come to your heart and your love and respect for me will return." He admitted his separation from "you is a bitter trial to me but I can see but one way to thwart it and that is repentance and humility on your part." He told her, "If you still love me as you have professed you do, you will be willing to do all I wish of you to gain your friendship and esteem."[37]

Jane, however, had no desire to return to Watt. On October 28, 1863, Brigham Young granted her the divorce.[38] Six months later, she complained to Young that Watt had not taken care of her and her family. Young found that the charges were not true. He then informed her that he could do nothing more for her. If she needed help beyond what George provided, she should take her request to her bishop, John Sharp.[39]

In 1863 Edmund C. Briggs and Alexander McCoy, two missionaries for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, came to Salt

35. George D. Watt to Jane Brown Watt, n.d., shorthand holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005). There is no date on this letter, but it had to be 1863 because Young granted the divorce that year.
36. Ibid. Watt informed Jane that Young had told him about her request.
37. Ibid.
38. Divorce certificates, October 28, 1863, holograph, Young Papers.
39. Brigham Young to Jane Brown, April 27, 1864, holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.

Lake City. The Josephites, as they were called, had as their leader Joseph Smith III, the oldest son of Joseph Smith Jr. Sometime after April 1864, Jane joined with them and was baptized by Briggs. She desired to leave Utah but feared that Watt would prevent that. In his previous letter, he had threatened her, "I would rather lay you in your grave and then should I know that you are safely concealed from the sorrows that you will be exposed."[40] Briggs arranged for a squad of General Patrick Connor's men at Fort Douglas to rescue her. A six-man army patrol, along with an "armed Reorganized member," probably Briggs, came to her house with a wagon and escorted Jane, her mother, and her three children to Fort Douglas. Watt said, "Many have been the speculations giving the words of gossip in relation to this matter, chiefly blaming me."[41] He tried but failed to convince his mother to return.

Shortly thereafter Jane took her mother and three children on the trail through Wyoming, again escorted by the military. She stopped for a while in Fort Laramie and met Adam Saladin, soon to be released from the army, and married him on January 30, 1865. They later moved to Nebraska.[42] Presumably sometime after her daughter married again, Mary Ann Watt Brown returned from the Midwest, probably with Robert, her grandson, to live with her son, George D. Watt.[43]

Over the next two years, Watt married two more women and proposed to at least two others. Why he decided in his fifties to marry twice more is unclear. He now had four children living with him, including George D. Watt Jr., who was almost an adult. Two had died, and three had gone with Jane. He probably felt the need to take more women as wives because of his desire to enlarge his posterity.

In 1864 Watt began to search for another wife. He had associated with James Smithies in the Salt Lake Theater Orchestra for a number of years and became enchanted with his daughter, Sarah Ellen. He decided that he could love her as a wife. Being very formal and always proper, Watt wrote her parents, asking their permission to marry her. He first apologized for not speaking to them about it, but "it is upon a subject which I can't help feeling somewhat delicate. I have seen your daughter and may state I can love her as a husband ought to love a wife." He admitted he was almost a

40. Watt to Jane Brown Watt, n.d.

41. George D. Watt to Martha Bench, n.d., shorthand, holograph (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005), LDS Church Archives.

42. George D. Watt to Martha Bench, n.d., shorthand, holograph (transcribed by LaJean Carruth), in author's possession. Jane lived in Nebraska City where she attended the Reorganized LDS branch. Later, she attended the Starr Creek branch in Kansas. See RLDS deceased files, early reorganization minutes, 1852–71, book A, p. 627; Nebraska City, Nebraska, RLDS branch records and Starr Creek, Kansas, RLDS branch records, Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri. I am indebted to Ron Romig, the archivist for the Community of Christ, for this citation.

43. I do not know Jane's point of view. She must have had another side to this very interesting story, but there are no records of her opinion.

stranger to the Smithies. "I am provided with a comfortable house remain in a beautiful constitution that I have no doubt will be admired by your daughter could she love me as her future husband. My disposition is quiet and peaceful, loving the society of my family and averse to change unless on cases where they are inevitable and they give me pain; my affections grow deep and lasting for those who reciprocate." He had never abused himself "by excesses of any kind, by drinking, chewing or smoking tobacco. I love coffee to my breakfast and tea to my supper which are the strongest drinks I indulge in."[44] He forgave those with "wrongs done to me" and prayed for "my enemies that they may repent." He knew that "no young woman would be afraid to trust herself with me for time and eternity."[45] The Smithies must have told him that they could not consent to this union, for Watt never married Sarah.[46]

In 1865 he began considering a daughter of Apostle Willard Richards, who had died in 1854, and Nanny Longstroth Richards; her name was Mary Asenath Richards, born in Salt Lake City in November 1850. Nanny was a sister of his wife Alice. Watt and Asenath probably never thought of themselves as courting, although his letter looks like an attempt to entice her. In January 1865, Watt took Alice to visit Nanny, who lived in Farmington. He talked to Asenath and gave her his photograph. She wrote him a short letter and thanked him: "I shall keep it to remember you bye though I need not have anything to remember you by for I think that knowbody could forget you that has ever known you."[47]

Encouraged by her letter, Watt wrote to her, first discussing news of the family. After that he mentioned the dilemma facing young Mormon girls: "You know Asenath that the dashing devil may care young fellow with spurs and whip in hand and a cigar in his mouth and maybe a roll of tobacco in his cheek with a broad rimmed hat encircled with beaver and 3 or 4 tails flying behind has charms for some young woman that are not to be found in a sedate praying meeting going and half gray headed person like myself." However, some young women look "at the matter different and consider that they would be more safe with a man of tried integrity and experience." He reminded her that she was a daughter of Willard Richards and needed to marry someone who would strengthen Willard's house in the hereafter,

44. The Word of Wisdom was not something Mormons held to rigidly at this time. Brigham Young's attitude was that the youth of the church should live it, but their parents should be understood and accepted for breaking it a little. Watt wanted to make sure that the Smithies knew that he broke it only a little by drinking tea and coffee.

45. George D. Watt to Brother and Sister Smithie, n.d., shorthand, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005). The date of this letter comes from the statement that he had been in the church for twenty-eight years next June. He was baptized in 1837, so this letter was written in either the fall of 1864 or the winter of 1865.

46. Sarah Ellen Smithie married Ephraim Scott in Salt Lake City on November 9, 1867. He was twenty-five, and she was twenty.

47. Mary Asenath Richards to George D. Watt, February 12, 1865, holograph, Watt Papers.

and even though he did not suggest himself as her suitor, he implied that she should choose a person like himself. He realized that he was older, but those serious young women would have in view "not the present only but the future, the eternal never ending future, where age will merge into youth, beauty, and eternal loveliness." Watt reminded Asenath about the nobility of her mother. He closed his long epistle with a wish: "God bless you Asenath and direct your feet into paths that will result in your present and eternal happiness." He signed it, "Your affectionate, Uncle George." Nothing more came of this entreaty to Asenath, and in 1868 she married another man.[48]

His next marriage partner came from the Harter family in Salt Lake City in 1866. John Harter had a daughter, Sarah Ann, who was still in her teens. Her father wanted her married, and so he asked several men. Because of the poverty of her family, Sarah worked as a maid in the home of John Young, Brigham's brother, for a while. Then she did service in the home of Wilford Woodruff, and, according to Watt, "when I first saw her she was living at Sister Lees in the 13th ward, waiting upon nine gentile boarders.[49] Her father called upon me to lay hands upon her; I found her imaciated with hard labor. I pitied her and loved her. I advised her father to take her home or she would soon go to her long home. In a few days 'she began to revive and she is now better.'" After Watt visited her for a short time, "in the presence of the girl, I asked her father and mother for her to be my wife, they consented. I then asked the girl and she consented."[50]

Her father then had to tell Watt about her past. A few years before that the Harters had taken into their home a non-Mormon boarder, who had courted Sarah secretly. They were married at Camp Douglas, with only her mother at the ceremony. "The girl was then in her forteenth year," Watt told Brigham Young. "She lived at her fathers house afterward, her husband coming to see her." Because she refused to go with him, her husband left the valley alone. The family presumed he went north and was killed in Montana. "The sad experience she has passed through, and the remorse she has suffered has made her a sedate and thoughtful woman although only 17 years of age," Watt informed Young. "I wish to make her my wife if it would be right for me to do so, and if you can give your free consent to our union; not otherwise."[51] On August 11, 1866, Watt married Sarah, presumably with Young's permission. She probably lived with Elizabeth after her

48. George D. Watt to Mary Asenath Richards, n.d., ca. 1865, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005).
49. There was a Stephen Lees in the Thirteenth Ward.
50. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., ca. August 1866, Watt Papers. Martha Bench Watt, later in life, told her granddaughter, Hazel Anderson Bigler, that Sarah's father had tried to marry his daughter to some other men in Salt Lake City before Watt finally married her.
51. Ibid.

Author's Collection

Sarah Ann Harter Watt, fifth wife, as an older woman

marriage. Later, Watt built Sarah a house in Kaysville. They did not have their first child, a daughter, until May of 1868.[52]

The last woman Watt married, Martha Bench, came from the little town of Manti in Sanpete County in central Utah. He first became acquainted with her in 1863 when she was sixteen, when he stayed at the Bench home with Bishop Alonzo H. Raleigh and E. W. Vanetton, another member of Brigham Young's party. The next day the group went to Ephraim, and Martha and her mother accompanied them. The three men stayed with the Benches again that evening.[53] Watt exchanged pleasantries with both Martha and her twin sister, Mary. He had such good feelings about them that he suggested that they think about a possible marriage with him. For sisters to marry the same man was not uncommon in the Mormon polygamous system.

After returning home, he wrote them a letter. He told them that every evening he had thought of them. He had prayed, asking his Father in Heaven to bless them and "for guidance to myself and you relative to the proposal I made you when I was last near you." He concluded that "I can love you

52. It is not clear when or where Watt built Sarah's house in Kaysville. It is possible that he had the house constructed and later added a townhouse apartment to each side to create the homes for his three youngest wives.

53. A. H. Raleigh, Diary, April 25–27, 1863, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

because you are good. I can trust you because you are faithful." He did not know them sufficiently well yet, but he knew their parents, "the fountain from whence you have sprung." When a person has the qualities of "fidelity, integrity, and a love of truth," he thought that husband and wife together can have an endless eternity of blessings. He opined, "How soothing to the heart is the soft tones of sympathetic feeling. How they smooth down the sharp points on life's highway, giving fresh courage and new life to the sinking despairing soul." He asserted that if he had all the wealth, pomp, prestige, and worldly titles, he would feel naked and in a "state of spiritual starvation," even though he lived in a world where "the music of poets spring from hearts true attachments." He told them that they, too, were susceptible to the same feelings and "happy must the man be to whom you give your hearts best affections." He hoped that it would be a person who could "properly appreciate the devotion of two such hearts." He claimed that if he was the one to create these feelings within them, he would be gratified.[54]

Mary liked the attention of this older man, but she had no inclination to accept his offer. By contrast, Martha was enamored with this tall, older gentleman and sent him a letter by way of Manti Bishop Andrew J. Moffitt. How many letters they exchanged in the next few years no one knows. George D. Watt could express his thoughts so well on paper that his letters intimidated one so young with a limited education. "Don't be afraid that I shall criticize your writing and composition for it is an art that is obtained chiefly by practice. . . . Write your thoughts and feelings as they live in you in simple language and that is good composition," Watt wrote Martha.[55] They kept writing. He visited her again when he went to Manti with President Young in October 1863. Their feelings for each other became stronger.

Their next known letter dates from 1864. When Bishop Moffitt arrived in Salt Lake, Watt inquired about a possible letter, and the bishop told him that he had sent the letter with someone who apparently had not delivered it. Watt wrote immediately, telling Martha that his family was fine, even though he was distraught about Jane, his former wife, and her family leaving home with General Connor's armed guards. He felt that he had finally been delivered from this problem, however. He begged Martha to come to Salt Lake with her mother and father "that I may have a chance to see you and get acquainted

54. George D. Watt to Mary and Martha Bench, n.d., shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005). There is no date on the letter. Watt mentions that he had been absent on a trip to St. George for a month and had just returned on "Tuesday evening 21 instant." At the bottom of the page, upside down, he wrote, "The president and his company left Great Salt lake City on the 20th of April 1863 and returned May 21st." The letter must have been written within days of his return.

55. George D. Watt to Martha Bench, n.d., shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005). This letter was probably written in 1866; his ability to write must have bothered her when she had to write back with uneducated English.

with you and you with me." He feared that because of the sad circumstances in his family, "you may feel afraid to join your destiny with mine. . . . I, however, consider you a girl possessed with enough sense and judgment."[56]

In the summer of 1866, Watt again traveled with President Young to Manti. He tried to talk with Martha but could do so only in public places. Frustrated by this limited opportunity, he wrote her a letter. He wanted to know her feelings toward him. He felt that he had so much misery in "marriages devoid of sympathetic affinity that I tremble at the idea of a person being joined to me who could not love me so as to willingly suffer all things if necessary for my sake." He told her, "I won't encourage any young woman to trust her dearest interests: her love and affection with me if I don't feel that I could fully reciprocate her tenderest love." He thought that life was like the world: "a well painted picture variegated with lights and shades with sunrise and storm." Simply put, he wanted to marry her. He did not express this desire, though, in simple words but hid it in literary and philosophical language.[57]

Martha understood that it was a proposal letter. She had been courting this man for several years, and even though a younger man in Manti liked her, she could not love anyone except George D. Watt. She desired to be his wife. At the end of December, she wrote confirming her desire to marry him. He wrote to her immediately: "I hope to prove myself worthy of your love. I know of no earthly blessing to compare with the true affection of a faithful simple womanly heart."[58] He informed her that he would not be able to marry her until he returned from England, sometime in the fall of 1867. When he returned on August 4, she was so anxious to see him that twenty days later, she came to Provo, where President Young had brought Watt and his party.

They recommitted to each other. In his sermon in Spanish Fork, Watt alluded to his forthcoming marriage by expressing his determination to take his share of the obligations "resting upon the young men in Israel." When he talked to the Provo congregation, he told them that he had committed himself in taking the counsel of a young man: "that is to marry a daughter of eve."[59] Martha's parents had not given permission for the marriage, and Watt would not marry her without it, so she returned to Manti for their consent.[60]

56. George D. Watt to Martha Bench, n.d., shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers. I estimate this letter to be about May 1864. Jane Brown was taken away by Connor's troops in 1864. Also he wrote that he had married Elizabeth Golightly "about four years ago."
57. Watt to Martha Bench, n.d., ca. 1866.
58. George D. Watt to Martha Bench, December 28, [1866], shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005). This letter must have been written in 1866.
59. Utah Stake, general minutes, August 24, 1867, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
60. George D. Watt to Martha Bench, October 28, 1867, photocopy of holograph, Watt

When Martha talked with her parents, her father consented, but her mother refused. Ann Longman Bench wrestled with her feelings over Watt's age (fifty-five) more than the fact of the polygamous marriage. Her husband was the same age as Watt, and she was seven years older. She could not give permission to someone of their age marrying her young daughter. At the end of October, Martha traveled to Salt Lake City, where she again told Watt of her love. He decided that he could not marry her without trying once again to obtain her mother's permission: "I have thought the matter over seriously, and tried to obtain wisdom from the Lord to guide us, and have come to the conclusion that you had better return home as you are, and if possible get your mother's consent to our union and return to me again." He continued, "I feel a strong objection in me to doing anything apparently clandestine. When you are my wife, I want to be able to meet your mother like a servant of God and a gentleman ought, that she may have nothing to upbraid me with."[61]

Watt thought, however, that if Martha failed to get her mother's permission they could still go ahead with the marriage. "If . . . she is still inexorable, you will then be fully justified in following your own inclination, with the blessing of your Father, and the blessing of the Almighty."[62] He sent a letter with Martha, so, if necessary, she could show it to her parents. She returned to Manti, where she finally obtained her mother's consent. Ann Bench had decided that her feelings opposing the marriage might damage her relationship with her daughter.

Watt did not have a house for Martha when she arrived in Salt Lake City again. She stayed with Elizabeth. Martha had not brought any bedding with her, either, so they had to make blankets for her. Another marriage meant more burdens and responsibilities for Watt.[63] On November 9, 1867, in the Endowment House, the fifty-five-year-old Watt married his sixth and last wife, the twenty-one-year-old Martha Bench.[64]

Because of her mental anguish over her daughter's marriage and concern that her husband might marry polygamously, Ann Bench became ill. About a week after their marriage, Martha returned to Manti to take care of her mother. Two letters from Watt to Martha in Manti during this period reveal another side of this man, qualities he would have also shown to his other wives if he had written them. He wanted Martha at their home in Salt Lake City, but it was also important for him that she was in Manti taking care of her sick mother.

Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).

61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Part of this information is based on conversations with Hazel Anderson Bigler, who as a small girl shared a room with her grandmother.
64. Endowment House records, November 9, 1867, microfilm of holograph, reel no. 114915, Special Collections, Family History Library.

Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Martha Bench Watt, sixth wife

Watt seemed genuinely concerned about Martha's mother: "I will remember her in my prayers that she may be made better under the blessing of the Almighty." He wanted to make sure Martha knew how much he loved her: "And dear, so long as I retain the power of my faculties and the good spirit of the Lord, and the tender love of Martha's heart, your mother and friends shall never have cause to complain of me. I have taken you to my heart to 'love and care' for you in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, to pilot you through life's checkard scenes to the haven where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."[65]

Martha had written of a "gloom" in the house because her mother feared that her father might marry Ellen Fowler, whom she called the "widow

65. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, November 20, 1867, photocopy of holograph, Watt Papers. There is a photocopy of this letter also at Harold B. Lee Library, Perry Special Collections.

Fowler." Her husband had died two years previously, and William Bench had been "seeing" her. Watt assured Martha that her father would not marry Ellen. Henry Charles Fowler, her brother-in-law, had told Watt that he intended to marry her. "I think, dear, that your family should banish such an expectation as your father marrying her entirely from their minds and cease from this time to borrow any further troubles on that score whatever," he wrote confidently. He continued, "Tell your mother to be comforted, and let her spirit triumph over all such dark forebodings, and tell the devil to kiss his own tail, and cease from troubling her."[66] About a year later, however, in November 1868, William Bench did marry Ellen Fowler.

After about two weeks of being apart, Watt said he wanted to visit Martha's family in Manti: "I would like very much to visit my newly made relations, and enjoy their society for a few days, but, dear I know not what chances there will be for me to get away." He thought he might be able to leave home, but he was needed at the office, and "on this account I fear I shall not be able to get away. O how I would like to visit you at your father's house." He encouraged her to write often. He ended his epistle with these words: "Now darling I bless you in the name of the Lord, and pray that we may be preserved to meet again. . . . Praying for all blessing to attend you I remain my Dear little wife your ever affectionate husband, George D. Watt."[67]

On November 24, 1867, Martha informed Watt that her mother had improved and she could now come back to Salt Lake City. He was overjoyed: "To have Martha at home would indeed give me happiness and to have her where she is [in Manti] pleases me because it is her will, and satisfies in her a desire to consol a mothers heart. God will bless you always because of the anxiety you have manifested for your mother's happiness, and He will bless and comfort her for your sake." He was glad that she would be home for Christmas: "It is a merry time, a time in which national and domestic anxieties for a season are forgotten, a time in which 'the old folks at home,' and the young folks abroad seek each others society and greetings, a time that everybody expects everybody to be at home that possibly can be." He continued, "Therefore, my darling, if it can be so ordered in the general arrangement of your affairs, we will try to be at home on that day, that we may have no absent one to wonder about, and to draw our thoughts from our happiness at home."[68]

President Young told Watt that he could travel to Manti and bring Martha back. He expected to start in a few days. "I cannot say what day I shall reach Manti, but I intend to make a pleasure trip of it, it will do me a great deal of good, and be quite a relief to me by letting me out of the office for a

66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, November 28, 1867, photocopy of holograph, Watt Papers.

short time." Because he was coming to Manti, he told Martha that everybody in the family would be able to meet him. Martha was so enthralled with her new husband that she repeated his good qualities to her twin sister, Mary, who once again became interested in him as a prospective husband. Martha wrote to him about that possibility. Watt commented that, when he came, "then I can let Mary look at me, I would not like her to look too hard though, for she might see through me."[69] He left Salt Lake City soon after reporting on a Brigham Young sermon on December 3. The couple returned to Salt Lake City for Christmas, the day on which he thought families should be together. On December 29, Watt reported on another of Young's sermons.[70]

Sometime in late April 1868 or early May, Watt sent a proposal letter to Mary Bench, although no copy survives. In a letter to Martha, he wrote, "Kind love to Mary; I am waiting patiently, and somewhat anxiously for word from her; Will it be yes, or will it be no? I wonder which it will be." He was confused as to how she would answer: "I confess that I vault between two opinions, sometimes I think it will be yes, sometimes I think it will be no." He wondered what she really thought. "She perhaps does not know which it will be herself." He then advised Martha to "let her ask the Lord and her father."[71] Less than a week later, he received Mary's answer declining his proposal. He told Martha, "It is all right that Mary should have her choice."[72]

The best illustration of the way Watt's polygamous family worked comes from a letter that he wrote in 1867. Knowing he would leave for Britain that year and concerned about the way the family would run without him, he instructed them on their duties and his expectations. When he wrote the letter, he had three wives and five children living with him. He had not yet married Martha Bench. George D. Watt Jr., twenty-four years old, also lived with Elizabeth, along with his wife and one child.[73]

This letter provides insight into family conditions and Watt's expectations while he is gone: "I thought that it would be best to put in writing what I desire of you in my absence," he began. He was leaving them and did not expect to return for at least six months. He desired their prayers on this trip. "Be temperate in laughter, and in lightmindedness lest the spirit of the Lord shall become grieved, and you be chastened with sickness

69. Ibid.
70. "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," December 3, 29, 1867, LDS Church Archives.
71. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, May 9, 1868, photocopy of holograph, Watt Papers.
72. Mary married Francis George Wall, who was her age, on June 28, 1872. The LDS Church ancestral file shows her marrying George D. Watt on November 9, 1868, but this is incorrect.
73. He had earlier lived in Kaysville on his father's farm but returned to Salt Lake City, where he could earn more for his family.

and death," he advised. He urged that their "time be improved in some profitable employment that will benefit your bodies and your minds." He felt that no one could be happy and contented "when they suffer precious moments to fly by unimproved." He wanted them to go to bed at "reasonable hours and rise early for this will give you health and plenty of time to perform your daily duties." He admonished his wives to "dwell together as dear sisters, and speak to and of each other with respect and consideration." He thought it was all right for them to visit their relatives: "To visit your relatives will do you good but I would not advise you to form friendships and attachments outside the circles of your relatives." If they formed those relationships, it "may lead you into bad company and bring you under the influences which are not akin the gospel of the Lord Jesus." He desired them to be careful with budgetary matters, or as he put it, "I enjoin upon all the principles of economy, and due care of any means that is put into your hands." He left George Jr. in charge of the family, but he advised him to sit in counsel often with the wives and especially to listen to Alice since she had "age, experience and wisdom; and what you agree upon to do will be sanctioned by me."[74]

Since he would not return for several months, he requested that they take care of the garden and water promptly when their turn came "that every plant may get its share of moisture, and I wish the watering to be done promptly at the time appointed that nothing may suffer." He wanted Alice to take care of the fruit. "I wish one and all to assist her in this when she needs their help." He also desired "to keep the children from devouring unripe fruit in great quantities for inflamation of the bowels and death may result from it." Realizing how valuable the farm implements were, he wrote, "Let the tools all be gathered up and placed in a safe place where they not be stole and wasted with rust, when they are not in use." He wanted them to make sure the children did not play with matches or fire of any kind "lest your habitation be burned down over your heads and you are left without the protection of a home."[75]

He instructed George Jr. to haul "enough coal to fill the coal house full" and also "wood sufficient to last the family well till the next season." When that was finished, "I am willing that George shall haul and sell fuel to assist him and his family." Since George Jr. was in charge, Watt wished he would be "kind and indulgent to all, as I would be myself, and give them as little trouble as possible." He should especially take an interest in Robert, Watt's son by his divorced wife, Jane, "and all to show him a good example, and when he needs reproving to reprove him in kindness, and he will be a

74. George D. Watt to family, June 27, 1867, photocopy of holograph, Perry Special Collections.

75. Ibid

good boy as he gets a little more age and experience."[76] Watt was especially concerned about his second son.

He advised them to attend their meetings regularly at the Tabernacle and ward meetinghouse "for this will break the monotony of home life, as well as be fulfilling an important religious duty. . . . In short I desire the united effort of all to keep all things in order and safe in and around your home, waste nothing but put everything to its legitimate and proper use, and you shall be healthy, wealthy and wise, and you will receive the commendation of all the good on earth, and the blessings and protection of the Lord and his holy Angels." He concluded, "I pray that the Lord may bless and preserve you, you dear ones, from every evil influence and power, and bestow upon you in great abundance the comforting influence of His Holy Spirit in my absence, that when I return I may find you all in life, blooming with health, and rich in the grace of God." Lastly, he instructed them to read his letter often.[77]

Watt's instructions also give us an idea of what he wanted to accomplish that year. He expected the family members to carry on their usual duties in his absence. The overall impression from the letter is one of an orderly household presided over by a benevolent patriarch.

Another record tells part of the story about the Watt family that historians often miss. The tithing-store account books detail what the family bought. These purchases give us an idea of their diet and itemize the other items they needed. The best records are for the decade of scarcity—the 1850s. Watt had in his household three wives and, at the most, four children. During the 1850s, Salt Lake City had only a few stores and very little cash, either in coins or paper. Joseph Smith had given the law of tithing to the church so that the members could practice the law of sacrifice to benefit the church. Tithing mandated that every member should voluntarily donate 10 percent to the church. In Watt's day, members donated their tithing in kind. The storehouse was established shortly after the Mormons arrived, and it became an all-purpose general store for the community. Watt actually drew his salary from the tithing store.[78]

The store set prices on its goods. In the early 1850s, flour cost $.06 a pound, beef was $.08 a pound, and pork ran a little more than twice that at $.18 a pound. Butter was fairly expensive at $.25 a pound, and cheese cost $.15 a pound. The Watt family, like their neighbors, chose items that were low or moderately priced.[79]

76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. For the way this system worked, see Ronald G. Watt, "Dry Goods and Groceries in Early Utah: An Account Book View of James Campbell Livingston," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 47 (Winter 1979): 64–69.
79. There are two main sources for the information on purchases: General Tithing Store Account Books, Trustee-in-Trust, ledger C, holograph, LDS Church Archives. For a more

The tithing-store ledgers tell us what the Watt family ate and what other items they purchased. Individuals also traded with their neighbors, so not everything was obtained from the storehouse. Throughout 1854, the Watts drew out 2,060 pounds of flour, 276 pounds of pork, 157 pounds of beef, 59 pounds of butter, 16½ dozen eggs, 139 pounds of salt, 32 pounds of cheese, 7 bushels of onions, 13 quarts of molasses (which was used as a sugar substitute), and lesser amounts of cabbages, carrots, tallow, vinegar, potatoes, parsnips, pumpkins, and squash. The family also purchased a few pounds of fish and mutton and some chickens.[80]

As the records clearly indicate, the family purchased primarily flour and flour products with a smaller amount of meat, which they obtained during the colder, winter months of the year. They also received salt at or near the same time; thus, they probably preserved their pork by salting it. The family ate chickens, a delicacy, in the winter when egg production was down. The fish was only available during the hot summer months. They generally got vegetables in season, although they acquired two bushels of onions in March.[81]

In 1854 the family also bought a few nongrocery items. In the cold of the winter, they obtained a few loads of wood for their stoves at $7.00 a load. In July and August, Watt bought at least six crocks, which he probably used for pickling. He acquired washtubs in December, two brooms in March, and two more in the summer. He also procured two yokes for his oxen.[82]

His purchases in 1855 varied little from those of 1854. He bought a few other items such as beets, beans, corn, and tobacco. Watt probably used the tobacco, which was in small quantities, as a medication for sick cattle. In addition to what they purchased at the store, the family members kept a cow and raised produce in their large vegetable garden.

Because of his credit on the account books, Watt could also get the Church Public Works employees to help him with his construction projects, and in April 1853 and October 1854, he purchased more than seven hundred feet of lumber, which he probably used to construct his house on West Temple Street. In February and March 1855, he acquired window caps and sills.[83]

By the end of 1855, Watt had two houses, two lots, and twelve acres of farmland. He also had four oxen, a cow with a calf, and two wagons. In 1858 he purchased four lots from Brigham Young; they were located in a newly developed area just east and a little north of the office that would eventually be known as the Avenues. The city surveyed the area with smaller blocks,

complete accounting, see George D. Watt account, Trustee-in-Trust, ledger C, 1853–55, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

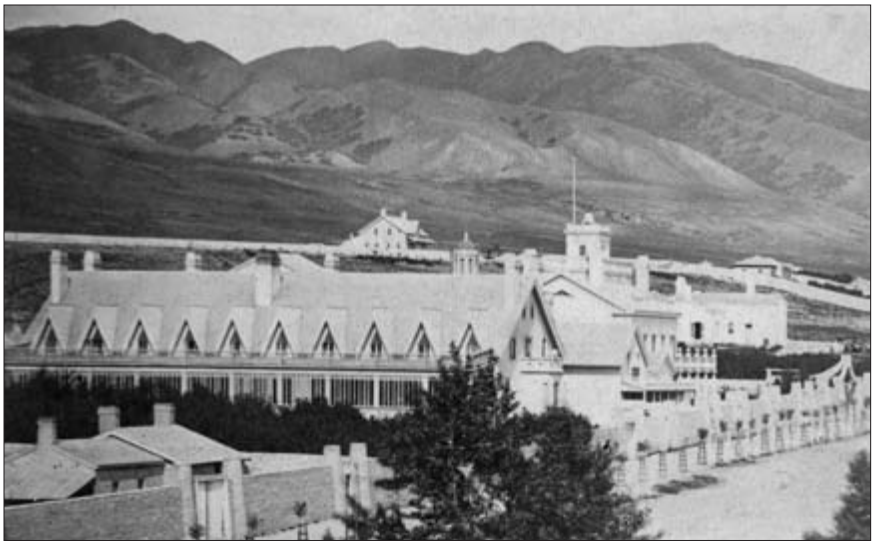
80. George D. Watt account, Trustee-in-Trust, ledger C, 1853–55.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. George D. Watt account, Trustee-in-Trust, ledger C, 1853–55, Church Public Works Accounts, Carpenter Shop Account Books C, LDS Church Archives.

only two and a half acres instead of the ten on the original Salt Lake City plat. The streets usually were named for trees.[84] In 1860 Watt began building a new house on the corner of Walnut and Garden Streets. This large comfortable house, which was to be Elizabeth's home, became his pride and joy, and he carefully selected every item to make sure it was of the right quality. He described the lumber and other items he needed in great detail. This home could easily accommodate one of his expanding families and, more than his other two, indicated someone who was prosperous, a man who had joined the economic elite.

The Church Public Works carpenters spent 254 hours on his house and charged Watt a total of fifty-nine dollars. He ordered one good lock for the front door and fourteen other locks for the inside of the house. He wanted every lock to open with a different key. The joists, rafters, and flooring all came from City Creek Canyon. All twenty-two hundred feet of the good white pine came from Big Cottonwood Canyon. He also asked for four boxes of window glass with fifty-two small sections or "lights" per box, as they were called. The last of the building materials did not arrive until late May 1860.[85]

Watt's new house in the Avenues, even though plastered, was not finished until 1861. Earlier, in March of 1860, the Church Public Works employees spent 134 hours building a fence.[86] When Watt sold his lot on West Temple Street, he must have taken seed or cuttings from those trees for his new property. In 1865 he purchased four other nearby lots, where he raised a large vegetable garden and fruit and mulberry trees.[87] He probably planted his garden on land that the city had designated for streets.[88] The Twentieth Ward ditch diverted water from City Creek to supply the western section of the Avenues, where Watt's land was, with adequate water.[89] He did not immediately furnish the house with everything that he wanted, probably lacking enough money. In 1864 he ordered a bedstead, a nightstand, six Windsor chairs, and a large rocking chair, which Elizabeth needed for her babies, from H. Dinwoody Furniture.[90]

84. Karl T. Haglund and Philip F. Notarianni, *The Avenues of Salt Lake City* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1980), 3–5.
85. Bill for lumber for G. D. Watt's house, 1860, holograph, Watt Papers. The bill for the lumber lists thirty-six joists, 19 feet long, 2 by 20 inches high. It also included fifty-six ceiling joists, 19 feet, 6 inches long, 2 by 6 inches wide. There were forty-four rafters, 23 feet long and 2½ by 5 inches wide.
86. George D. Watt account, Trustee-in-Trust, Church Public Works Accounts, Carpenter's Account Book G, p. 30, holograph, LDS Church Archives
87. Salt Lake County Recorder, Land Transactions book D, 1865, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives. The original is at the Salt Lake County Recorder's Office.
88. Watt probably had a garden on what was to become Second and Third Avenues between his lots and also on Walnut Street.
89. Haglund and Notarianni, *The Avenues of Salt Lake City,* 4.
90. Account with H. Dinwoody, 1864, box 6, holograph, Watt Papers.



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Brigham Young homes on South Temple Street showing Watt home on the hill above them., ca. 1868

Watt also helped other family members in England immigrate to Utah. In 1855 he paid for the passage of his two younger half brothers, Joshua and Joseph Brown and Joseph's wife and four daughters, who sailed on the ship *Siddons*.[91]

In 1859 Watt purchased some clothes for himself and his wives. Even though they were living in a western community, people in Salt Lake City wanted to wear the right clothes and the latest fashions just like the best-dressed people in New York City or even London. Missionaries that the church sent to these places observed the way people dressed and let the local population know. The very fashion conscious thought that only the shops of London would provide them with the most up-to-date styles and best quality.[92]

Since Watt had some available funds, he determined to buy some clothes in London. He and David Calder, another clerk in Young's office, both concluded that they needed clothes for themselves and their wives. Watt knew he had to describe the desired items in detail. He also understood from others' experiences how much they would cost. In 1858 Calder wrote J. D. Ross, a counselor in the British Mission presidency, asking him to purchase clothes for the two men: "Knowing your superior taste and ability, as well as

91. Altogether Watt paid £16 10s. for their transportation to Salt Lake City
92. For a picture of the best dressed in this time period, see Joan L. Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans and Fashion, 1840–1900* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995).

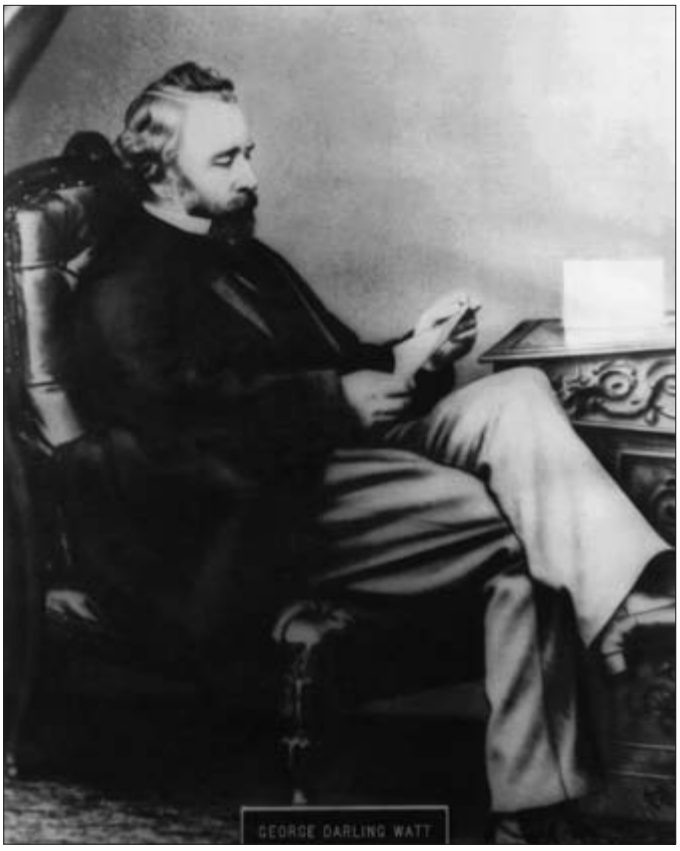
your accommodating disposition, I take the liberty of drawing upon your time to transact the business of your two friends 'far away.'" He thought Ross could obtain the clothes at a first-class shop, "not so much in name, as in substance." The two men wanted only the very best quality and workmanship "as it costs just as much expense to bring them here as an inferior quality." Calder gave Ross a small amount of advice concerning the woolen corduroy cloth: "The woolen cord ordered, you will please get one pair pants made for each of us from it, in addition to the other two pair pants each. I want the narrow cord as it is the neatest." He told Ross to ship the merchandise to New York in care of H. S. Eldridge, the church emigration agent.[93]

The clothes Watt bought outfitted him with some of the finest fashions of the day. They included a navy double-breasted overcoat, lined with plaid cashmere, with silk braid, broad sleeves, and a velvet collar; a navy double-breasted frock coat with a velvet collar and outside pockets; and a dark navy three-quarter-circle cloak, lined throughout with Scotch plaid. He also wanted three pairs of pants: a pair of treble-milled black ones, a pair of dull brown drab, and a white pair for summer. He wanted one double-breasted, patterned vest that was fashionable, but not gaudy, and a heavy black-satin vest with a roll collar. He ordered six collars, four pairs of black goatskin gloves, three caps, and four silk Indian handkerchiefs.[94]

He also purchased for his two wives at the time material for two dresses, scarf shawls, six bonnets with trimmings, and other cloth for complete outfits, including one gross of cotton spools, six pounds of thread, and six pairs of black leather goatskin gloves. He bought a white linen tablecloth, twenty-nine yards of Irish linen, and thirty yards of white flannel.[95] Men's clothes at that time came ready made and could be chosen off a rack in a shop, but women's clothes had to be made, often by the woman who wore them.

Ross began his quest for the clothes in the finest shops of London. He was unable to find any shop that covered all the purchases, but he personally selected the clothing and cloth from a variety of some of the best shops. Then he boxed up all the goods and sent them off with Robert F. Neslen, president of the Mormon company that was traveling on the ship *William Tapscott*. In his letter, Ross explained that he could not find good-quality white stockings so he had substituted grey ones instead, but he had purchased two pairs of inferior-quality white ones.[96] Two days later, Asa Calkin, the British Mission's financial clerk, sent Watt a statement totaling £68 4s. 4½ d.[97]

93. David O. Calder to J. D. Ross, December 30, 1858, holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, David O. Caldwell Papers, LDS Church Archives.
94. Ibid.
95. G. D. Watt to J. D. Ross, December 30, 1858, holograph, Watt Papers.
96. J. D. Ross to George D. Watt, April 12, 1859, holograph, Watt Papers.
97. Asa Calkin to George D. Watt, April 14, 1859, holograph, Watt Papers.



Courtesy of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers

George D. Watt, ca. 1860

After he received the bill in May 1859, Watt studied it very carefully. He must have been aghast at the amount and was especially concerned about the cost of certain items. The twenty-five yards of woolen corduroy had cost more than anything else: £6 17s. 6d. The sack overcoat had only cost £4 10s., and the cloak, £5. Although he had requested four pairs of gloves, only two had been sent. The cost for the blue cloth caps also seemed exorbitant. He probably had not received the clothes yet, but he sat down and wrote a protest letter about the total price and the cost of selected items.

Ross, who was traveling, received the letter in Glasgow and immediately answered it. Offended that anyone would question his honesty, he said that he had done the best job possible and only purchased the finest goods available. Furthermore, he had bought them at the best shops and inspected each article. "I would advise Mr. Calder and Mr. Watt never again to ask any man to spend his time and to use his best judgment and experience in doing

Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Salt Lake City Main Street, ca. 1869

business for them, and all for nothing, unless you have the utmost confidence in his honesty," he fumed.[98] Ross also sent receipts for the clothes Watt had questioned to Salt Lake City. He had purchased the twenty-five yards of woolen corduroy at William White Tailor and Draper on Chancery Lane in London. He had bought the caps from Johnson & Co. on Regents Street, who declared themselves "Hatters to the Queen," and he had purchased the gloves from Society Hygienique on Moorgate Street.[99] When the goods arrived, Watt and Calder found that they were pleased, but they still believed that Ross, and perhaps even Calkin, had made a little money for themselves.[100]

Watt was so pleased with his new clothes that he went to the photographer and had his picture taken. In the portrait, he is sitting in a large stuffed chair, wearing his drab pants with his legs crossed, beside a desk, looking at a paper. He looks like a man of letters. The image depicts his right side. He has a full beard, and his curly hair is a little long on the side, but he appears very fashionable. His black frock coat is immaculate, definitely the right clothing for the best-dressed man in Salt Lake City.

Watt's wives must have been very busy that summer, making themselves dresses from the cloth that had been purchased. When they finished, they must have also been very well dressed, women who could have visited the fashionable places in New York or London, and especially in Salt Lake City, where it counted. We do not have any pictures of them; perhaps they never went to the photographer. Watt's purchases reflect his desire for him and his family to be as well dressed as the leading families in the territory.

98. J. D. Ross to George D. Watt, July 14, 1859, holograph, Watt Papers. Underlining in original.
99. Receipts of purchases of J. D. Ross, Trustee-in-Trust, miscellaneous series.
100. Both Ross and Calkin were later accused of pocketing some money on private transactions.

9

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS
INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITIES

> Demand and supply are the great foundations of commerce; they affect the price of articles among all people, whether savage or civilized. Money capital does much in governing or disturbing them, in making them equal or unequal, according as it is used by capitalists; but intelligence and union can effect more in maintaining an equilibrium between them than money.
>
> "A Talk," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, October 24, 1867

The 1850s in Utah saw the organization of a plethora of cultural and intellectual organizations in which Watt participated. Because of these groups, he expanded his mind and began to think beyond religion. He learned about governments, wars, scientific advancements, drama, music, and agriculture. He became a member of this intellectual and cultural elite and closely associated with some of the greatest minds in the church. During this period, he truly became a self-made man.[1]

One of the first of these organizations started on January 8, 1855, when Brigham Young met with a committee of Wilford Woodruff; Robert L. Campbell, who later became territorial superintendent of schools; and several others to discuss the possibility of organizing a society to diffuse all knowledge and science, called the Universal Scientific Society. Almost a

1. For the best discussion of these early cultural and intellectual groups, see Joseph Heinerman, "Early Utah Pioneer Cultural Societies," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 47 (Winter 1979): 70–89.

month later, the group had its first formal meeting and elected Woodruff as president, Campbell as clerk, and Watt as assistant clerk. Most of these men were either members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles or clerks in President Young's office. Thus began a learning experience that was meant to educate them on nature, science, travel, government, and many other subjects. From their members, they learned about architecture, home manufacture, and theology, among other subjects. Watt lectured to them about the Deseret Alphabet as his contribution for membership.[2] They also had an orchestra that played at their meetings. Unfortunately, the society did not last a year. Sometime after October 20, it ended for unknown reasons.[3]

On February 6, 1855, the Polysophical Society organized with Lorenzo Snow as its president. Samuel W. Richards wrote in a letter to the *Millennial Star* that "Brother Lorenzo has a select party which meets at his Hall once a week, to continue through the winter; social improvement and to cultivate a taste for literature and refinement the object."[4] Members enjoyed dramatic productions in French, Italian, and, of course, English. Watt taught them about the Deseret Alphabet, and Orson Pratt lectured to them on the heavens.[5] They also had music, consisting of "about half-a-dozen violins and a bass, piano, guitar, clarinets and flutes, and that most lovely melody which sometimes gets blown out of a Scotch bagpipe."[6] Henry Naisbitt, one of the directors, wrote, "This was the first nucleus of a varied intellectual character in the Church, and it speedily drew toward itself the lion's share of that latent talent which, through the gathering, gravitated to Salt Lake City."[7] The society came to an abrupt end in October 1856, when Jedediah Grant, second counselor in the First Presidency and an honorary member, said that the Polysophical Society was a "stink in his nostrils," for it had an adulterous spirit.[8]

Next Brigham Young founded the Deseret Theological Institute, another short-lived organization, at the April General Conference in 1855. This group declared that it was "the extension of those principles of light and truth which we have received through the instrumentality of the Holy Priesthood."[9] Young spoke once on knowing the "only wise God and Jesus

2. Universal Scientific Society, Minute Book, 1855–56, pp. 19–36, holograph, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). Watt's presentation on the Deseret Alphabet occurred on June 23, 1855, but he is mentioned on many dates as either reporting or giving prayers.
3. Samuel W. Richards, Journal, October 20, 1855, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
4. "Extracts of a Letter from Elder S. W. Richards—The Legislature—Social Meeting," *Millennial Star* 17 (April 7, 1855): 254–55.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Henry W. Naisbitt, "Polysophical and Mutual," *Improvement Era* 2 (1899): 744–45.
8. Hannah T. King, Journal, October 8, 1856, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
9. "Preamble and Constitution of the Deseret Theological Institute," *Millennial Star* 17 (August 18, 1855): 515.

Christ whom He has sent."[10] Again Watt contributed by lecturing on the Deseret Alphabet. This group ended because of the Utah War. Watt also became the clerk and reporter for the Deseret Typographical Association, a smaller group than the others. These men were interested in printing books but also tried to cultivate refinement and social improvement. The association had its last recorded meeting on July 16, 1859.[11]

The first cultural group in Utah with music and theater in mind was the Musical and Dramatic Company. The theater started in Salt Lake City during the winter of 1850–51 with the presentation of the play *Robert Macaire* held in the Bowery. On February 20, 1852, the Deseret Dramatic Association, the successor to the Musical and Dramatic Company, was organized with Alonzo H. Raleigh, the bishop of the Nineteenth Ward, as president. Brigham Young supported it and often attended the performances. At the end of March 1852, Watt joined the association. Some of the members' first discussions centered on where they could perform their plays. Because they could not use the Tabernacle, they built the Social Hall, located just south of Temple Square. Heber C. Kimball conducted the dedicatory meeting on January 1, 1853, and Apostle Amasa Lyman offered the dedicatory prayer.[12]

Most of the plays were sentimental comedies or melodramas. It is possible that many of them were locally written, for it is difficult to find any information about them. President Brigham Young loved the theater and insisted that the plays be uplifting. The association members usually presented two plays at each performance. The main production was always first, followed usually by a farce. On January 7, 1853, they performed *Robert Macaire* and *His Last Legg*. The Deseret Dramatic Association employed artists to paint the scenery, which helped them economically in the new city. Children under the age of six were not admitted.[13]

On January 17, 1853, association members performed *Don Caesar de Bazan* as their first play in the Social Hall. On January 21, 1853, the handbill publicized a melodrama in three acts, again entitled *Robert Macaire*. Then

10. Richards, Journal, April 23, 1855.
11. See Heinerman, "Early Utah Pioneer Cultural Societies." For the Deseret Typographical Society, see "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," July 16, 1859, p. 2, LDS Church Archives.
12. Deseret Dramatic Association, minutes, 1851–64, holograph, Salt Lake Theater Collection, LDS Church Archives. There are a number of sources about the theater in early Utah. The best overall study is an unpublished paper, Harold I. Hansen, "A History and Influence of the Mormon Theatre from 1839–1869," Brigham Young University, 1967, copy in author's possession. For a complete book on the subject, see George D. Pyper, *The Romance of an Old Playhouse* (Salt Lake City: Seagull Press, 1928). For a good article by one of the major participants, see Philip Margetts, "Early Theatricals in Utah," *Juvenile Instructor* 38 (May 15, 1903): 289–93. For a book written early in the twentieth century, see John S. Lindsay, *The Mormons and the Theatre* (Salt Lake City, 1905).
13. Deseret Dramatic Association, minutes, 1851–64.

Private Collection

George D. Watt ca. 1860

they presented the two-act "laughable farce" *The Irish Lion,* which included G. D. Watt in a supporting role. On February 2, the Social Hall performers presented the "celebrated comedy in three acts," the *Serious Family.* After it concluded, the crowd enjoyed a community sing while the stagehands prepared for the next play, which was "the laughable play, in two acts" entitled *Irish Attorney,* with James Ferguson, Horace K. Whitney, Leo Hawkins, Joseph M. Simmons, and others, including Watt in a minor role again.[14] Because of the lack of documentation, it is unclear how many more plays he acted in.

The theater group continued to perform plays until the Utah War, when the productions ceased until 1859. The lack of a theater encouraged Philip Margetts, one of the leading actors, to perform plays with a group at the home of Henry Bowring. Watt probably did not participate in these performances. In 1861 the Deseret Dramatic Association once again began to perform at the Social Hall. During that year, Brigham Young announced the construction of a new theater on the corner of State and First South

14. Deseret Dramatic Association, handbills, January 21; February 2, 1853, Church History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church History Library).

Streets.[15] The building, dedicated on March 6, 1862, could accommodate fifteen hundred people for any production.

Watt involved himself again with the theater. By 1862 he was the secretary of the Deseret Dramatic Association. He also performed in the theater but not as an actor. The theater of that day always had an orchestra. David O. Calder, who was a fellow clerk in President Young's office, knew that the orchestra needed a viola player and probably encouraged Watt to play. So Watt, who had learned the violin already, purchased a viola and began practicing. He was ready when the theater opened. George Sims, another clerk in the office, in writing to William Staines commented that "our orchestral practices deserve much credit, among the most active of the musicians are D. O. Calder, Br. [Charles J.] Thomas [the director] & G. D. Watt. The orchestra numbers about 24 and their music equals in quality the provincial Theatres of England, and the minor ones of London."[16]

The orchestra first performed on March 6, 1862, the day when Daniel H. Wells dedicated the theater. Thomas, many years later, mentioned that the audience applauded them enthusiastically. He said that at first "the orchestra was a crude organization, but the more rehearsals and the more they played, the orchestra became one of the chief features of the theater." In 1865 George Careless reorganized the orchestra and retained only five members of the original group. Watt was not one of them.[17] However, he had participated in the debut of the finest orchestra in pioneer Utah—a major accomplishment for someone who had had no contact with music in his early life.[18]

Watt also joined Calder's Deseret Musical Association, a combined orchestra and chorus. The first concert the group performed was held on December 9, 1862, in the Tabernacle.[19] During the 1860s, this group performed Haydn's *Creation,* Mozart's Twelfth Mass, and Handel's *Messiah.*[20] George D. Watt truly proved himself to be a man for all seasons.

Watt enjoyed reading to learn more about the world, although no catalog of his library exists. He read books on many subjects. He ordered books through David Calder, who sent for them from the publisher Dick and

15. See Hansen, "A History and Influence of the Mormon Theatre."
16. George Sims to William C. Staines, February 21, 1862, vol. 6, pp. 887–91, holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives; George D. Watt to Mr. Golightly, December 28, 1862, shorthand, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2005). Br. Thomas was C. J. Thomas, the orchestra director.
17. "Members of the Theater Orchestra Fifty Years Ago," *Deseret Evening News,* March 2, 1912, sec. 2, p. 3.
18. Deseret Dramatic Association, minutes, 1851–64; also see Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2003), chap. 6.
19. See "First concert of the Deseret Musical Association," handbill, December 9, 1862, Church History Library.
20. Alexander, *Utah, the Right Place,* 151–52.

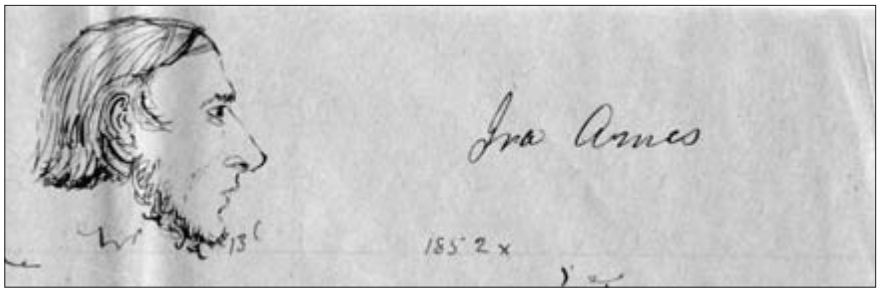
Fitzgerald in New York City. In November 1859, Watt received a book entitled *Inquire Within* by Robert Kemp Philip. Its longer title is *Inquire Within for Anything You Want to Know,* or, *Over Three Thousand Seven Hundred Facts Worth Knowing*. It contains all types of short instructions on almost any subject, including definitions of the laws of chess and directions on the way to swim, the art of conversation, behavior at dinner, and taking care of scratches.[21]

In January 1860, Watt ordered *The Sociable, The Corner Cupboard*, and *Live and Learn*. George Arnold's *The Sociable* or *One Thousand and One Home Amusements* has a subtitle that reads, "Acting proverbs, dramatic charades, acting charades or drawing-room pantomimes, parlor games, parlor magic, mechanical puzzles," and many more.[22] Robert Kemp Philip's *The Corner Cupboard* is another fact book for everybody. *Live and Learn: A Guide for All Who Wish to Speak and Write Correctly* is a grammar book with such chapter titles as "Rules for the Use of Capitals and Italics," Rules for Spelling," and "On the Participle." Watt used *Live and Learn* for the speeches he recorded. It became a great source for helping him transcribe the shorthand sermons into good English. These volumes are like encyclopedias and assemble a wide range of information. They became the reference volumes in Watt's library. They are probably only a few of the ones he purchased, but there is no record of the others. Watt also regularly took the *Deseret News* newspaper.[23]

According to family tradition, Watt was also an artist. His grandchildren used to admire his art in his home in Kaysville.[24] Franklin D. Richards mentioned that Watt cut out his silhouette when he was on his mission to England in 1848, a skill he enjoyed practicing the rest of his life. Watt used dark paper and scissors to create the person's profile.

None of Watt's silhouettes or artwork have survived. Some drawings, though, have turned up in a completely unlikely place: his shorthand notebooks. Presumably when Watt had time, he sketched the likenesses of some of the people sitting in the audience. Altogether there are thirty-two sketches in his notebooks. Many of them were drawn hastily, and some are cartoon-like drawings or caricatures. Most of the sketches are only bust length, but a few extend to the waist. Most of them are profiles, especially of the right side. Watt identified only three of the drawings: Ira Ames, Lorenzo Snow, and William Wine Phelps. A few of the others are recognizable, however.

21. Robert Kemp Philip, *Inquire Within for Anything You Want to Know* (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1857).
22. George Arnold, *The Sociable* or *One Thousand and One Home Amusements* (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1858).
23. David O. Calder to Dick and Fitzgerald, November 3, 1859; January 19, 1860, David Calder Letterpress Copybook, LDS Church Archives; Robert Kemp Philip, *The Corner Cupboard* or *Facts for Everybody* (London, 1858); *Live and Learn: A Guide for All Who Wish to Speak and Write Correctly* (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1856). Calder lists each person and the books they requested, that he is ordering for them from Dick and Fitzgerald, a publisher and bookstore in New York City.
24. Interviews by author with George D. Watt's grandchildren.



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Ira Ames drawing

Watt has two drawings on the inside cover of the second notebook in 1851. One is just a face with a beaklike nose and curly hair. The other is a waist-length portrait of a man with a Victorian dress jacket and bow tie. His hair is long, and he has a light beard; it is possibly Willard Richards. In 1852 Watt drew a right profile, which he identified as Ira Ames. It shows a man with a long thin nose, a beard, and what appears to be a thinning front hairline. In back his hair comes down to the bottom of his ears.

On July 24, 1852, Watt began a notebook that has three drawings. One person is Brigham Young, although he is not identified. The face is outlined with dark ink, the nose is almost hawkish, and the hair comes down almost to his shoulders. He is wearing a proper Victorian dress jacket with a high-collared shirt. In October 1852, in a book entirely filled with an account of Parley P. Pratt's South American mission, Watt sketched his best full-face drawing. He drew two intersecting lines—one horizontal and the other vertical—and designed the face around them. The vertical line extends through the middle of the forehead, nose, mouth, and chin, while the horizontal one cuts across the top of the eyes. This person is balding with long sideburns and has a beard down his face and under his jaw.

In the next book, which contains sermons by Orson Hyde and Parley Pratt, Watt drew two right-profile sketches in pen and ink that are among his finest. The top one looks like a Neanderthal man with a short neck, a full head of straight hair, sideburns, and a beard. The bottom one depicts a balding man with hair that appears curly in the back. He also has long sideburns that run into his beard that features a tuft of hair beneath his lip. This person is probably Heber C. Kimball.

Finally, in November 1853, Watt sketched the left profile of a person. This individual has a long sideburn but no beard. His hair appears to be of moderate length, but the most distinguishing features are his protruding lower lip and his glasses, which are pushed up on his forehead. The light frames and temples are stretched to their limits, and a portion of the glasses is floating above his head.

Both courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Left: Brigham Young drawing; *right*: unknown person, possibly Albert Carrington

After November 1853, Watt's notebooks have no drawings until 1865, when he sketched a poorly drawn face that looks like Ben Franklin. There are also a few pencil sketches on some of the dark covers of his notebooks. The most interesting is labeled "L. Snow asleep." There are two views of Snow: a right profile and a front view showing him with both eyes shut. In the profile, his chin is resting on his chest, and he is leaning back with eyes closed in the front view. In 1867 Watt drew on the cover of one of his notebooks the face of a man who looks like Abraham Lincoln but was probably Daniel H. Wells. He shows the curly hair, the hawk nose, and the beard that covers his chin. It is one of his best sketches. Next to it is a pencil sketch of a person with long hair, a mustache, a receding chin, and a hat on his head, which is only outlined. On this image are the letters W.W.P., identifying William Wine Phelps. The next year he made a pencil drawing of a man with a rather large, pudgy head in the midst of his shorthand notes. The man is clean shaven with a long nose and glasses and is possibly George A. Smith. Above him is the small head of a woman with a bonnet, the only female in the notebooks. There are a few more drawings; the last is dated April 5, 1868.[25]

25. All of these are in the George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives. Most of the drawings are at the beginning of the collection or at the end of the collection. Maybe there were other drawings, but they have been lost.

Both courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Left: Neanderthal man drawing and probable drawing of Heber C. Kimball, 1853; *right*: unknown person

Sometime in the 1850s, Watt's interests turned to agriculture. He became the corresponding secretary of the fruit association, called the Pomological Society and later the Deseret Horticultural Society. It later merged into the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society (DAM), which emphasized agriculture more than manufacturing. His work with the society consumed a good portion of his time. This organization was the forerunner of the Deseret territorial and Utah State Fairs. The society appointed him the corresponding secretary and reporter at its organizational meeting in April 1856. The legislature elected the officers and Board of Directors. Wilford Woodruff served as president of the board from 1856 to 1861. The DAM encouraged the growth of plants and animals by disseminating information about them. The society also promoted better breeds of farm animals and encouraged farmers to try new sheep.[26]

In June 1856, Watt sent a letter to various bishops asking them to become members of the society for a fee of two dollars and act as agents in their local wards.[27] The wards organized an auxiliary branch of the DAM within

26. For a good discussion of the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society, see Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 207–9.
27. "Journal History," June 19, 1856.

Both courtesy of LDS Church Archives

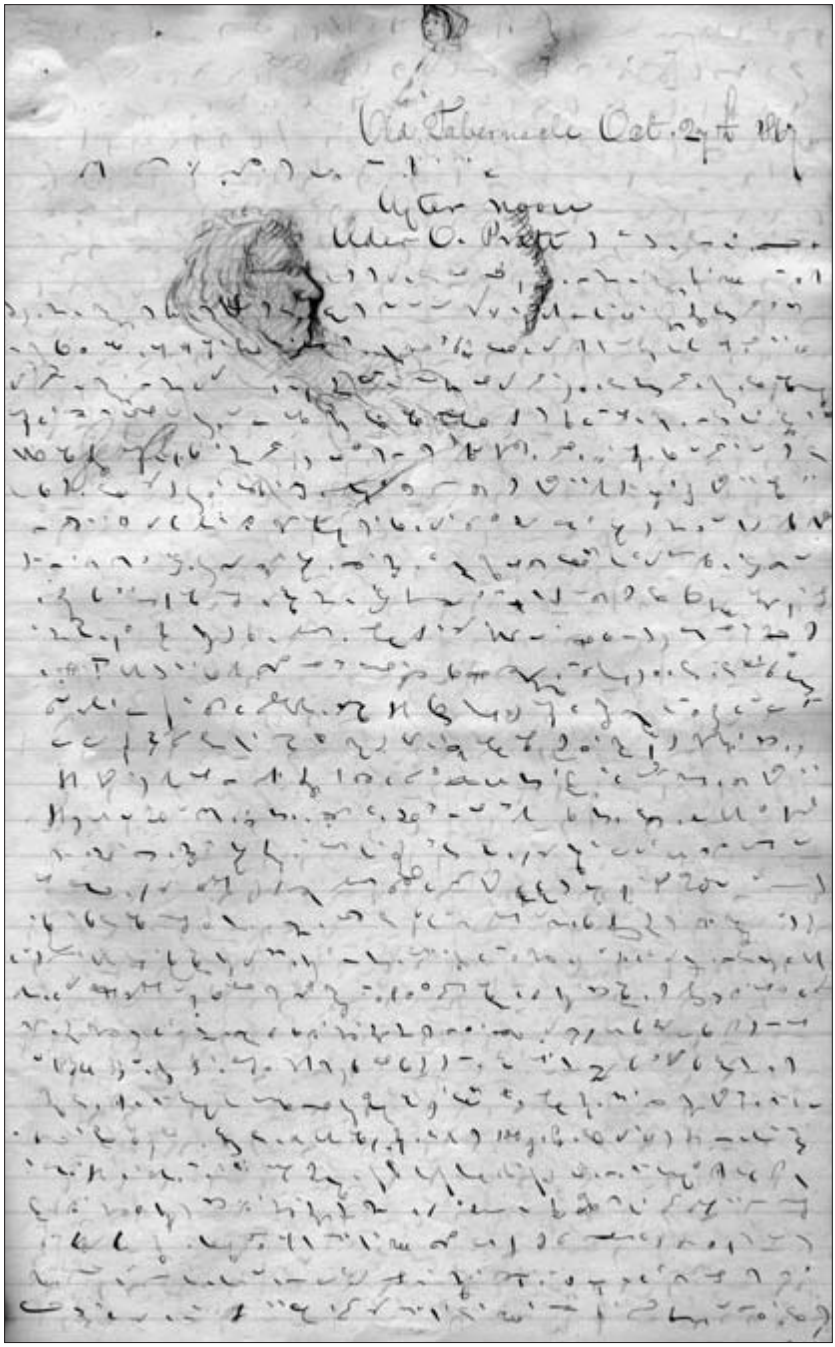
Left: L. Snow asleep, 1865; *right*: Daniel H. Wells and W. W. Phelps, 1867

their boundaries. These local groups held ward fairs and meetings, where members of the parent organization, including Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, and Watt, encouraged the new members to grow or produce items in Utah.[28] It was during this time that Watt, using the educational information from this society, began to grow bigger and better fruits and vegetables.

Watt continued to use the principles he learned from the DAM throughout his life. He sent for seeds all over the United States. He raised animals and experimented with new crops. He especially became fascinated with silkworms and sericulture. He also spent time on his property growing gardens. His gardens were his hobby, avocation, and even passion. He raised most of the produce that the family needed. He probably had gained an appreciation of gardens in England. He used what he learned from the DAM to make them better.

Watt entered his produce and animals in the annual DAM fairs. In October 1855, he brought four large peaches into the historian's office with the biggest one measuring eight and a half inches around. He called the peach Willard's Mammoth because Willard Richards had planted the tree. Watt divided the peaches among the staff and gave the stones to Thomas Bullock to plant. In 1858 the *Deseret News* reported "some good savory cabbages were brought into the Deseret State Fair by George D. Watt which attracted considerable notice; they were large and solid and good as we

28. J. Cecil Alter, *Utah: the Storied Domain,* 3 vols. (Chicago: American Historical Society, Inc., 1932), 1:220.



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Possible portrait of George A. Smith and an unidentified woman in Watt's shorthand notes, 1867

have ever seen."[29] He also displayed his tomatoes, corn, parsnips, and other vegetables at the fair.[30] He sold radish seed to the other employees at the office. In 1859 the *Deseret News* reported that a hog raised by Watt weighed 455 pounds.[31]

He was always willing to try new agricultural products. In 1860 he exhibited cigars made from the tobacco he raised on his land.[32] The *Daily Evening Express,* printed in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, published a story about his tobacco and cigars.[33] Also in 1860 Watt advertised for sale a number of seeds that he had received from France. They included many varieties of sugar cane, cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, turnips, carrots, beets, parsnips, onions, radishes, lettuce, celery, tomatoes, cucumbers, and eggplants. He mentioned to potential buyers that "all who wish to raise a cabbage head instead of cabbage leaves have now the chance."[34] Undoubtedly Watt had tried all these varieties in his own garden. In December 1861, J. M. Bernhisel, the territorial representative in Washington, D.C., sent him some dwarf sugarcane seed. Watt probably planted it.[35]

In June 1864, the fruit committee of the DAM, composed of Luther S. Hemenway, Levi Richards, and John V. Long, visited Watt's gardens and found a large crop of strawberries. The family had been picking them every day for two weeks. These men said they measured several of a type called the Excellenta strawberry, with one reportedly measuring six inches around and three others, four and a half inches; four of the strawberries weighing two and a half ounces each. The committee reported that "we are of the opinion that if we had visited this garden one week sooner we could have found twenty strawberries that would have weighed a pound."[36] John Jacques, a clerk in the historian's office, wrote the *Deseret News* that he wanted to see a large bed of strawberries "with the deep working, wide planting, and

29. "Deseret State Fair," *Deseret News*, October 13, 1858, 8: 139.
30. "Journal History," October 6, 1858.
31. "Philosophy of Fattening Hogs," *Deseret News,* December 28, 1859, 9: 344.
32. Historian's Office, Journal, May 1, 1860, holograph, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives. By this period in Utah history, Brigham Young was actively promoting the Word of Wisdom. He especially opposed drunkenness and selling alcohol. In the 1850s, he told the women in Utah Valley that they should not drink tea and coffee. By the 1860s, he had quit chewing tobacco and thought that others should be able to do that, too. He especially preached that the youth of the church should not indulge like their elders. For the best study of Young and the Word of Wisdom, see Paul H. Peterson and Ronald W. Walker, "Brigham Young's Word of Wisdom Legacy," *BYU Studies* 42 (Fall 2003): 27–64.
33. "Affairs in Utah," *Daily Evening Express* (Lancaster County, PA), April 11, 1860, 3.
34. "Seeds! Seeds! Seeds!," *Deseret News,* February 29, 1860, 9: 416.
35. J. M. Bernhisel to Brigham Young, December 27, 1861, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers. Bernhisel also sent some of the dwarf sugarcane seed to Daniel Wells, Albert Carrington, H. B. Clawson, and Brigham Young.
36. "Great Strawberries, G.S.L. City, June 20, 1864," *Deseret Weekly News,* June 28, 1864, 5.

thorough culture which Mr. G. D. Watt gives to his plantations."[37] In 1866 Watt gave President Young a plate of rich, luscious strawberries.[38]

In June 1865, United States Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax, who was touring throughout the western United States, visited Salt Lake City. Colfax had assumed the task of traveling throughout the West to learn about its potential and visit its people.[39] In Salt Lake City, he visited the garden of George D. Watt. Thomas B. H. Stenhouse, the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* reported, "Of course, we were of the party, and were more than pleased to see the guests enjoy themselves in that strawberry patch—we did enjoy it. Mr. Watt had the thanks and best wishes of his visitors."[40] In his journal, Colfax indicated that they visited "the splendid gardens here and found them charming indeed. . . . Strawberries abound, and we revelled in them in the garden of George D. Watt, who has the finest garden of all." Colfax wrote that Watt "had made a garden where the sagebrush and gravel had reigned supreme, and had apricots, peaches, flax, *morus multicaulis* [mulberry trees], strawberries largely, plums, cotton, etc."[41]

In a speech later that evening, Colfax admitted that "no one could traverse your city without recognizing that you are a people of industry." The gardens astonished him: "No one could look at your beautiful gardens, which charmed . . . me, for I did not dream of any such thing in the city of Salt Lake." He also described the residents of Salt Lake City as people of taste: "If anybody should doubt that, I think that one of your officers on the hill, who turned us loose in his strawberries to-day, realized that he had visitors of taste. (Cheers and laughter.)" Colfax said that he finally had to leave because he was full: "The truth is I was too full for utterance, therefore I cannot make much of a speech tonight."[42]

In March 1865, Watt brought into the president's office a piece of cloth his family had woven from cotton.[43] A few months later, he came into the historian's office with some yarn that he had purchased as common wool from the tithing office. One of the clerks commented, "It was a fine specimen of yarn."[44]

Brigham Young preached self-sufficiency: that the Mormons should raise their own crops and not purchase from outsiders. Watt listened attentively and then began to practice these precepts in his own life. He purchased a

37. "La Constante Strawberry," *Deseret News,* August 31, 1864, 8: 336.
38. "Journal History," May 29, 1866.
39. See Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States with Speaker Colfax* (Springfield, MA: Samuel Bowles & Company, 1865).
40. Thomas Stenhouse, "Visiting," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* June 15, 1865), 2.
41. Bowles, *Across the Continent,* 243.
42. Ibid., 249.
43. "Journal History," March 15, 1865.
44. "Journal History," June 2, 1865.

farm in the Kaysville area, where he raised sheep and used their wool for clothes. He also grew everything he could to feed his family on his seven acres in the Salt Lake Avenues.

Not only was he a practical farmer, but he also understood agricultural economics. He furthered his knowledge on this topic by reading newspaper articles and a small library of books. In October 1865, Thomas Stenhouse titled an article in his *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* "The Irrepressible George—A Utah Man." He boasted, "There is no man of our acquaintance who in home manufactures, just resembles brother Geo. D. Watt. He is the greatest home spun institution of the working classes, with whom we are personally acquainted. George is unceasing in his labors and in homespun is irrepressible. We rarely see him but he has something around him of home manufacture, something that he has just got hold of that beats everything imported." He continued, "George has a farm in Kays ward and on 'the bench,' catching a view of the valley from the north, he has a magnificent house and garden, in which he has the best choice of fruits in the Territory; his orchard extends over seven acres and contains everything in that line." Stenhouse thought, though, that Watt's house showed even more homespun industry: "He has cotton spinning, woollen spinning, weaving of all the varied classes; then he has his thousands of silk worms producing in their department. By the bye, George has mastered the violin, is a member of the Orchestra, wears home spun in the summer, home spun in the winter, eats his own bread, wears his own apparel and makes his own music."[45]

Although Watt had an abundant garden and had grown many products, he had never written about his farming skills. The next logical step was for him to focus his descriptive abilities on agriculture.

On February 8, 1866, an article appeared in Stenhouse's *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* entitled, "A Word in Season." The author described the simple practice of planting a fruit tree. Perhaps he had Andrew Jackson Downing's book, *The Fruits and Fruit Trees of America,* which explained to the average farmer how to plant, graft, and prune all types of fruit trees.[46] The author of "A Word in Season" advised any horticulturalist to do the straightforward things that you would assume everyone already knew. He told the reader to clear the snow and dig a hole about eighteen inches deep and six feet wide in February. About a month to six weeks later, the tree could be planted. Next the planter should give it a "bucket of water to settle the earth well about the roots, and a wheel barrow load of good stable manure on the top for a mulch." Not forgetting a continual supply of water, the author advised

45. Thomas Stenhouse, "The Irrepressible George—A Utah Man," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* October 16, 1865, 3.

46. For information on the way Downing's book applies to Utah Valley, see Gary Daynes and Richard Ian Kimball, "By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them: A Cultural History of Orchard Life in Utah Valley," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 69 (Summer 2001): 215–31.

"that it is not finished until you have laid out well defined water ditches, to convey water to your newly planted trees when they need it, and in such a way that every fibre in their roots will get a drink." He also counseled the reader to plant strawberries around the trees. Thus the ground would be productive while he or she waited for fruit from the tree. The Viscountess strawberries "will yield several crops before the trees are large enough to overshadow them, or to bear fruit themselves." Because the article was signed with the pen name of "W," no one knew who the author was. "[47]

Stenhouse received such favorable comments from his readers that he asked the author to write another article. These articles were written by a Utah man who knew about agricultural methods and could teach the people of the territory how to be good farmers. The author titled his next essay "Apples and Pear Seeds." This time he also began a treatise on economics. It is possible that the author had been reading Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* published in 1776, which discusses markets and no regulations on goods by governments, an approach called laissez faire. The author never used that term, though. According to this author, the people of Utah had to be what he called "self-sustaining." He described it this way: "Not being where ocean commerce, and the commerce of our great American rivers can reach us, we cannot, by exchanging our home productions with the people of distant portions of this country, and with foreign countries, bring money and manufactured goods to our doors. Since neighboring gold discoveries have caused mining settlements to spring up in our borders, a market has been created which has partially supplied us with the means of interchange with the Eastern market." The presence of U. S. troops in the territory had brought "government contracts" and created a market for Utah's agricultural products. "The high price of Utah flour in the northern mining districts will encourage wide awake agriculturists to raise it there," the author stated. If, however, the government decided it needed troops elsewhere, part of that money would "be dried up." To the author, money was simply "a convenient medium of exchange."[48]

After the author discussed the present Utah economics, he asked, "But what have apple and pear seeds to do with this?" He felt that apple and pear and all other variety of seeds had brought power and glory to the different states of the earth. One should start immediately and plant them so that even "when you are asleep, or following the avocations of life, the little rootlets of these plants may be working for you—may be helping you to that which you cannot get when money cannot be had." He then reverted to the practical aspects of apple and pear seeds. After soaking them in warm milk and water, the reader should plant them about one inch down in well-manured soil. Every garden should have many trees "growing up

47. George D. Watt, "A Word in Season," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* February 8, 1866, 2.
48. George D. Watt, "Apples and Pear Seeds," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* March 1, 1866, 1.

to form stocks to receive, by budding or grafting, the most choice and precious fruits."[49]

Again Stenhouse received many favorable comments, and a lot of readers wanted to know who this contributor was. On March 19, 1866, Stenhouse replied, "As we are frequently interrogated for the name of the author of the excellent articles that have been published in the *Telegraph* on gardening signed 'W,' we take pleasure in stating that our esteemed friend Geo. D. Watt, Esq., is the writer. 'Brother George' has favored us with those excellent and timely contributions, with no motive but the pure one of doing good to his fellow citizens, and we are pleased to see them so liberally appreciated."[50]

In the same issue where Stenhouse identified him, Watt authored another article with the title of "Asparagus." He defined it as a perennial plant native to the shores of Britain or the steppes of eastern Europe. Again he said that an important step was to prepare the soil by working it to a depth of two and a half feet and fill it with fourteen inches of "well rotted manure, leaf manure" from the canyons. Then two rows of asparagus could be planted six inches apart "and allow an alley way of three feet between each row for convenience of watering and gathering." Harvesting should be done sparingly the third year. It was not until the fourth year that the plants could be "cut for the table." This vegetable was the first of the season, and "after peas become abundant, asparagus should not be cut, but should be suffered to make top and gather vigor and strength of root for another year."[51]

Watt's articles were so popular that the *Deseret Evening News* also approached him about writing. In April 1866, the *News* published his article entitled "Shade Trees." Watt introduced his article by commenting that when the pioneers had first settled the area, they had planted young cottonwoods in the town. He, however, did not like the tree. He thought it grew "well on the wet bottom lands, but on our dry bench lands they are very apt to be sickly, and become a prey to borers and numerous insects." He also objected to it as a shade tree "on account of a downy substance which, like particles of cotton, floats upon the air, sticking upon the clothing of the pedestrian, and even entering into bed rooms, parlors and kitchens, making it difficult sometimes for cooks to keep it out of the food they are preparing." Watt felt that locust and mulberry trees provided better shade. "The locust, in addition to being a very thrifty grower, forms, under proper training, a dense top, and produces a hard, tough and useful timber," he explained. And he claimed that "the mulberry forms a handsome top and is in many ways very useful and profitable." The owners should also keep animals away from their

49. Ibid.
50. Thomas Stenhouse, "Our Contributor 'W,'" *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* March 19, 1866, 2.
51. George D. Watt, "Asparagus," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* March 19, 1866, 2. The article was also published the day before in the *Deseret Evening News;* see "Horticultural," *Deseret Evening News,* March 18, 1866, 5.

trees by placing a fence around them. The worst enemies to shade trees were men "who have that destructive tendency to whittle while spinning yarns." To discourage them, he suggested that "I know of no cure more effective than a good horse whip, soundly and suddenly applied." There might be some danger involved "in making this application, but as the safety of doing so the owners of trees must be their own judges."[52]

In October 1866, Watt published an essay in the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* entitled "Dip[h]theria." He had no knowledge of modern medicine or bacteria-causing disease, but like many nineteenth-century people, he was concerned with sanitation and cleanliness. He took his views from Britain, where he had been born. Both in the 1830s and 1860s, Parliament published reports that good sanitation in the streets and cleanliness in homes were important for health.[53] Watt thought that anything that was dirty or had decaying substances in it should be cleaned: cellars, walls, carpets, floors, dishes, and utensils. He wrote that "it is often the case that carpets are allowed to remain on floors too long before they are removed and cleansed, and the floors under them swept and washed clean." Pots and pans of lead and pewter should be entirely banished from the kitchen "as they are never without danger." Children could receive canker from poorly cleaned pots, pans, and utensils unless they were coated with tin.[54]

In October 1867, Watt began his longest treatise in a six-part series titled, "A Talk." Again he chose a subject with which he was familiar: sheep. This article started on page three of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, but soon the interest was so high that the last three installments began on the front page. Watt had been a weaver in England, so he knew about good wool. He also raised sheep in America, so he understood how to care for these animals that clothed humanity. However, this discussion was more than just about sheep because he incorporated economics and talked about the way normal households with father, mother, and children fit into that pattern. He was particularly concerned about affluent people in Utah who had invested in sheep but not given them a good shepherd and especially not the right sheds in winter: "The flocks were huddled together in winter in dirty pens, without shelter, exposed to the rains and snows of the fall, winter and early spring, scantily fed." These sheep would not produce enough wool. Only cared-for sheep would make a good return. In time he thought Utah would become a big "sheep walk," where animals would winter in the south and travel all the way to the northern part of the territory in the summer, but for now each family should care for a small flock with a trusty dog by their side.[55]

52. George D. Watt, "Shade Trees," *Deseret Evening News,* April 4, 1866, 2–3.
53. See Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815–1870,* 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 463–64.
54. George D. Watt, "Dip[h]theria," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* October 1, 1866, 1.
55. George D. Watt, "A Talk," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* October 24, 1867, 3.

For families to use the sheep's wool, they needed a "common spinning-wheel" to produce cloth. A handmade article was better than anything a machine could do. He gave the example of a Danish lady who offered him a pair of hand-knit socks for a dollar and a half, whereas the imported machine-made ones cost half that amount. Watt thought, though, that the Danish lady's stockings were better quality and would last longer. The imported woolen socks "are made of the refuse of wool, and spun and knit by machinery for the market."[56]

If all the people in the territory wanted two pairs of woolen socks, they would need fifty thousand pounds of yarn "to supply this demand alone." For all Utahns to clothe and blanket themselves in woolen products would require "600,000 pounds to supply 50,000 men." As he said, "Demand and supply are the great foundations of commerce." The principle of supply and demand was governed by what people wanted, and Watt thought that there was no end to the demand. However, greater demand than supply created a higher price—an unreasonable price—and that was not acceptable.[57]

In his treatise at this point, Watt revealed he was opposed to laissez faire. No one in that production line from the farmer to the last seller should charge his or her neighbor more money in a scarce period. An unfair higher price "strikes a blow at the best interests of our growing country, and spreads a gloom and discouragement over that portion of society affected by it, and over those interests which keep up an increasing demand to meet lively and active sources of supply." Every enlightened producer should obtain a fair profit but not take advantage of the principle of supply and demand. Now Watt retreated to a communitarian philosophy and stated that a profit "should be determined by a committee." What if the supply was greater than the demand and the price offered the seller was too low? In that case, Watt advocated that farmers should lock up their products to create a demand until they could obtain a fair price, but this should only happen very infrequently.[58]

He also advocated that every person in Utah should be industrious; there would never be enough wealth to justify a life of idleness and pleasure: "The true Mormon husband and father is a farmer, a mechanic, a manufacturer, a shepherd, or a stock raiser; he is valiant in battling the elements to produce what he needs." He should also be a great example for his family: "honest, just and true to his God, to himself, to his family, to his brethren, and to every high-toned honorable, and equitable principle."[59]

Watt then described his ideal Mormon woman: "The true Mormon wife and mother is industrious, economical; managing her household with skill,

56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. See Watt, "A Talk," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* October 31, 1867, 3; and November 7, 1867, 1.
59. Watt, "A Talk," October 31, 1867, 3.

seeking to save on all sides, rather than to recklessly consume and squander her husband's substance. She watches over her children with solicitude and care, as to what they eat, drink and wear. . . . She meets these stern duties with a brave heart, petulance and complaint forming no part of her daily exercises." She should be a woman of judgment, an ideal woman who was at home in the kitchen and the "drawing room."[60]

The children also must be taught to learn and labor. The sons needed to produce and the daughters to manufacture raw material into needed items. "Girls raised after this fashion make proper wives for Utah's sons of toil. In such a community there will always be demand for raw material to manufacture; let no man therefore fear to enter into home production with a right good will," he explained.[61] Essentially Watt proposed establishing a small factory in each home.

In his last installment of "A Talk," he returned to discussing the care of sheep. A shepherd needed a good dog to protect and drive the sheep. In winter the farmer needed to feed his animals well, but "the feeding should not be left to boys and inexperienced hands." In those cold months, "cleanliness, sufficiency, and due economy are three considerations never to be lost sight of." He said that "they should not be allowed to graze in the neighborhood of dusty roads, nor to rest in low places, but only on the heights, where they may enjoy a free circulation of the atmosphere, and be undisturbed by insects." He felt confident that sheep properly herded and wintered would not encounter disease.[62]

After Watt left Salt Lake for Kaysville, he sent a letter in 1870 to the *Deseret Evening News* about grapes. He devoted the entire article to the practical side. According to him, California grapes did not have qualities to produce good grapes in Utah. He listed six varieties that he thought best suited Utah's climate and soil—the Eumelan, Iona, Israeli, Delaware, Diane, and Concord—and evaluated each as a dinner, raisin, and wine grape.[63] He promised to write about other agricultural products, but there were no later reports in any newspaper.

Watt's most significant contribution came from raising silkworms. Sericulture, as it was called, had come to Utah and, according to him, would free the territory from economic bondage and provide employment for

60. Ibid.
61. Watt, "A Talk," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* November 14, 1867, 1.
62. Watt, "A Talk," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* November 21, 1867, 1.
63. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Deseret Evening News,* October 4, 1870, 4. It is possible that Watt was answering a debate between Daniel Bonelli from the Muddy settlements and Louis Bertrand from Tooele, who had written letters about whether the southern settlements or the northern communities produced a better grape wine. See Waldo C. Perkins, "From Switzerland to the Colorado River: Life Sketch of the Entrepreneurial Daniel Bonnelli, the Forgotten Pioneer," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 74 (Spring 2006): 4–23.

many. The worms, usually kept in a shed, fed only on the leaves of mulberry trees. In this controlled environment, the worm developed into its cocoon stage, and every cocoon would produce silk. The process of stripping the leaves, feeding the worms, and finally processing the silk was labor intensive. For the cloth to be economical, it must be produced in a country with inexpensive labor.[64]

A Frenchman, Octave Ursenbach, first brought the silkworm into Utah about 1854. Sometime in the early 1860s, Watt began to raise them. In 1865 he exhibited a silkworm that Ursenbach had imported from Italy as an egg.[65] A month later, Watt brought some frames into the president's office with several hundred cocoons on them. Very quickly he became the expert on sericulture. By 1868 he had ten thousand worms. He collected two bushels of leaves daily from his mulberry trees to feed his worms. Sericulture became his passion. He thought that each family could provide the labor and the product; silk could clothe them, and selling the cloth would in a sense feed them. Silk could make Utah self-sufficient in all ways.

At the end of March 1866, the *Deseret Evening News* published Watt's article on "The Mulberry Tree." He claimed it thrived best in the pure, dry air of the mountains and the benchlands. He gave credit to Octave Ursenbach, William C. Staines, and Brigham Young for proving that mulberry trees could be raised successfully in Utah. They also produced a "palatable" fruit and provided shade. One tree could produce 50 pounds of leaves for worms, so Watt felt that a small orchard of ten, twenty, or more trees should be planted. Altogether 2,500 worms needed 250 pounds of leaves for the season: "In this way tons of raw silk can be raised throughout our country, giving an interesting and profitable employment to our young girls, thus aiding in obtaining that commercial influence and independence which is necessary to the permanent growth, greatness and glory of any nation."[66]

64. See "History of Silk," available online at http://www.silkroad.com/artl/silkhistory.shtml; and "History of Silk: The Legend, The Silk Road," available online at http://www.texeresilk.com/cms-history_of_silk.html.`

65. "Journal History," May 21 1865. Most of the studies of silk in Utah skip over this period to talk about the Relief Society's involvement in the sericulture just a few years later. For an early study, see Margaret Schow Potter, "The History of Sericulture in Utah," (master's thesis, Oregon State College, 1949); for one of the best studies about the entire movement, see Janet Peterson, "Preaching Up Silk: Utah's Half-Century of Sericulture," *Pioneer* (Autumn 2002): 19–22. Another study that looks at the silk industry is Jill Mulvay Derr, "Woman's Place in Brigham Young's World," *BYU Studies* 18 (Spring 1978): 377–405. For another man's involvement with the sericulture, see Jacob W. Olmstead, "Give Me Any Situation Suitable: The Consecrated Life of the Multitalented Paul A. Schettler," *BYU Studies* 41, no. 1 (2002): 108–26. For an examination of the sericulture in the hinterland of Utah, see Virginia K. Nielson, "Sericulture: The Silk Industry in Ephraim," *Saga of Sanpitch* 24 (1992): 44–47; Terri Draper, "Jolly Green Giants," *St. George Magazine* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 78; and Louise Degn, "Susanna G. Cardon," *Studies in Mormon History* 5 (1978): 119–36.

66. George D. Watt, "The Mulberry Tree," *Deseret Evening News,* March 28, 1866, 3.

In March 1868, in a letter to the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* Watt again promoted the silk culture. Utah was indeed silk country, and the mulberry tree could grow in the territory. The furniture maker could use its wood, and its fruit could be mixed with cider and used as a medicine. The fruit was also good in pies. In place of the useless cottonwoods, the people of the territory should plant mulberry trees: "For no insects feed upon their leaves except the silk worm; and then their branches give us fruit and wine, and their leaves an article of clothing of the best and finest quality." He then analyzed how raising silk would "bring into our country millions of wealth annually."

Economically the argument against raising silkworms was how labor intensive it was, but Watt claimed this was not true: "It has been ascertained by actual trial in California,—that one man can tend as many worms as eight persons in the old world." The Utah farmer was poor because he could not raise enough grain—the staple in the state. Every Utah farmer should produce silk. In the winter months, the entire family could spend its time "winding silk and preparing it for the loom at home and the market abroad." He concluded, "While we are so powerfully aided, let us put forth our hands and gather the rich blessings which are within our reach in such unlimited abundance, for there is silk in the soil, silk in the waters and silk in the air."[67]

In March of 1868, Thomas Stenhouse and others climbed the hill and visited the "indefatigable George. . . . We feasted our eyes, however,—on the mulberry trees and the cocoons. . . . We were amazed, overwhelmed and tried to get 'a scripture' about mountains flowing with mulberries and silk worms." Watt showed them around his small farm: "He has a delicious place—trees, bushes and plants in profusion, budding with wealth. We take our incredulous saying all back again—George is 'a model man.'" Stenhouse then commented on how useless an editor or anyone who did not raise mulberry trees was.[68] A few months later, Watt stopped into the office of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* and showed the editor 150 cocoons. He told Stenhouse that silk was a good idea, and it should "insure the success of the business. George is an energetic pioneer, and he shall in no wise lose his reward."[69]

In August 1868, Edward Stevenson climbed the bench to Watt's home. He found that the grasshoppers had devastated Watt's locust and fruit trees and much of the bark. Watt showed him twenty-five ounces of eggs that he intended to sell to anyone who wanted to produce silk. He had a market in California but preferred to sell them in Utah. "He seated himself, opened

67. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* March 12, 1868, 3; Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* November 23, 1868, 2.
68. Thomas Stenhouse, "The Mulberry Trees," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* March 23, 1868, 3.
69. Thomas Stenhouse, "The Cocoons," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* July 16, 1868, 1.

a sack of cocoons, and began spinning silk, about the consistency of No. 10 cotton yarn," Stevenson said.[70]

Watt's writings on agriculture must have impressed Brigham Young because in 1868 he asked Watt and Albert Carrington to write a general epistle for the church. It is a lengthy treatise, primarily in Watt's handwriting, about the history of the territory, immigration, and the sheep and cotton industries, among other subjects. It ends abruptly, so Young may not have seen the final results. The epistle was never published, and it is possible that when Watt left the office in 1868, it was still in his desk.[71]

Watt also tried writing fiction. George Q. Cannon, an apostle, started a new journal in 1866, *The Juvenile Instructor.* He had heard so many of Watt's stories of his childhood about being a vagabond on the streets of Manchester that he asked him to write about those experiences. Watt wrote one for the first volume, and thus began a series of forty-three installments that ran for more than three years as the "Little George" stories, subtitled, "A True Story." Watt signed them with the pen name Uncle George.

Watt's main purpose was to teach the youth of the territory that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the true religion. However, he did not make this a constant theme in every story. He also told children about other religions, about godfathers and godmothers, and about baptism in the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. He admonished the children that true baptism depends on someone with priesthood authority and immersion. Being an economist at heart, Watt also taught his young readers how to obtain the most for their money. Little George will do anything for people who are good to him, and he calls each of them "kind": the kind lady, the kind teacher in the poorhouse, and the kind mistress. Like his contemporary, Charles Dickens, Watt was trying to recreate in his own way some of the events of his boyhood.[72]

70. Edward Stevenson, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* August 13, 1868, 2.
71. George D. Watt, general epistle, ca. January–February 1868, Young Papers.
72. See *Juvenile Instructor* 1–4, 1866–69. For details of the stories, see chapter one.

10

SERMONS OF OBEDIENCE
TRAVELING WITH BRIGHAM YOUNG AND TO BRITAIN

> If I know myself I have the spirit of this labor upon me, not for the present so much as for the future, not for hire but to discharge a great duty which seems to be the purpose of my existence. . . . Already my mind has become almost stereotyped in this line of thought, so much so, that much of my time I am unfit for social society and conversation.
>
> George D. Watt to Brigham Young, September 9, 1865

Perennially the Mormon leadership sent missionaries to the eastern United States and especially to Britain, converting many to their religion. Brigham Young had called the faithful to gather to Zion. The poor came with the aid of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, which was a revolving loan account. By the end of 1868, more than twenty thousand immigrants had arrived in Utah territory. By 1860 settlements had spread north from Bountiful to Cache Valley and then finally in 1863 to Bear Lake. Expansion south had begun with the settlement of Utah Valley, Provo in particular. By 1861 the Mormons had ranged as far south as Kanab and St. George.

Because these new pioneers were scattered throughout Utah, President Young no longer knew everybody in the church, and not all the members could travel to Salt Lake. Young decided that the only way to teach the people was to travel throughout the territory, and Watt went with him. Watt also became the correspondent for the *Deseret News* and later the *Semi-Weekly*

Telegraph. Besides providing synopses of Young's talks, he often reported on the condition of crops.

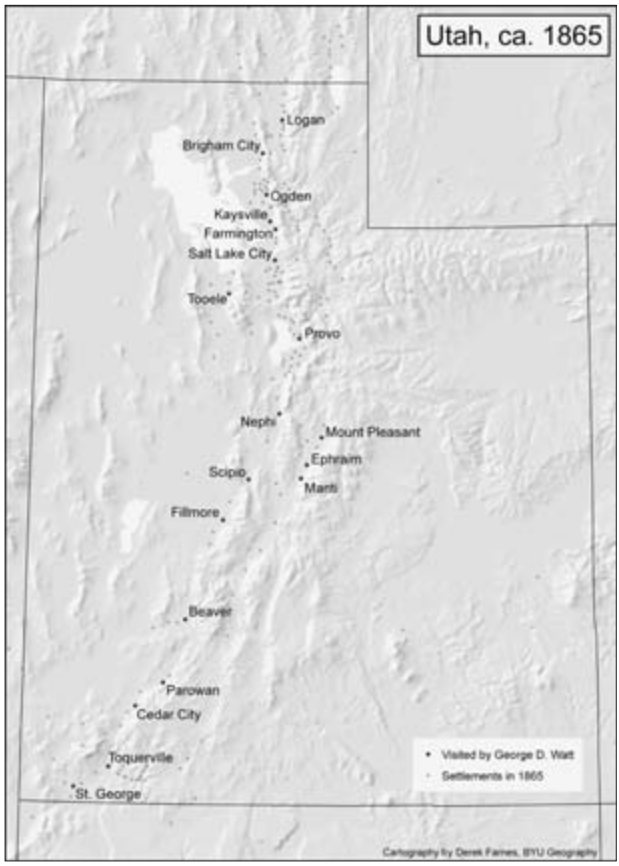
These excursions by Young were great processional outings because he generally traveled with a large entourage, often fifty or more people. The local communities met him with bands, militia, and the entire population lined along the streets. The wards held great feasts and balls and hosted all the members of the party. In return Young and the others, including Watt, preached and imparted wisdom to them. The people loved it. Many of them, unless they were ward and stake officers, had seen their president only a few times. Since Watt was with Young, the people also esteemed him. Undoubtedly he loved the status of his position. Watt's sermons and writings from this time tell us his beliefs and what he felt was important in his life.

During the 1850s, Young visited only a few of the new settlements. In September 1856, he went to Provo and took many of the church leaders with him, including Watt, who was to record the sermons for the newspaper. As one of the speakers, Watt told his audience that his religion meant everything to him and he should be willing to suffer for it. Every person was sent to Earth to be obedient to God.[1] Watt traveled with Young in 1858 when he went to Weber, Box Elder, and Cache Counties and again in June 1860, when he visited Cache Valley, faithfully recording the sermons. In October 1860, he went with the president's party to Manti—visiting each community, holding meetings, and staying overnight with friends.

On December 30, 1860, Watt spoke to his own Twentieth Ward congregation. He "complimented the Saints on their new school house"; he always emphasized the need for schools and education. "Spoke on the important part we must occupy, for we could not lay dormant on drinking, lying swearing, stealing & c." He admonished parents to lead a righteous life and set a good example to their children. He encouraged "young men and women to assist their parents." Mothers should teach their "daughters to keep house. Be frugal, careful &c. so that they will be good housewives. They should teach their children properly." He also exhorted the congregation to be kind to their animals.[2] In July 1861, in another sermon to the Twentieth Ward, Watt said that "faithfulness [was] necessary to receiving blessings" of the Latter-day Saints. Members needed to live righteously to receive the promises of eternal life. Sealings or marriages in the Endowment House "are given as a preparatory step."[3]

In the summer of 1861, Watt accompanied Young three times. On May 15, he journeyed through Fillmore south to Washington County and

1. Utah Stake, minutes, September 14, 1856, typescript, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
2. Twentieth Ward, general minutes, December 30, 1860, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
3. Ibid., July 28, 1861.



Travels throughout Utah

preached at Beaver. On their way south, the party stopped at the Mountain Meadows monument that had been erected to commemorate the people in the Baker-Fancher party who were killed in September 1857. After the group left the settlements in the Colorado Plateau area, they stopped at Fort Harmony to visit John D. Lee, a participant in the massacre. Always the gracious host, Lee seated the fifty people at his table and fed them. Their return journey was hot and dusty with swirling winds the entire time until they reached Spanish Fork, where they encountered a rainstorm that followed them all the way to Salt Lake City. They arrived back in Salt Lake City on June 8.[4] In August they traveled to Farmington, and in September Watt accompanied the party to Logan.[5]

4. "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," June 8, 1861, LDS Church Archives.
5. Ibid., September 12, 1861.

In 1861 Watt spoke at October General Conference in Salt Lake City on "inseparability of our temporal and spiritual existence." He "spoke in strong terms of the necessity of the Latter Day Saints observing the law of consecration, and said that all our means should be laid out and expended with a view to an increase." Because of his background in economics, he also "alluded to the influence and power of wealth."[6] In November he spoke at the Fourteenth Ward schoolhouse on cleanliness and the duties of wives to their husbands. Wilford Woodruff wrote in his diary that he was "followed by G. D. Watt. In his peculiar style he urged the people to wash their bodies, keep their houses clean and make clean bread."[7]

In April 1863, Watt traveled again to Washington County with Young. He spoke at several places, including Toquerville, Washington, and St. George, but the subjects are not known. On the way back to Salt Lake City, the party visited Goshen and journeyed along the west side of Utah Lake. By the time they arrived back in Salt Lake, Watt and the group had traveled 850 miles, visited fifty settlements, and held forty-one meetings.[8] In September 1863, Watt went with some church authorities north to Kaysville to dedicate the new meetinghouse. Since he had land in Kays Ward, Watt had donated money to help construct this building. At the first meeting on Saturday, Watt addressed the congregation along with George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and John Taylor. After the dedicatory prayer, Taylor asked him to read chapter six of Second Chronicles. Watt also sang "The Poets Farewell" with a quartet composed of himself, John Thornley and his wife, and William Beezley. After closing remarks by Bishop Christopher Layton, Watt gave the benediction.[9]

Brigham Young tried out several men as the newspaper reporter for his excursions. The first one wrote wonderful descriptions of the communities but provided no summaries of the sermons. The next one, J. V. Long took shorthand and wrote excellent reports but stopped working for Young in 1863. Watt's reports were similar to Long's, so after that, he became the official travel journalist for the *Deseret News*.

Shortly after October General Conference in 1863, President Young left for Sanpete County, and Watt faithfully packed his bags and went along. They traveled as far south as Manti before returning, and Watt reported on the places they went. He finished with the words, "This trip to Sanpete was in every way pleasant and cheerful, and in every place the President and his friends were hailed with a most hearty welcome. The teachings given at the

6. Ibid., October 7, 1861.
7. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898,* typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–85), 5:602.
8. "Journal History," May 19, 1863.
9. "Journal History," September 26, 1863; John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith to President Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, September 26, 1863, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

various meetings held, were of a character to cheer the hearts of the faithful Saints, to stir up the slothful to greater diligence, to increased faith in God, and confidence in each other."[10] In September 1864, the party journeyed to Fillmore. Watt spoke in Scipio, but no minutes were taken at that meeting. Watt exercised a little hyperbole about that area when he said in his published report, "The land, where water was naught and the soil barren, is now a land of flourishing cities; where frost desolation and sterility characterized regions now productive farms, thrifty orchards and fragrant flower borders flourish."[11] The company then went on to St. George. Two months later in November, Watt went with President Young to Ogden.

In 1865 Watt traveled out of town with the president five times. Young journeyed from Logan to St. George and to Tooele in the west. In June the group went to Utah Valley, ending at Nephi, and less than a month later, they proceeded south again to Manti. Watt preached first at Santaquin and then at Mt. Pleasant, where he encouraged his listeners to build better houses and have more productive gardens.[12] In his newspaper reports, he began to describe his surroundings. In Moroni he commented, "As soon as we had, in a degree, washed the dust from off our faces and shaken it, in a measure, from our clothes, we met with the people of Moroni under a bowery situated on the south side of their log meeting-house."[13]

On August 1, Young and his party went to Logan, where, for twenty-five minutes, Watt "exhorted the people to abide in the counsels of the servants of God." He also discussed using products they made, rather than purchasing items from outside Utah, "inciting the Saints to continued progression therein." He also preached in Brigham City on the return trip: "He instituted a comparison between the blessings enjoyed by the people of God in ancient times and those enjoyed by them now, showing how great are the blessings we have received."[14] Later in the month, the group went to Tooele, where Watt admonished the people to plant various varieties of fruit trees.[15] Early in September Young again trekked south. The party proceeded to Scipio, Fillmore, Kanosh, Beaver, Parowan, and Cedar City. Throughout the entire trip, Watt commented about the poor crops. The company then visited Utah's Dixie. In St. George, the entire party, including Watt, went to the fair. He especially enjoyed the fruit exhibits.[16]

10. "Journal History," November 25, 1863.
11. "Sketch of Pres. B. Young's Trip South," *Deseret News,* October 5, 1864, 4.
12. "Continuation of President Young's Trip to Sanpete," *Deseret Evening News,* July 19, 1865, 14: 329.
13. "Conclusion of President Young's Trip to Sanpete," *Deseret Evening News,* July 26, 1865, 14: 338.
14. "President Young's Trip to Cache Valley," *Deseret Evening News,* August 9, 1865, 14: 353.
15. "President Young's Trip to Tooele," *Deseret Evening News,* August 30, 1865, 14: 377.
16. "Continuation of President Young's Trip South," *Deseret Evening News,* October 12, 1865, 15: 2.

Watt's writing method caused Brigham Young some concern. Being fluent in shorthand, Watt took all his notes in Pitman and then later transcribed them. Young advised Watt to summarize articles in longhand. If he did this, he could quickly get his reports to the pony express, which took packages and correspondence to Salt Lake City, and enable the *Deseret Evening News* to publish them faster. Watt wrote Young a letter, addressing it to "Dear Brother–Father." In the letter, he said, "It is my greatest earthly happiness when I know that my labors are satisfactory to you and receive your hearty sanction." He said he had already written the sermons in longhand and maintained the subject of the speaker "as faithfully as possible. He, however, had been taking shorthand reports for such a long time that he had difficulty recording in longhand, for "short hand . . . requires little or no exercise of the mind being purely machanical." He promised to "continue this system of long hand reporting during this trip."[17]

Watt then described his own state of mind: "Already my mind has become almost stereotyped in this line of thought, so much so, that much of my time I am unfit for social society and conversation. Earthly wealth is but dust in the balance compared with this work which I think I am designed to perform in my lifetime, and the impression that I work for dollars and cents has yet to be made upon my mind, and, Sir, I consider that I have nothing in this world that I do not owe to your goodness." He closed his letter by stating, "Desiring your dictation, guidance and direction in all things, and desiring to be used in the way that will produce the greatest good to the cause of our God I have the honor to be your brother and fellow laborer."[18]

Sometime after his self-evaluation to Young, Watt decided to expand his writing to agricultural topics, which had always been a specialty of his. Thomas Stenhouse, his old friend and the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* urged him to write for his paper. He accepted, thus beginning another chapter in his life. These articles helped him expand his mind and share his thoughts with others. During 1866 President Young traveled only a little. At the end of July, the group went south to Springville, where they held a meeting in the rain.[19] In September they traveled north to Logan. On this trip, Watt began writing for the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* where he used the pen name of "D." He described the roads, mills, crops, towns, and militia groups that met them and the music, especially the singing groups. At Willard he commented that the crops were fine, although the wheat had more smut in it this year than usual. "The peach crop is heavy, and I can bear testimony to the fineness of the fruit, having eat[en] several peaches grown by the Bishop," he concluded.[20]

17. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, September 9, 1865, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
18. Ibid.
19. "Journal History," July 30, 1866.
20. "The President's Trip North," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* September 10, 1866, 2.

Watt was well known all over the territory. He reported speeches, talked, and prayed at meetings throughout Utah. Always he was at the president's side: the faithful recorder who allowed all to know about Brigham Young's concerns and beliefs.

Economic pressures began to mount for Watt, however. After his marriage to Sarah Ann Harter in 1867, he became concerned about supporting his families. His younger wives had many child-bearing years ahead of them. He was no longer a young man, and he needed additional income to help support his growing family. He also had a mounting debt on the tithing-office books that worried him. The old specter of poverty from his boyhood continued to haunt him.

Watt determined to pursue his claim to his uncle's estate in Britain. In 1853 he had received a letter from his brother-in-law in Preston, England, telling him about a claim to land worth £40,000 that he had to an estate near Dublin, Ireland; the land had formerly belonged to his uncle, George Darling Wood, who had died in South America. Watt had asked Young if he could go to Britain in 1853, and Young had given him permission to leave with Franklin D. Richards. However, at that time, Watt had decided to stay in Utah and, as he said, "fulfil the duties of my calling, learn to accumulate property, and thereby properly know the value of it." From that time until early in the 1860s, all communication between him and his relatives in Britain ended. He reopened correspondence with them because he desired to find out about this Irish land. In 1863, when he wrote Margaret Brandreth, his sister, she refused to reply. Two months later, he sent a letter to his Uncle Morris Howard. He mentioned that he could not see "why the free exercise of a person's agency in the choice of his religion should estrange him from the common attachment and cordial good feelings existing between relatives and friends." He told his uncle about the death of his first wife and that he had married again.[21] Morris probably recommended that he try for the estate once again. It had been leased for twenty-one years, and the lease was about to expire. Watt wrote to Young, asking for advice: "I shall feel perfectly satisfied with whatever you advise conserning it, and shall gladly and with a free good will regulate my future course accordingly."[22]

Young told him that he could do whatever he pleased. This time Watt made a different decision. Young recommended that he travel with Brigham Young Jr. and be designated as a missionary; he could take care of his personal

21. George D. Watt to Morris Howard, n.d., shorthand, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2002). This letter was written either late in 1862 or early in 1863 because Watt mentions that George D. Watt Jr. is nearly twenty, and he was born on June 10, 1843.

22. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, January 15, 1864, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers; Watt to Brigham Young, November 10, 1866, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

business first.[23] There was even a rumor going around in Salt Lake City that he was going to inherit a £50,000 estate in Ireland and receive a lordship.[24]

On January 30, Watt went to the Endowment House and received a blessing from Heber C. Kimball for both his temporal and spiritual life. Because Watt wanted to preserve the words, he sat with a pen and paper recording the blessing while five men laid their hands upon his head. Kimball humbly appealed to the Lord, "Wilt Thou let Thine holy angels go with him, and thy servant brother Brigham Jr. to conduct them safely . . . ; that they may be preserved . . . over the sea to England, and from thence to any place wherever they may go." He promised Watt that his family and home would be blessed. He sealed all the blessings that had formerly been given to Watt by patriarchs, apostles, and prophets, "embracing the holy anointing and say that every one of them shall come to pass through thy faithfulness."[25] After this blessing, Watt was eager to return to his homeland to preach to the people of Britain and pursue his personal interest.

Before Watt and Brigham Young Jr. left, Brigham Young advised his son to have "Elder George D. Watt examine into the subject of type for our Deseret Alphabet, where it can be bought to the best advantage." He also requested that if they had "time to spare," they could travel to Washington, D.C., and visit William Hooper, Utah's territorial delegate. Young also thought that "in taking passage across the Ocean I wish you to secure one of the best steamers of the Cunard Line. Better wait a week than embark on a vessel whose staunchness may be questionable."[26]

On February 4, 1867, Watt and Brigham Jr. left Salt Lake City. They went by coach, but at the mouth of Emigration Canyon, they changed to a sleigh because of the deep snow and then alternated between a coach and sleigh.[27] They traveled night and day across the barrenness of Wyoming and ran into snowstorms most of the way to Denver. At the Elk Mountain stage station, Young maintained "the driver is frozen somewhat. We were 8 hours making about 25 miles. The storm is raging fearfully, and we could scarcely get from the stables to the house, we were so benumed with cold, and the wind is blowing a hurricane." When it was not snowing, it was terribly cold, so much so that the occupants of the stage thought they would perish. The driver consumed too much liquor and even lost his way for a time until fortunately the stage made its way back to the road. Six days after leaving Salt Lake, they arrived in Denver, where they rested for a day. Since it was Sunday, the hotel proprietor invited them to attend his Episcopalian service, which the

23. Brigham Young to Brigham Young Jr., February 2, 1867, holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.
24. Thomas C. Griggs, Diary, January 27, 1867, LDS Church Archives.
25. Heber C. Kimball, blessing given to George D. Watt, January 30, 1867, photocopy in author's possession.
26. Young to Brigham Young Jr., February 2, 1867.
27. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 5, 1867, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

Utahns gladly accepted, but Watt said the preacher seemed more anxious to display the flowers of oratory than speak to the hearts and understanding of his hearers. Watt, always noticing trees and bushes even in the winter, wrote that "Denver is entirely destitute of fruit trees and fruit bearing shrubs."[28]

The two travelers left Denver the next day, faced more storms, and arrived at the train station at North Platte, Nebraska, two days later. Young wrote, "The roads are rough and the drivers anything but gentlemen." The weather continued exceedingly cold. Young said that the drivers did not become drunk along this route, but "they are constantly pouring down the liquor, and it is only their great powers of endurance that keeps them sober."[29] They crossed the Platte River on ice. At North Platte, they waited in a freezing station for fifteen hours for the delayed train. "We find it very tedious waiting," commented Young. "Slept in the waiting room."[30]

Once they boarded the train, the rate they were traveling increased to twenty-five miles per hour. The snow "is now falling in torrents or rather in huge flakes which promise shortly to block up the road," Young observed. The drifting snow, sometimes ten feet high, stopped the train several times before they reached Omaha. Near Grand Island, snow indeed clogged the railroad track, and the men shoveling could not free the train, so it remained stuck within a mile of the station while the passengers sat cold and without food until the next day. "We remained all night, and we saw the morning of the second day without food," an upset Young said. "Several of the passengers walked into the station being very hungry and disgusted with the tardiness of the railway officials."[31]

Watt wrote that they had been greatly preserved by the Lord: "When danger has been in our paths, we have felt a calm and unshaken trust in the promises made to us by the servants of God."[32] They changed trains at Omaha for Chicago.[33] During this trip, they became acquainted with five other "traveling friends," who were rather sad to see the two missionaries leave them in Chicago. Watt told the newspaper "they seemed to part from us with regret, and gave us their cards, inviting us to visit them in their homes in New York and Philadelphia, if either of us should ever come within their vicinity."[34]

They rested a day in Chicago and took the train the next afternoon for Detroit and eventually Niagara Falls.[35] Watt was overwhelmed by the beauty and majesty of the ice-filled falls. He said, "I was struck with awe and wonder

28. "Journal History," February 17, 1867, 2.
29. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 12, 1867.
30. Ibid., February 15, 1867.
31. Ibid., February 15–16, 1867.
32. "Journal History," February 25, 1867.
33. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 17, 1867; "Journal History," February 17, 1867.
34. "Journal History," February 25, 1867.
35. Ibid.

when I viewed, as it were a world of waters leaping with a clear bound into a fathomless abyss, and breaking into a spray in their rumbling, gurgling, roaring, dashing downward course, as if they dreaded to meet the mysterious depths of the boiling caldron into which their foaming, raging floods have emptied themselves from the days of gray antiquity." He was impressed by the imposing majesty of the falls: "They kiss you at a distance with their misty spray, but let no mortal creature within the inevitable grasp of their rushing, angry, merciless cascades, for no power but that of Omnipotence could rescue."[36] Young had no such romantic description of Niagara's majesty, only briefly commenting, "Visited the falls on the Canada side, and was struck with the vast quantity of ice every where visible."[37]

The two finally arrived in New York on February 22. They booked passage on the ship *Java* of the Cunard Lines for March 6. On their first two evenings in the city, they saw the Shakespearean play *The Merchant of Venice* and a musical group called Dan Brant's Negro Minstrels. Two evenings later, they saw a five-and-a-half-hour musical play called *The Black Crook,* which Young said "may well be called magnificent."[38] After a few days of rest, they traveled on to Washington, D.C., arriving at 10:00 p.m. After their evening meal, they journeyed to the Capitol, where they met William Hooper, Utah's representative to Congress, "which was very providential as we had not his address." As Young reported, "Visited him at his rooms enjoying a quiet chat until 1 a.m."[39] Watt told the newspaper that since this was his first visit to the Capitol, he "felt much interested in walking through the rooms, and viewing the statues and historical paintings."[40] Young commented, "I still think the Capitol one of the most beautiful buildings ever beheld."[41]

During their visit, Hooper introduced them to many congressmen, and in the evening, he received permission for them to be admitted to the floor of the House. Watt considered Hooper an excellent representative for the territory of Utah: "His continued and diligent application to the duties of his office, his gentlemanly deportment and urbanity of manners and his earnestness in stating facts relating to Utah and its people have won for us numerous friends in both Houses of Congress." They also met President Andrew Johnson and General Ulysses Grant. Of this meeting, Watt stated, "I do not remember ever being more favorably impressed with a man of the world than I was with that of President Johnson, although he looked much care worn. He was very busy, and we only remained long enough to greet

36. Ibid.
37. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 21, 1867.
38. Ibid., February 23–25, 1867. The *Black Crook* was the first "book" musical ever performed; actors performed its popular songs and dances in a unified play. I cannot find anything about Dan Brant's Negro Minstrels.
39. Ibid., February 26, 1867.
40. Journal History, March 4, 1867.
41. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 27, 1867.

him and bid him farewell." Hooper advised them not to speak of polygamy, but Watt still had to answer questions on that subject.[42]

While Watt was in Washington, William Seward, the secretary of state, gave him a passport, a document he had never needed before. It permitted him to travel safely to foreign lands. The most interesting material in the document was the description of Watt. The passport stated that he was fifty-two, his height was 5 feet, 11 ½ inches, and he had a high forehead, grey blue eyes, a prominent nose, an oval chin, brown and grey hair, a healthy complexion, and a full face.[43]

Following this visit to Washington, the two men returned to New York to sail. The *Java,* a propeller-driven ship, was 332 feet long and 42 feet wide. During the passage, they met heavy winds and rough seas. Three days before docking, they encountered gales that damaged the ship and slowed it down, turning the usual ten-day trip into fourteen. They were seasick the first two days but then found many interesting people who were ready to discuss Mormonism. In a letter to the *Deseret Evening News,* Watt told about a man he met who admitted that the Mormons had done a vast amount of good. He did think that Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon using a novel by Solomon Spaulding, however. "I replied that he was behind the times, for that old foolish fabrication of the devil had long since been abandoned by his satanic majesty and his Christian followers, as too thoroughly ventilated to do them any further good in their raids against 'Mormonism.'" After a discussion about Joseph Smith, Watt bore a strong testimony that Smith "was called to be a prophet of God, and was directed by Him to take the ancient plates from their hiding place and translate them by the power of God."[44]

They arrived in Liverpool on March 20 and immediately went to 42 Islington Road, the British Mission headquarters.[45] Watt saw a few of the sights of the city, but he returned to the mission office and stayed there the rest of the day. On March 21, Watt and Brigham Young Jr. preached together at a meeting in Liverpool to a group of about twenty people.[46] Watt returned to a Britain that still had poverty but was more prosperous for the middle class than the country that he had left more than fifteen years earlier. The working class did not reflect the unrest that had characterized it before. Britain had become an imperialistic nation and made incursions into China. The industrialized part of the country was at work.

Watt must have already written to his sister, Margaret Brandreth, and his brother-in-law about his trip to Britain. After he arrived, he penned them another letter: "If the desire of my heart can be granted to me, I would be

42. "Journal History," March 4, 1867.
43. George D. Watt, U.S. passport, copy in author's possession.
44. "Journal History," March 20, 1867.
45. Ibid., March 20, 21, 1867.
46. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, March 22, 1867, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

near you the short time I expect to remain in this land: for although I have many dear acquaintances in England, I feel a stranger in a foreign land while absent from my family. Could I be permitted to make your house my home while I am here, to see and caress your children while I am absent from my own, It would indeed be to me a boon of comfort."[47] Within a few days, he left for Preston.[48] His brother-in-law had originally notified him about the inheritance, and Watt felt it necessary to seek his help. His family welcomed him very hesitantly.

He also met with the Saints at the Preston branch, attended by fifteen people and led by Elder John Halsall, a longtime member of the church in the vicinity. Watt praised Halsall for his faithfulness: "It might be well here to say, that I found brother Halsall enjoying good faith in the Gospel. . . . He has been a watchman for the Preston Branch from the beginning, always at his post, and never flinching from the performance of his duties as a minister of the Gospel."[49] Watt was amazed at the small number of members left in Britain. Those who remained were "the poorest of the poor Saints." Several people approached Watt and told him that after they paid their rent, food, poor rates, and tithing and purchased the *Millennial Star,* they "have not one half-penny left."[50] The *New York Times*, which subscribed to the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* published part of this article. The newspaper quoted Watt as saying, "In 1851 I attended a meeting of the Saints in Liverpool, which was held in one of the finest halls in the city and addressed a congregation of nearly one thousand people. . . . In the month of March, 1867, I again attended a meeting of the Saints in Liverpool, and spoke to a congregation of not more than twenty persons, in a room or garret situated in the back streets of the city, measuring about ten feet wide and twenty-five feet long, being lighted by skylights from the roof.[51]

Because of his sister's hesitancy to accept him when he had written her several years before, Watt told the Brandreth family very little about the restored church: "I cannot, however, say that I have felt prompted by the Spirit of the Lord to say anything to the people of Preston on the subject of the restoration. . . . I have rather felt a strong disposition to close my mouth, in silence." He did discuss gospel principles with some of his sister's friends and others he met. As he considered those conversations, he observed, "I have found a want of honesty and force of character. . . . In fact, they do not seem to know that they should read and understand for themselves; they pay ministers to do this for them."[52]

47. George D. Watt to Margaret Brandreth n.d., shorthand holograph, Watt Papers.
48. British Mission Office, Journal, March 20–23, 1867, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
49. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 29 (May 4, 1867): 285.
50. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* July 15, 1867, 1.
51. "The Mormons in England," *New York Times,* August 1, 1867, 1.
52. George D. Watt to Franklin D. Richards, April 26, 1867, *Millennial Star* 29 (May 11, 1867): 297–302.

He also talked to those who were interested in the journey of the Mormons to Great Salt Lake Valley and wanted to know if they had prospered. When questioned about the weather, Watt agreed that the climate was dry, "consequently a healthy climate. Diseases of the lungs are unknown among the natives of those far-off regions." Even in the southern part of the territory, though, the Mormons had made settlements, and, paraphrasing Isaiah, Watt said the desert had blossomed like a rose. The settlers were able to grow all types of fruits and vegetables there. "It is situated in the very bosom of the 'rocky Mountains,' far away from the wicked and corrupting influences of the thickly populated portions of the world," Watt observed. To make a stronger case, he repeated an often-stated observation, "The climate has visibly changed, rain is becoming more and more abundant, and heavy frost less severe."[53]

Even though he talked about religion to his sister's friends, Margaret reported to James Fielding, Watt's old minister, that he preferred vain amusements to anything of a serious nature. Fielding, who also met him on this trip, said that Watt seemed void of spiritual feeling.[54] Watt probably talked more to them about his agricultural achievements, and because of that, they thought he lacked spirituality. The Watt they remembered was an ardent believer and devoted himself to religious pursuits.

His sister told him about the death of his Aunt Jannet in Gatehouse of Fleet less than a month before. She may have also told him about her intention of having a marker placed on their grandfather's gravesite at the old Anworth Kirk cemetery, about two miles from Gatehouse. She did not tell him about where and when their father had died, however.

Presumably during his first month in Britain, Watt investigated his claim to the land in Ireland. He and his brother-in-law traveled to London and perhaps Dublin. Although he tried to obtain the inheritance, he failed. It is not known exactly why, but when he was writing on the transatlantic ship *Minnesota,* he provided a clue. He probably went to the land office in London and was told he needed to live in the British Isles. He must have been stunned and dismayed, for he could not return to Britain. His wives and families lived in Utah; he could not separate himself from them and his friends. In his letter in the *Millennial Star,* he wrote, "If you believe that I have the faintest shadow of wish to leave my people with whom I have been connected for thirty years then you are deceived, . . . for were you to make me England's King and lay at my feet England's wealth without her debts, to forsake my religion and my people, to dwell with you, by the grace of God

53. Ibid. From all appearances, Utah at this time was going through a wet cycle where there was more rain.

54. See the following articles in vol. 29 of the *Millennial Star:* "Correspondence, Preston, April 23, 1867," May 4, 1867, 284–85; "Preston, April 12, 1867," May 11, 1867, 297–302; and "Correspondence," May 18, 1867, 332–35; also see James Fielding to Mercy Fielding Thompson, October 11, 1867, holograph, photocopy in author's possession.

it would not amount to even a temptation. The wealth of the world cannot purchase the promise of eternal life which I possess through the Gospel." As he explained further, "By the grace of God I could not step down to accept of thrones and kingdoms of this in exchange for the exalted positions and associations which I now hold with the people of God in Zion."[55] He also was unable to find the fonts for the Deseret Alphabet. He did buy his wives some beautiful black cloth as a token of his love.

On April 21, Watt attended a conference in the Temperance Hall in Manchester and sat on the stand with Orson Pratt and Franklin D. Richards. During the second session, he was the sole speaker and talked about Utah: the climate, the productiveness of the crops, and the kind of life enjoyed by the people. He contrasted Utah's good conditions with the poverty and misery that prevailed in Britain. He also bore his testimony to the truthfulness of Mormonism.[56] Richards wrote that "G. D. Watt preached with much interest and life to the Saints."[57]

The *Millennial Star* reported that Watt left Liverpool on May 23, a little more than two months after arriving, on the *Minnesota*, bound for New York City. The *Star* commented that he had been on private business but had employed his "spare time in proclaiming the truth in public and private, both by word of mouth and through the medium of the *Star*."[58] On board the *Minnesota,* Watt, who had been writing to the *Millennial Star* for about a month, wrote his last letter. He proclaimed a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. He told the *Star*'s readers that more than thirty years earlier, when the Mormon missionaries had come to Preston, he had been at that "first meeting that those American Elders attended, which was a Sunday morning prayer meeting. I then knew that they were the true servants of the Most High before they had opened their lips to say a single word in my hearing." He declared that he knew that the Mormon Church was true, "and the angels around the throne of God do not know it to be true any better than I know it to be true."[59]

He arrived in New York and devoted a little time to fulfilling President Young's request to bring back printing fonts of Pitman phonotype with him since he had found nothing in Britain. Watt, who was a little homesick, sent a letter to Young about new developments in the Pitman system. He must have visited a phonographic outlet in New York because he advised Young to write to Ben Pitman in Cincinnati. He ended his letter with the words, "I

55. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 29 (June 1, 1867): 427–30.
56. "Journal History," April 21, 1867.
57. Richards, Journal, April 21, 1867.
58. "Departures," *Millennial Star* 29 (June 1, 1867): 346.
59. "'Correspondence' George D. Watt to F. D. Richards, May 29, 1867," *Millennial Star* 29 (July 6, 1867): 427–430. See also "Journal History," May 29, 1867.

long to be by your side, and pray, if it can be so ordered in the Providence of God, that I may never again leave it in time nor eternity."[60] He preached in Williamsburg, which was near New York, on June 15. These members lived close to poverty. As Watt said, "They are a very poor people, but faithful and true Latter day Saints striving with their might to save sufficient money to pay their way up to the headquarters of the Church in the mountains." He ended his article to the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* with the comment, "I am really wearied with the rattle and noise and bustle of this great city and shall doubly prize the quiet, peace and safety of my Mountain Home."[61]

Watt was still in New York on July 4, when he saw a magnificent fireworks display. He left sometime after that day and traveled by train to the railhead in Nebraska, where he met about four hundred new immigrants coming to Utah.[62] On July 24, anxious to be home, he wrote a letter from Julesburg, Colorado, which he sent off to the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* reviewing the history of the church. He closed with "such are my reflections, while you are doubtless engaged in festivities in honor of this day."[63] He traveled with Orson Pratt, who had left England a few days after him, and William Godbe by stage to Salt Lake City, where they arrived on August 4, 1867. The *Deseret News* commented that they had had a safe journey, seen no Indians on the trip, and were glad to be home again.[64]

Shortly after Watt returned, he visited Thomas Stenhouse, the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph.* Stenhouse commented that Watt had been on a visit to England and "returns to his 'Mountain Home' with the warm enthusiasm that glows in the bosom of every true man who loves Zion and her interests." He added that Watt's letters from Britain had been read with great interest, "for George is blessed with the gift of plainness."[65]

The past few years had been busy, productive ones for Watt. He had gained prestige throughout the territory because of his travels with President Young. He not only recorded the speeches of the church authorities but also had the opportunity to preach himself. He had traveled to Britain to alleviate his economic problems. After this trip to England, Watt's life began to take a different course. Over the next few years, he faced several disappointments that drove him away from the course that he had set for himself thirty years earlier. He preached faithfulness to the leaders of the church, but when the final analysis came, he did not always follow his own advice.

60. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, June 25, 1867, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
61. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* July 15, 1867, 1.
62. "Journal History," July 25, 1867.
63. George D. Watt, "Correspondence, Julesburg, July 24th, 1867," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* August 8, 1867, 2.
64. "Home Items," *Deseret News* (August 7, 1867) 16: 253. See also "Journal History," August 4, 1867.
65. Thomas Stenhouse, "At Our Sanctum," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* August 12, 1867, 2.

11

LIFE-CHANGING EVENTS
LEAVING THE OFFICE, BUSINESSMAN

> I have not troubled you or any other person for counsel or advice touching the road I have chosen to walk since I left your office, but of my own accord and free choice I set my mind upon a purpose, and my stupid head would not suffer me to retrace my steps, but on I went through mire and clay up to my eyes, asking no help from any man, bearing my own burdens, trusting in God alone for deliverance, and confessing all my folly and sins unto Him. It has been a hard road to travel, but I have found Him a sure help in time of need.
>
> George D. Watt to Brigham Young, July 27, 1870

When George D. Watt returned from Britain in August 1867, he resumed his usual duties of clerk and reporter. He traveled with President Brigham Young, took phonographic reports, and even preached. Everything appeared to be the same. Within his heart, though, things were not the same. He had certain financial obligations that could not be met. He determined to talk to Young about his financial expectations. This discussion became a life-changing experience for him. His life thereafter left the safe climes of the president's office. Economically, socially, and religiously, life became different for him and his family.

Within two weeks after returning home from Britain, Watt was again traveling with President Young, this time to Tooele. He wrote, "The grand old mountains on the east and on the west seemed to salute each other with a gay good morning." Traveling west and looking east, he commented, "On

looking in the distance upon our beloved city—the G.S.L. City, the city of orchards—it dazzled like a priceless gem locked up within the fastnesses of the everlasting hills. God is known in her palaces." As they approached Tooele, he described the joy of the local citizens greeting their president. A band met them near the town boundaries and escorted them in. Everyone shouted "hearty hurrahs" and "waved their hats and handkerchief."[1] Watt faithfully reported at all the meetings, and he also addressed the Saints. He was again back in the harness, and it felt good.

Less than a week later, Watt left for Utah Valley with Brigham Young and his party. They stopped first in American Fork at the house of Bishop Leonard E. Harrington. When they arrived in Provo, the bell in the new church summoned everybody to the dedicatory services on Saturday. During that day in Provo, Watt prayed twice and talked once "in his usual vigorous and interesting style"; he even sang in a trio with Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon. He talked about the beauties and advantages of living in Utah.[2] On August 25, 1867, Young told his audience that one of the best discourses of the day had been given by George D. Watt: "The theory of our religion is a practical thing, it is to practice goodness while we live upon the earth." He also told them that "Brother Watt has not got on his home made linen coat, but he has got on pantaloons of the same kind of material that I am certain will ware from five to ten years. He says he can raise and manufacture silk cheaper and easier than he can raise and manufacture flax." He also commended the usefulness of Watt's silkworm production.[3]

As they were leaving Provo, Watt commented on the meetings and the trip to Payson: "The rich counsels given by the President will never be forgotten. After a beautiful drive, we arrived in the city of Payson in time to wash the dust out of our eyes, and get to meeting at half past 7."[4] During their trip home, the party visited Lehi. When they left, thinking about his recent trip to England, Watt wrote, "Truly the Saints dwell in pleasant places, the earth yields to them its increase without stint, and upon them righteousness looks down from heaven."[5] On this trip, Watt took his wife Elizabeth along with him.

On September 2, the group headed north, visiting communities all the way to Bear Lake Valley, and held many meetings in the towns near the lake. Somewhere near Bear Lake they visited a place he called Round Valley, where he saw "scores of bushels of young trout, they appeared to be as thick as they could lay together in the water, and we were told that large trout

1. "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," August 16, 1867, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
2. Ibid., August 25, 1867.
3. Utah Stake, general minutes, August 25, 1867, LDS Church Archives.
4. "Journal History," August 25, 1867.
5. Ibid., August 28, 1867.

come out of the Lake early in the spring, and congregate at the head of this stream in great numbers."[6] They returned via Huntsville and Ogden, arriving back in Salt Lake on September 21. In the *Deseret Evening News,* he wrote, "The president and Twelve were a fountain of light to the people, and the people had eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand the things which the Holy Ghost gave to them through the living oracles."[7] He again took Elizabeth and also their oldest son, Richard, with him.[8]

In 1863 Brigham Young began construction on the new Tabernacle, a large domed building in the west-central part of Temple Square. By the summer of 1867, more than two hundred men were working on the building. Watt noticed the construction and the great effort that these workers were making to have the Tabernacle ready by October General Conference. Three days before the meetings, they removed the scaffolding. In that first session, Watt sat in his desk in that new building and wrote his shorthand reports. He sent one for publication in the *Deseret Evening News.*[9]

His life remained busy. Work demanded his time and his pen in taking correspondence, copying sermons and letters, and doing a multiple of things around the office. He reported on the General Conference with Edward Sloan and David Evans. He spoke again on October 13, when David Evans possibly took the report on his sermon. He told his audience that there were many good Mormons who were still in England but very poor. He thought that those in Utah had wealth enough to help the poor come to Utah. As an example, he even compared their clothing—especially the hats—to what was worn in London: "There is not a congregation in all London that great modern Babylon can show fine hats and bonnets as we can in this congregation." He then went on to describe the food they ate: "We are blessed with plenty of good bread to eat and plenty of good fruit." He thought as Utahns, "we eat too many fat things. . . . Let's eat our food a little more plainly."[10]

He also spoke on October 20 and November 3 at the old Tabernacle. During the second sermon, he talked about silk and the possibility of an impending European war. He advised the Saints to purchase flour and prepare for scarcity. George Q. Cannon, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who followed Watt, remarked that "we all like to hear Bro.

6. Ibid., September 15, 1867.
7. Ibid., September 21, 1867. These articles have been pasted in "Journal History" as they appeared in *Deseret News.*
8. "The President's Trip North," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* September 9, 1867, 2.
9. See Nathan D. Grow, "One Masterpiece, Four Masters: Reconsidering the Authorship of the Salt Lake Tabernacle in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Mormon History* 32 (Fall 2005): 170–97; see also Ronald W. Walker, "The Salt Lake Tabernacle in the Nineteenth Century, A Glimpse of Early Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 32 (Fall 2005), 198–240. For a summary of the meeting, see "Journal History," October 10, 1867.
10. George D. Watt, "Tabernacle Sunday Meeting," Oct 13, 1867, shorthand, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2007).

Watt speak, especially, when he dwells on the mulberry tree." Cannon, in a jovial fashion, thought that Watt's advice "was that every young man previous to marrying, should purchase and plant ten mulberry trees, and when the young ladies saw that they might expect what followed."[11]

In February 1868, Watt left with Young to go to Provo, where he reported on all the meetings. He wrote, "I never felt a better spirit in any meeting than prevailed in the meetings we held there."[12] He also preached at the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City later in the month, where he encouraged the Saints to work righteously and enjoy the blessings that resulted from doing so.[13] On April 6, he was once again at the reporter's table at General Conference along with David W. Evans, T. B. H. Stenhouse, and Edward Sloan, all gentlemen of substantial accomplishments.[14]

In the spring, Martha Watt returned to Manti to help her mother and father. Shortly after, Watt wrote his dear "Mattie" and told her about things at home. He gently chastised her for not sending a letter. He had been in high-council meetings making shorthand reports for six days "until I am pretty tired, or I should have wrote you sooner." He talked about the bad weather they had been having. His mind was on his garden and improving his land. He reported that the sow pig had given birth to five piglets "on a very cold night, we lost two with cold." He closed the letter with the words, "Dear, I am as ever your very affectionate, George D. Watt."[15]

He still had not received any mail by May 5, so he wrote Martha a short note: "Yesterday, Sunday, expected a note from you, none at noon; was not at meeting in the afternoon, went down to the office after supper, nothing still." Monday morning, still no letter: "Now there is a big question in my mind, what is the matter with Mattie." He thought that perhaps the weather had caused a problem with the mail. Still, he sent his love to her and "all your people."[16] To his relief, he received a letter from her the following day.

On May 9, he again wrote her a cheerful letter while he was sitting in the new Tabernacle. He wanted to let Martha know that his health was good: "I have got over my little spring head ache, and I do not know that I ever felt better in my life than I do at this time." He was fighting grasshoppers every chance he could: "I had all the folks out this morning with brooms and brush, driving thousands of them into dry hay, where your humane, kindly feeling, good hearted husband set fire to them, destroying tens of

11. "Journal History," October 20, November 3, 1867.
12. Ibid., February 11, 1868.
13. Ibid., February 16, 1868.
14. Ibid., April 6, 1868.
15. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, April 18, 1868, holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).
16. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, May 5, 1868, holograph, Perry Special Collections. Underlining in original.

thousands." He was sure that "they are the Lords army but they have no business eating my stuff. They have no business in my garden destroying that [which] my wives and children should have." He closed with the words, "God bless you and all the family."[17] In a later letter, he wrote that Alice, Lizzy, and children had visited Kays Ward. They found the pregnant "Sarah still upon her feet and well."[18]

Brigham Young was not the easiest employer. He was accustomed to presiding and exercising authority, and he could be very domineering. No one ventured any opposition to his decisions. Watt also had his idiosyncrasies. He was impulsive, impatient, and could be stubborn. In mid-May, Watt, worried about all his burdens and responsibilities, approached Young about a raise. He was making $3.50 a day. He needed more money to take care of his growing family. The bookkeeper and clerk of the Brigham City Cooperative was making $4.00 a day, although it is possible that Watt did not know this.[19] He certainly knew what other clerks in the office were making, and he felt that he was worth more than that. Watt had become a very essential clerk around the office. He created stenographic reports and minutes, wrote letters, and even clerked at high-council meetings late at night. He thought that he should be paid commensurate to what he was doing.

Instead of writing Young a letter—his usual modus operandi—he took a more direct approach and asked him for a raise in person. Watt carefully made a convincing argument, and then he asked for $5.00 a day, but Brigham Young refused. The two men exchanged some fiery words. Young accused Watt of not being in the office very much; at least he was not there when Young was. He came in early and left within a few hours to tend his garden. Watt's impulsive nature took over. He went up and laid down his notes before Young and said, "Brother Young, if George D. Watt does not earn every cent he gets, you had better get someone who can."[20]

He probably fumed over the argument while walking up the hill to his home. After considering his options, he decided to be at his usual reporter's table at the School of the Prophets meeting that evening. Brigham Young undoubtedly stunned him when he told the priesthood, "I don't want George D. Watt around me. I can't get rid of him. He comes into the office when he darn pleases. [Then] he goes off and tends his cherry trees." Young continued to tell the men that Watt did this week after week and did not ask his permission. "I don't want you George, why, because you won't do as I want," he concluded. [21]

17. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, May 9, 1868, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
18. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, May 17, 1868, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
19. Brigham City Cooperative, ledgers, 1865–67, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
20. Claude Richards, "History of Willard Brigham Richards, 1847–1942," 1981, LDS Church History Library, p. 15.
21. George D. Watt, School of the Prophets reports, May 15, 1868, shorthand, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by Lajean Carruth, 2008). The

When writing to Martha a few days later, Watt said, "I am now no man's servant. You are anxious to know why? I cannot tell you fully until I see you; I will say this much; the president had said he could not get rid of me, and I was determined to stay there whether or not and make him pay me $5.00 a day; I immediately put on my hat and coat and left, and I am now free from the toil and labor of pen work."[22]

Officially there was no mention of his departure, except a penciled notation in the trustee-in-trust ledger, stating, "On May 15, 1868 Geo. D. Watt left the office."[23] Even though Young was harsh in his remarks, he probably did not expect Watt to leave. However, he used bluntness instead of diplomacy with his longtime employee.

Probably there was another reason for Watt requesting a raise. For some reason, he had accumulated a considerable debt on the tithing-office account books. Many of the other clerks also had a debit in their accounts in the ledger. It is possible that the financial clerk did not record their credits and debits as well as he should have, especially their credits. Watt's account was fairly even in the tithing office until 1857, but after that year, he drew more than his recorded salary. By 1865 he was in the red for sixteen thousand dollars. Most likely his trip to England to claim his uncle's estate was an attempt to reduce this sum. When that failed, he was unable to clear his debt. He continued to draw from the tithing store until his deficit totaled twenty thousand dollars.[24] Even with an increase in his salary, there was no way to pay what he owed.

Watt left Young's employ so suddenly that he did not have any alternative work.[25] He worked on his own land. He told Martha, "My Darling do not sorrow over these things. I have been grieved at the unqualified saying of the president, I have served him faithfully 16 years and had become attached to him, but the change will be for my good in health and circumstances."[26] About three weeks later, he told her he had been busy on his property building a hothouse for his grapes. "The grasshoppers have been very destructive; I have not a green thing to eat, and my trees look poisoned with them; they are not so bad as they have been, and I am in hopes that I may be able to raise something yet." His silkworm eggs were beginning to hatch, and he would have about twenty thousand of them, "but in consequence of the hail storm and grasshoppers my feed for them will be scanty enough; I shall have to beg of my neighbors." He told her not to get discouraged, or, as he put it, "Now dear, don't get cast

original is in the Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

22. Watt to Martha Watt, May 17, 1868.
23. George D. Watt account, Trustee-in-Trust, ledgers, vol. 9, 1866–69, LDS Church Archives.
24. Ibid., vol. 8, 1862–65.
25. He left all of his shorthand notes in Brigham Young's office. He never went back for them.
26. Watt to Martha Watt, May 17, 1868. He felt that office work was detrimental to his health.

down with this dark picture, for I do not murmur against the providence of the Almighty, but I try to acknowledge His hand in all things and to love and serve him."[27]

Then he tried to tell her more cheerful news. Sarah had given birth to a six-pound baby girl at the end of the previous month. She was doing fine, and the baby "from all appearance will be a good child, it is very good looking, and plump, and I do assure you that Sarah is very proud of it. So you see amid all the bad luck, as some people call it, we have some very choice blessings." He concluded by conveying his love to her.[28]

At the same time Watt left the office, Brigham Young was planning an initiative against the non-Mormon merchants in Salt Lake City. Non-Mormons, or gentiles as Mormons called them, came to Utah in significant numbers first with the soldiers of the Utah War. When they left, the California Volunteers under Patrick Edward Connor established Fort Douglas a few miles from Salt Lake City. Non-Mormons had been selling to the Mormons since the 1850s. These merchants were taking the Latter-day Saints' hard-earned cash and produce out of the territory, causing an unfavorable balance of trade. In the late 1860s with the coming of the railroad imminent, the threat of a great gentile invasion became very real.[29]

Brigham Young moved actively to thwart this perceived threat. In the late 1860s, the wards began to provide Sunday school classes for youth. The church revived the Relief Society, a woman's organization. For the men, Brigham Young established the School of the Prophets, an organization modeled loosely on the School of the Prophets in Kirtland. The School of the Prophets required men to live their religion as well as be good neighbors and not trade with non-Mormon merchants.[30] It was meant to educate the members of the church in their behavior. Watt talked to the school twice in March, once on the sericulture—he was one of the main advocates in the territory—and the other time on the Deseret Alphabet.[31]

In the business world, Young at first had a hands-off policy toward the gentile merchants. In 1865 he proclaimed a boycott. He encouraged the Mormons to pool their money and purchase goods in the eastern markets as a unit, thus obtaining better prices. In October 1868, he told the School of the Prophets that he would excommunicate those Mormons who purchased goods in non-Mormon stores. By October Young had set up a plan for the Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institute (ZCMI). The Mormon merchants joined their inventories and capital assets into one company.

27. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, June 11, 1868, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
28. Ibid.
29. Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), chaps. 8 and 9.
30. Ibid., 96.
31. School of the Prophets, minutes, March 2, 16, 1868, holograph, LDS Church Archives; see also "Journal History," March 2, 16, 1868.

Each businessman who accepted this concept put an image of the "all-seeing eye" on his building.[32]

In 1869 the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads joined their rails at Promontory Summit in northern Utah, completing the transcontinental railroad. The line missed Salt Lake City by some thirty-five miles, so Young involved the Mormons in constructing the Utah Central Railroad from Ogden to Salt Lake City. The trains brought goods into Utah quicker and more cheaply than before. Not desiring the Mormons' hard-earned cash to leave the territory, Young asked his people to make their own clothes, something he had requested them to do for years. The "homespun" business would keep eastern merchants from taking advantage of the Mormon populace. Thus, with cooperation and self-sufficiency, all of Zion would be united into one large economic unit.[33]

President Young was interested in promoting new farm products that would benefit farmers who lived near-subsistence lives. Perhaps silk was the needed product that could help them. There were only a few people who could convince others to produce silk. The best possibility was George D. Watt, who was an outspoken advocate of sericulture. So even though the two men had their differences, Young finally became convinced that Watt was the only man who could sell the program of silk production. At the end of October, Watt announced in the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* that a general assembly of the authorities of the people of the Saints in the old Tabernacle had appointed him to visit the wards and settlements of Utah and tell the people about "the culture of the Mulberry tree, and the production of Silk . . . and also to organize cooperative bodies in every Ward for the effectual introduction and permanent establishment of this remunerative industry."[34]

He started his efforts at the Fourteenth Ward in Salt Lake City. At each lecture, he exhibited cocoons, explained the operation of silk reeling, and showed the audience some silk he had produced. He called upon the women of the wards to influence their husbands to become part of the sericulture. At the end of the meeting, the bishop organized a ward silk-producing cooperative. Watt also had the opportunity to sell his starts for mulberry trees, which consisted of cut branches.[35] By the middle of December, he had lectured throughout the Salt Lake Valley and moved first south to the Sanpete area and then north to Bountiful and Kaysville.

During the silk campaign, Young sent letters to Albert Carrington, the president of the European Mission, informing him that Watt was traveling

32. Walker, *Wayward Saints,* 97–100, 139–43.
33. Ibid., 80–88.
34. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* November 5, 1868, 1.
35. See the following letters to the editor in the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph:* November 9, 1868, 1; November 12, 1868, 2; November 16, 1868, 1; November 19, 1868, 1; November 23, 1868, 2; November 26, 1868, 2; and December 7, 1868, 2; see also "Home Manufacturers," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* December 3, 1868, 2.

throughout Utah "laboring with much zeal" and instructing the people about the advantages of planting mulberry trees and feeding silk worms. Watt's lectures helped to organize cooperative societies in many of the wards.[36]

Watt's critics had told him that there was no hope in producing silk and it would simply devour people's time, labor, and money. In November Watt, replying to them through the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* disagreed: "On the contrary it can enrich our community, and become the foundation and keystone of our independence." Watt thought that the present money supply was meager, and "to base our hopes on them is like trusting to a rope of sand." The coming of the railroad would not make a difference in freighting costs. "Not so with silk and silk worm eggs, their lightness and value make them essentially articles of export for Utah. One ton of silk, say at five dollars per pound (though if well reeled will fetch double that), is worth ten thousand dollars in gold," he asserted. He also denied that the price of labor would be too great.[37] According to L. Provost, a silk enthusiast from California, there was a great demand for good eggs that would sell for four dollars in gold per ounce.[38]

In the middle of December, Watt again wrote to the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* about silk. He was concerned about cash flow or, as he termed it, a "constant and sure supply of money." Utahns would not be able to pay for manufactured goods brought by the railroad. "Prejudice, persecution, an Indian war, a deep snow, great floods, national troubles, and other unforeseen circumstances may occur to cut off our supplies." To solve this problem, Watt felt that the people of Utah needed to "grow millions of mulberry trees for the production of silk."[39]

On December 27, 1868, he talked about the silk culture to his own Twentieth Ward. He said that this ward was excellent because of its mountainous location. He thought the residents should not send their grain and money away to support "our enemies." He exhibited some cocoons and a reel of silk, which he had raised on his own property in the Twentieth Ward. He then demonstrated the advantage of silk as a cloth and explained a little about planting mulberry trees and raising worms.[40] At the end of December, Watt also spoke at the School of the Prophets about raising silk, probably using the same lecture.[41]

36. "Brigham Young to Albert Carrington, November 18, 1868," *Millennial Star* 30 (December 19, 1868): 810–12; Young to Albert Carrington, November 18, 1868; January 5, 1869, holographs, Letterpress Copybooks, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.
37. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* November 19, 1868, 1.
38. "L. Provost to George D. Watt, George D. Watt to L. Provost," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* November 30, 1868, 2–3.
39. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* December 14, 1868, 2.
40. Twentieth Ward, general minutes, December 27, 1868, LDS Church Archives.
41. Historian's Office, Journal, December 26, 1868, holograph, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives.

Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

George D. Watt, ca. 1867

While Watt was preaching silk production, sometime in either October or early November, Robert G. Sleater discussed with him the possibility of establishing a general store. Sleater told Watt that he had contacts with merchants in Chicago who would be glad to finance them. He believed that they could dominate a goodly percentage of the market. Sleater had been born in 1840 in Bath, England, and had immigrated to Illinois in 1852. After the Civil War, in which he fought, Sleater had come to Peoa, Utah, as a non-Mormon to visit his Uncle Abraham Marchant and was baptized in 1866. He tried to farm and teach school unsuccessfully. Later, he moved to Salt Lake City. Watt met him at meetings of the Deseret Typographical Association.

The plan, according to Sleater, was that Watt would handle the store and be the financier and adviser, and Sleater would do the buying and promoting. Sleater was sure that he would be able to arrange goods from Chicago

on credit. Watt was not sure he could handle the selling part, so they discussed with William Ajax the possibility of him running the store as their clerk. Ajax had converted to the Mormon Church in 1853 and immigrated to Utah in 1862 from Great Britain. Watt and Sleater then approached T. B. H. Stenhouse, the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph,* about becoming a partner or at least financing some of the business. Stenhouse reluctantly agreed to give Sleater money to go to Chicago.[42]

Late in November 1868, Sleater left by stage for Chicago. He already had orders for two wagons when he left Salt Lake City. He quickly contacted his friends at Hall, Kendall and Company, a wagon manufacturer. After some negotiations, the company agreed to give Watt and Sleater exclusive rights to sell their wagons in Utah. The always-enthusiastic Sleater assured Watt that he was busy contacting other friends: "I have not allowed the grass to grow under my feet." He then began to send bills and price lists to Watt in Salt Lake City. He wished he had some cash because he would be able to purchase the smaller goods and even obtain better prices on wagons. He needed to establish a small bank account to obtain better credit.[43]

Watt received Sleater's letters in the midst of his silk lectures. He liked Sleater's positive attitude, but he feared that he was overreaching himself. Sleater assured Watt that he would proceed gradually and cautiously. He also needed to look at items that would sell in Utah. By this time, Watt had also brought Ajax into the firm as a third partner. Sleater liked Ajax and was sure that he would be an asset. Ajax sent him $175 to cover the cost for some stoves. Watt also wrote asking Sleater to purchase a nice suit for him, which Sleater did. He at one point told Watt that many merchants in Chicago were coming to Salt Lake City, and he was giving them letters of introduction to Watt. On January 4, he wrote that five merchants were coming to Salt Lake and were funding his way home.[44]

Since Watt was now going to be a merchant, he thought he should also join the Mormon cooperative, and he verbally committed to it. As he preached to the farmers throughout the territory, however, he became convinced that his store could make a profit without joining. He did not feel like placing his assets into the hands of the Mormon merchants in Salt Lake City. For some unknown reason, he thought that he could still make a profit even though the ZCMI stores had a greater inventory and

42. J. Kenneth Davies, *Deseret's Sons of Toil, A History of the Worker Movements of Territorial Utah, 1852–1896* (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing Co., 1976), 144–47.

43. Robert Sleater to George D. Watt, December 4, 12, 15, 18, 1868, *John Cunnington vs. George D. Watt Jun. and Alice Whittaker,* March 24, 1870, case files 1851–96, ser. 9802 (3rd Dis.), box 4, folder 44, microfilm of holograph, reel no. 13, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.

44. Robert Sleater to George D. Watt, December 28, 31, 1868, January 4, 1869, *Cunnington vs. George D. Watt Jun. and Alice Whittaker,* March 24, 1870.

could buy in bulk. He discounted the possibility of them undermining his business. He did not consider that Young might declare a boycott against the Mormon merchants who had not joined ZCMI. He understood the church's argument, but it seemed almost like a paradox to him. It seemed logical that cooperation was the way the church should proceed. If the church wanted to pursue that, though, the merchants and clerks at ZCMI should work without pay. If the United Order ruled the land, the people should be willing to consecrate all they had.[45]

At first he could keep these feelings about the cooperative out of the lectures that he delivered. He concentrated on silk production. Soon his lectures began to reflect his lack of faith in Brigham Young's system, however. After lecturing in Salt Lake Valley, he traveled through Utah and Sanpete Counties. We cannot be sure when he started to include remarks against the system in his lectures, but Orson Hyde noticed them in Sanpete County early in 1869.[46]

It is also unclear exactly when the store was ready for business. Sleater did not return to Salt Lake City until the middle of January 1869, and the wagons, stoves, and other goods probably arrived either in late February or early March. The three men found a building in a good location on First South Street near the meat market between Main and State Streets and set up the firm of Watt, Sleater and Ajax, general purchasing agents in general merchandise. They expected to sell their stock easily. They carried kitchen goods such as bowls; garden tools such as rakes, hoes, and shovels; and some other items such as glass, water pails, grease, castor oil, stove polish, hairnets, necklaces, ink, syrup, brushes, and a large line of wagons. With their Midwest connection, they expected to be competitive with every other merchant in town. Their specialties became coal oil and a wood-burning stove, sometimes described as a charter-oak or a monitor stove. Watt had been lecturing on cash flow to the silk producers and realized that he needed cash for his own business. He finally obtained a $10,000 mortgage on his house in the Avenues.[47] When the store opened in March, he convinced Alice that he needed additional cash and borrowed $7,000 from her. George D. Watt Jr. wanted to be part of the firm, too, and added $560.[48]

While Watt spent his time preaching, his partners oversaw the operation of the store. He continued to think about the Mormon merchant association when he was preaching about the sericulture. He did not think

45. This paragraph is a summary of several of Watt's writings and reports about him; see J. A. Leishman to Brigham Young, April 1, 1869, holograph; Bishop John King, "Statement Regarding G. D. Watt," March 25, 1869, holograph; George D. Watt to Brigham Young, July 27, 1870, holograph, all in incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
46. Orson Hyde to Brigham Young, April 2, 1869, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
47. *Cunnington vs. George D. Watt Jun. and Alice Whittaker,* March 24, 1870.
48. Ibid. Watt paid 2 percent per month on the loan.


GEO. D. WATT. ROB'T G. SLEATER. WM. AJAX.

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THEO. F. TRACY, Ag't.

Advertisement of Watt, Sleater & Ajax store in Salt Lake City Directory, 1869

these merchants had the right reasons for joining the system. They were in it for their own pocketbooks. He personally thought that supply and demand should be the principle behind business. His business began in March, and he began to see money coming in. By the end of March, Watt was in opposition to the parent ZCMI store.[49] He had already sold stoves cheaper than the cooperative and still made his 10 percent profit. He intended to bring in sugar and sell it for freight and cost.[50]

In March and April, Watt was in Cache Valley, preaching on mulberry trees and silkworms. Throughout his travels, he kept thinking about his antipathy for the cooperative. On March 25, 1869, in Millville, he could not control himself any longer. He spoke against cooperation "as taught by Prest. Young." He told his listeners about extravagant parties held by William

49. Samuel W. Richards, Diary, March 20, 1869, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
50. Leishman to Brigham Young, April 1, 1869.

Jennings, one of the directors of the Salt Lake ZCMI store, and that ZCMI was attempting to sell the old clothes—he called them "old rags"—that the other stores had brought into the cooperative. Bishop John King of Millville said that Watt claimed that the cooperative was "now going to coerce they [the] people to b[u]y there rags at an extravigant price." He thought that the other merchants believed that socializing helped their business, including giving parties for the influential. Watt could not understand how lavish parties helped business. In a private conversation with Bishop King later, he said that "no man had any right to dictate how or where this People should lay out there means." King thought Watt's remarks "were calculated in my oppion [opinion] to lead they [the] People away from the truth, and they [the] wise teaching of the authoritys of this Church."[51].

At Wellsville he delivered his most vitriolic lecture against the cooperative. He told his audience that the ZCMI merchants had taken their money and left the people beggars and in poverty: "The merchants . . . had laid us upon our backs and suffered them to pick our pockets, that we had made beggars into Princes, had built them fine mansions, had clothed them in Scarlet and fine linen, and made our leaders rich, and still was poor and in poverty, from the fact, that we were necessitated to sell our grain butter and eggs, to the merchants." He also pointed out that when special visitors, or as he called them "great men," visited, "of course the Pres. would fit up some place for their reception, in a grand style, and that our fat chickens would have to be forthcoming to feed them." Whatever money these important people brought to Utah, regular residents would not benefit from it.[52]

Watt finally began to talk about the silk industry. He felt that the most important principle of all was to raise silk. President Young had only given a token effort to silk; most of his efforts had gone into wool: "For six years he had kept poking silk at the Pres., but he could not see anything but wool." Finally, Young had sent for mulberry seed from France, but "still he did not seem to have much faith in it." Watt thought it would not be too long until Young turned his woolen factories into silk ones. If people raised silkworms, they would benefit financially. Silk was a panacea for all ills. People could export silk and clothe themselves in it. Then they would have wheat in their bins; fat horses, cows and sheep; and plenty of butter and eggs. Watt advised the people to buy his mulberry starts. When they did raise "silk in abundance, Zion would arise and shine and put on her beautiful garment."[53] The Mormon people, he said, had made the merchants and their own leaders rich, but he did not think that the ZCMI merchants were selling at a fair price.[54]

51. King, "Statement regarding G. D. Watt," March 25, 1869.
52. Leishman to Brigham Young, April 1, 1869.
53. Ibid.
54. Young to Albert Carrington, November 18, 1868; January 5, 1869; King, "Statement

In Mendon he discussed the sericulture in an "edifying manner" and then began boasting that he could buy products for his store at a better rate than ZCMI in Salt Lake City. He could succeed because he had "no clerks, gave no credit, and freighted in bulk." He thought that the "people could trade where they liked."[55]

When Young learned about Watt's remarks, he ordered him to return to Salt Lake City to explain himself. He told Bishop Peter Maughan of the Cache Stake that he was sorry to hear of Watt's ravings and that he would injure himself more than others. "I trust for his own sake that this fit of craziness will prove temporary," Young commented.[56]

Young released Watt from his mission of preaching the silk culture. Without its greatest advocate, the movement died. Only Watt promoted the sericulture in such a passionate manner. Perhaps the silk industry would never have worked in Utah anyway. It needed a milder climate than the harsh Utah winters and summers. Also raising silk was labor intensive. Most people did not have the time, patience, and perseverance of Watt and his family to be successful at it. Watt sold some silk cloth to western and eastern merchants, but perhaps it was too coarse. Some individuals who had bought his mulberry starts complained that they failed to grow, and they thought that Watt had sold them an inferior product.[57]

On April 3, 1869, Watt gave a two-hour report at the School of the Prophets about his southern and northern tours of preaching the sericulture. He also replied to the charges against him by admitting his injudicious use of words. Wilford Woodruff said that Watt made his confession in his way, not the way Woodruff wanted it. President Young was extremely mild and forgiving in his remarks. He thought as long as a man's intentions were good, they could overlook his indiscretions.[58] Young vocally forgave him, but Watt did not preach about silk again.[59]

Watt returned to his acreage in Salt Lake City and concentrated on running his business. His small farm in Salt Lake City proved successful that summer. At the territorial fair, he received a gold medal for the best fifteen pounds of silk cocoons. He also earned a silver medal for the best pound of reeled silk.[60]

Regarding G. D. Watt," March 25, 1869.

55. J. G. Willie to Bishop Peter Maughan, March 28, 1869, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
56. Brigham Young to Bishop Peter Maughan, March 31, 1869, holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.
57. "Journal History," February 14, 1869, p. 4.
58. Historian's Office, Journal, April 3, 1869; Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898,* typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–85), 6:460. The date is April 3, 1869.
59. Historian's Office, Journal, April 17, 1869.
60. "Journal History," October 6, 1869, p. 3.

Some Mormon merchants were reluctant to join ZCMI, but Brigham Young finally convinced many of them. By May 1869, Young told the bishops that even though there were some "really good men" among the Mormon merchants who had not joined, they were acting in opposition and the bishops needed "to clear the streets of all such."[61] Watt's store had not joined ZCMI, and the general management noticed his opposition. He also continued to sell at cheaper rates than the cooperative. He was challenging it to match his prices, but the ZCMI directors were too wise for that. In June the directors sent David Van Wagoner and S. H. Epperson to Watt, Sleater, and Ajax to make a last effort to convince them to support the cooperative. Watt defiantly told them that he had some stoves in stock, could get many more, and sell them cheaper than any place in town. He could also sell glass, nails, and other goods more cheaply.[62] His business philosophy and spirit of obstinacy combined to get him into trouble.

Young was now ready to take action against the Mormon merchants who had not joined ZCMI. The church began encouraging its members not to buy from them. Family tradition states that when the partners went to work one morning, they found a notice on their door telling Mormons not to patronize their store because they were supplied by a gentile company in Chicago and had not joined the other stores. By the middle of July 1869, the business was in arrears on freight and mortgage bills. On that day, Watt talked to the court of bankruptcy clerk, William Appleby. He also consulted a lawyer, George R. Marshall, and told him that the partners were financially embarrassed and could not pay unless they had more time. Marshall advised him to infuse the company with more cash. He sold his last two lots in the Avenues on August 10 for five hundred dollars, but it was not enough.[63] The partners paid off Alice and George D. Jr. with goods from the store. By the middle of August, the creditors had started court proceedings against the firm.[64]

On August 20, Watt wrote to Martha, "Since your departure so varied has been the change of circumstances and feeling that my mind has been upon a constant streatch." He had agonized over the situation and decided that he would lose all of his property in Salt Lake City. To Martha he said, "Nearly all of our creditors have entered a suite against us, we are summoned to appear before the court in ten days to make our defense. Of course we have no defense to make and judgement will go against us. This

61. Presiding Bishop's Minutes, May 1859, Typescripts, Box 81, fd. 6, LDS Church Archives.
62. David Van Wagoner and S. H. Epperson, "Statement, June 3, 1869," holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers; Richards, Diary, June 5, 1869.
63. Salt Lake County Recorder, Deeds, August 10, 1869, microfilm of holograph, reel 13, book D, p. 63, LDS Church Archives.
64. *Creditors vs. Watt, Sleater & Ajax,* September 6, 1869, case files 1851–96, ser. 9802 (3rd Dis.), box 4, folder 7, microfilm of holograph, reel no. 11, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.

as you know is what we have looked for for sometime, but in the kind providence of God I shall be able to save myself to the uttmost of my wishes." He wanted to be as honorable as possible and repay his creditors. "I shall do this without taking a single dollar of any man's means, but I shall in reality lose, many thousands of dollars. However let your mind be perfectly easy on that score. All of this, as you must know, has given me some anxiety of mind."[65] In a letter a month later, he said he had employed "able counsel to save the creditors from fraud, and myself from financial ruin." He did not know how the matter would come out, but "my trust is in God and He has never forsaken those who trust in Him."[66]

On August 30, 1869, five creditor companies brought suit against Watt in Judge C. C. Wilson's chambers. As he had indicated to Martha, he made no defense, and the combined amount that he lost (with court costs) totaled $4,203.13. The marshal seized all of the store's goods for the creditors.[67] In October a notice appeared in the *Deseret Evening News* that the firm of Watt, Sleater, and Ajax was bankrupt and "that the payment of any debts and the delivery of any property belonging to said Bankrupts, to them, or for their use, and the transfer of any property by them, are forbidden by law."[68]

Watt thought that this case finished the matter, but in February 1870, after he and his family had moved to Kaysville, another creditor represented by R. H. Robertson, attorney, began legal proceedings against George D. Watt Jr. and Alice Whittaker Watt. Its representatives had investigated the seized books and discovered that George D. Jr. and Alice had loaned the company a total of $7,560, which the defunct firm had paid back just before bankruptcy proceedings. Judge Wilson of the Third District Court summoned the defendants, as well as Robert Sleater, George D. Watt Sr., William Ajax, two former clerks, William Appleby, the register in bankruptcy; T. B. H. Stenhouse, and others, to testify in court in the case of George D. Watt Jr. and, as the court termed her, Alice Whittaker. The court instructed the jury that if the relationship between Watt and George D. Jr. was father and son and the one between Watt and Alice Whittaker was husband and wife, jury members could take that into consideration in estimating the probability of their knowledge about the financial condition of Watt and the firm. Judge Wilson also instructed the jury that if Alice was Watt's wife, the money she loaned was in actuality his money. On the following day, the jury came back with a settlement for the plaintiff of four thousand dollars.[69] Watt lost everything, except his Kaysville property, in the two court cases, and Alice, his

65. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 20, 1869, photocopy of holograph in author's possession.
66. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, September 21, 1869, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
67. *Creditors vs. Watt, Sleater & Ajax,* September 6, 1869.
68. "Notice," *Deseret Evening News,* October 27, 1869, 11: 450.
69. *Cunnington vs. George D. Watt Jun. and Alice Whittaker,* March 24, 1870.

wife, lost nearly all of her property. George D. Watt Jr. also lost his meager savings, and he and his family were forced to move into the farmhouse in Kaysville with his father's wives and children.

In March, only a couple of days after the judgment, Watt attended the School of the Prophets meeting in Salt Lake City and talked briefly to them. He said that he was still "under the Devil's Harrow." He hoped that he would continue with his brethren and the cause of truth. He stated that he needed to be even more humble, and then perhaps President Young could use him once again. He emphasized that since he was a mixture of Scottish and English, he could never be driven, but he would do anything for kindness and sympathy. Finally, he said that "he hoped to hang on to the Old Ship Zion, and endure to the end."[70]

In July 1870, Watt wrote a letter to Brigham Young. It was introspective, bombastic, and reminiscent of the letters that he had sent to Willard Richards in his younger years. He planned to report what had happened in his life to Young. He had sought no one's advice, only God's, and he alone was responsible for his acts. He gave a short report on his former business: "I will, however, say here, that the creditors of the firm known as Watt Sleater and Ajax have got all they can reach, and the matter which has so troubled me is about concluded." He had not asked Young's advice or troubled him since he had left his office, "but of my own accord and free choice I set my mind upon a purpose, and my stupid head would not suffer me to retrace my steps."[71]

Thinking of his experiences in his business, he continued, "But on I went through mire and clay up to my eyes, asking no help from any man, bearing my own burdens, trusting in God alone for deliverance, and confessing all my folly and sins unto Him. It has been a hard road to travel, but I have found Him a sure help in time of need." He had tried to be a merchant and smash all "our enemies," but "my lesson was to short and light, so by the force of the intended blow I lost my balance and fell into the mud hole."[72] From the time of his bankruptcy, all of his time had been "spent in saving my mortal remains from sinking entirely out of sight, in getting fairly on my feet, and in cleaning off the thick of the mud preparatory to appearing again before the Lord in His sanctuary." He expressed an unwavering faith in the divine mission of Joseph Smith. He also affirmed that Brigham Young had expressed the mind and will of God, and now it was up to the people to live it.[73]

70. Ronald G. Watt, "Sailing the 'Old Ship Zion:' The Life of George D. Watt," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 1 (Fall 1977): 62.
71. Watt to Brigham Young, July 27, 1870.
72. Watt is not completely honest in this letter. Brigham Young's earlier purpose was to take care of the non-Mormon merchants by having Mormon merchants undersell them. Watt seems to be saying that he tried to do that by himself, but in actuality if he had joined the cooperative movement, it would have been more helpful than the stand he took.
73. Watt to Brigham Young, July 27, 1870.

Then the letter became a treatise about cooperation. Watt thought that it was given to the Mormons as a tool of deliverance from dependence on the outside world. It would be better not to threaten disfellowshipment for those who did not buy at the stores. He praised the Salt Lake ZCMI and commented that he bought only there when he was in the city, but the branch businesses were not run by reliable people. He thought the purpose of the cooperative was "very unpopular among the people." He advocated that "the system of buying and selling has ever been left free and untrameled, while competition has always held in check the growth of baneful monopolies—the world has always been united upon one system of trade, to buy where you can get the most and the best for your money."[74]

He advised Young to change the system so that no dividends, rents, and wages would be paid. To improve and allow for growth, there should be "about 7 percent interest or more added on the money used to form a fund for the purchase of machinery, the erection of buildings for manufacturing and to further subserve the great purpose we seek to accomplish. This would indeed be Zions Cooperative institution for all would be interested in it and all would be benefited by it." Then they could sweep the gentile merchants from the community.[75] .

After Watt left the president's office, he was not influenced by Young. Instead, he began listening to other ideas. Shortly after his comments in Cache Valley, Watt began to be interested in the so-called New Movement or Godbeite philosophy. William Godbe and E. L. T. Harrison believed that cooperation was not the right economic path. Previous to 1868, they had also become estranged from Mormonism which they had associated with for more than twenty years. William Godbe had converted to the church in England. Since his arrival in Utah in 1851, he had prospered as a merchant. Brigham Young and Godbe had been close confidantes throughout his early days in the city. Godbe also became a counselor to Bishop E. D. Woolley in the Thirteenth Ward. Elias L. T. Harrison had converted to the Mormon Church in England in 1852 and served admirably in the British Mission until he immigrated to the United States nine years later. Even with this church service, he had come to have some doubts about his beliefs. Godbe and Harrison finally united in opposition to Young and the church.

In 1868 the two men journeyed to New York City for business purposes and met Charles H. Foster, a renowned medium. He introduced them to the mysteries of the séance, where supposedly Heber C. Kimball, who had died a short time before, greeted them and, with other spirits from the dead, taught them for three weeks. Godbe and Harrison carried these "revelations" back to Salt Lake City, but the spirits cautioned them not to reveal everything yet. Their purpose was eventually to undermine Mormonism

74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.

with a new religion. When they returned, Godbe talked to many people about his feelings against cooperation and Brigham Young. He surely talked to Watt and found a very sympathetic ear.[76]

The spirit of the times for the post–Civil War United States was capitalism, a laissez-faire attitude. Watt knew something about capitalism. He had preached and written about it in his articles in the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph.* Cooperatives did not fit within that philosophy. Godbe and Harrison, both leading merchants in town, refused to join ZCMI and depended on gentile and dissident Mormon support. Watt, seeing their success, migrated to their circle.

It appears Watt became attracted to Godbe mostly for economic reasons. Both Godbe and Harrison had another religious path they were following—Spiritualism—which was foreign to Mormonism, but it is not likely that Watt was influenced by their spiritualist beliefs.[77] Watt had cut the tether between himself and President Young. Now the disastrous end of his business was too much. He found more in common with Harrison, Godbe, and an old friend and the editor of the *Telegraph,* T. B. H. Stenhouse.

He also failed to attend the School of the Prophets. Because of this, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, and George Q. Cannon visited Stenhouse, Harrison, Godbe, and Watt on October 17. The following day the committee members reported that they had found all of these men "in darkness," Harrison especially. All of them were disfellowshipped from the school until they attended and explained their absence and grumblings.[78] A few days later, Watt and Stenhouse made their apologies and were restored to fellowship in the school. Watt decided that he needed to forgive others as much as possible, especially President Young and those who had forced him out of business, and return to church activity.[79]

On October 25, the Salt Lake Stake leaders, under Brigham Young's influence, called Godbe and Harrison before a public ecclesiastical trial.[80] The Salt Lake Stake high-council members sat in their respective positions. Godbe defended himself in diplomatic fashion, but he wanted to know whether it was possible to disagree with church leaders and still be fellowshipped. He also opposed the coercive nature of Young's antimercantile policy. Harrison bore his testimony of the truthfulness of the church, but

76. Ronald W. Walker calls this "the New York epiphany"; see Walker, *Wayward Saints,* 109–27. Modern Spiritualism first started in 1848 in the United States when Margaretta and Catherine Fox, after investigating noisy rappings in their house, established communication with a spirit. At first these spiritualist congregations had little association with each other. Finally, in 1901 the Spiritualists' National Union was organized.
77. Ibid.
78. Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal,* 6:500. The date is October 17, 1869.
79. Walker, *Wayward Saints,* 143.
80. Ibid., Chaps. 3, 4, 7, and 9.

he did not believe that Brigham Young could be infallible.[81] In his remarks, Young told Harrison and the audience that he had never claimed to be infallible, but the priesthood was. The Salt Lake Stake presidency excommunicated both men. Since this was a public ecclesiastical court, it is possible that Watt attended.

Both Godbe and Harrison knew that a new church had to have a superior organization. Both men admired the LDS Church's organization, and they wanted to replicate that structure, so almost two months later on December 19, 1869, in the Thirteenth Ward building, they organized the Church of Zion. The building was packed, but Watt was probably not in attendance because he was busy moving his families to Kaysville. The new church had a similar organization to Mormonism but only two ordinances: baptism and confirmation. Spiritual communication between those in the "immortal worlds" and those on Earth was the only binding principle. The church did not believe in a personal, exalted man-God but in, as Godbe described it, the Great Spirit of the Universe. They did not believe in resurrection of the physical body because the spirit body had all the qualities the individual needed. They also did not believe in the devil and the sanctity of the Bible. Most Mormons could not believe in the teachings of the new church. A little over a year later, the Church of Zion failed.[82]

The lasting legacy of the Godbeite movement became a newspaper. On January 1, 1870, Harrison and Godbe started the *Mormon Tribune*. About a year later, they changed the name to the *Salt Lake Daily Tribune and Utah Mining Gazette*. The *Tribune* immediately became the voice of the non-Mormon population of Utah, often expressing anti-Mormon sentiments. At first the sheet struggled financially, but the founders sold it to a group of Kansas newspapermen, who continued the earlier policy.[83]

Now that his business was ruined, as Watt perceived his choices, the only path open to him was to be a farmer. He had lost all of his land in Salt Lake City. He had been a superb gardener. He had a farm and sheep pastures in Kaysville where Sarah was living. It was located on what was called the "sand ridge," an area high above the valley floor with no irrigation water. He hired William Broomhead, a carpenter in Salt Lake City, to build him two houses.[84] The larger house was actually three apartments, like a townhouse. Each apartment had an upstairs and a downstairs, and a hallway connected all three.[85] His three youngest wives—Elizabeth, Sarah, and Martha—lived in this house. He built a smaller house a short distance away for Alice. The

81. Ibid., 154–59.
82. Ibid., chap. 11.
83. Ibid., chap. 13.
84. William Broomhead lived in the Salt Lake Seventeenth Ward and was a carpenter.
85. Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt* (n.p.: privately printed, [1958]), 94.

separation allowed her to enjoy the children but also have her own peace and quiet. When Watt visited Kaysville at the end of September, he reported to Martha that Alice's home was under construction, although the work had slowed because Broomhead was home with a sick child. He thought that by the time that his letter arrived in Manti, the carpenters would have finished the casings. He expected that Martha's home would be finished in about six weeks.[86]

The large house in Kaysville was not finished until December. On December 5, 1869, Watt talked to the Saints in his own Twentieth Ward. He said that he had come to say good-bye to them. He "wished to have the faith and goodwill of the saints," his old friends and neighbors of the ward. He had tried to assist in public duties and comfort the saints." He desired to remain faithful, but—referring to the bankruptcy of his business and his silk mission—he "had gone through some scenes of late which he thought would be a lasting lesson to him." He held good thoughts about all the members of the ward, "thought he had no enmity to anyone and did not think he had any enemies."[87]

After he moved to Kaysville, Watt recommitted himself to the teachings of Mormonism. In a letter to Brigham Young referring to the Godbeites, he said, "As to New movements and old movements at home and abroad, all hell being moved to dethrone God if it were possible, and destroying His rule on earth, they have no more of my fear or regard than the pooting of a mouse a day old." What was important to him was that he had "entered into solemn and grave covenants to stand by my brethren and the cause of truth, and I am going to do it, the Lord being my helper, to the end of the chapter." He told Young that he had as much an interest in the workings of the kingdom as Young did and hoped that he would bear with him. Thinking about his failed business, he said, "I have been under the devil's harrow now for two years. It has been my chief business to extricate myself, and have been of little use to the cause of truth, to myself, to you, to anybody else all this weary time." He hoped his experiences of the recent past had given him a little more ballast to steady him, "and that the latter part of my days may be spent more to the glory and honor of God than the former."[88]

86. Watt to Martha Watt, September 21, 1869.
87. Twentieth Ward, general minutes, December 5, 1869, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
88. Watt to Brigham Young, July 27, 1870.

12

SPIRITUAL WANDERINGS
APOSTASY AND SPIRITUALISM

> Your humble friend stands in this category of rejected ones, has been insulted and incensed with the cold shoulder and pity of old beloved friends and respected acquaintances, has been met with "apostate," "son of perdition," "traitor," and such like hard and vicious terms. His presence and the presence of his family has been shunned with freezing persistency, and debarred from their usual social contact with neighbors and friends as though they carried with them the poison of the deadly Upas.
>
> George D. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878

Watt moved his family into their completed house in Kaysville before Christmas 1869. He left his longtime home in the capital city of Utah and Mormonism and took up residence in the hinterland—the provinces. The local people did not understand his digressive path. He would find no Mormons who would give him a sympathetic ear there.

Located twenty-one miles north of Salt Lake City, Kaysville was one of the main communities in Davis County. The town was settled in 1849, and in 1851 the new inhabitants built a school that they also used as a church meetinghouse. By 1853 Kaysville totaled just over four hundred people, with only about one-third living in town. Watt's farm, about three miles north and east of town, is in present-day Layton. Just north of his land was the sand ridge, where the sand was so thick it was difficult to drive a wagon. When Watt moved there, his land had no irrigation water. In 1869

John Thornley, a close neighbor, first grew wheat without irrigation in a process called dry farming.[1]

By the spring of 1870, Watt was busy on the farm: clearing land, planting, and taking care of his animals. In July 1871, he wrote to his wife Martha, who was in Manti taking care of her parents. He had just returned from Salt Lake City and had not left his room, "am most fatigued and half sick with the journey through this excessive hot weather and dry dusty road. While in the City I witnessed a new thing in Utah two celebrations of the 4th of July," he told her. The liberal parade, which was a mixture of Godbeites and gentiles, "was entirely void of show, but represented wealth while the Mormon procession represented 'bone and sinue.'" Still, he considered that "the Mormon procession was one of the finest I should judge that has ever been in these mountains, every trade was well represented." The parades passed quietly, "and the day concluded with an exhibition of fireworks." He mentioned that he had watched both processions but had not joined either one, "for I had my team to take care of and could not leave it."[2]

Watt continued to struggle spiritually. He attended the Kaysville Ward services infrequently. The meetinghouse was a few miles away but not an insurmountable distance. His neighbors, who were more devout and attended church more frequently, understood that he was not fully committed, and they also knew about his earlier problems with the Godbeites.[3]

In April 1871, Watt sent a letter to Brigham Young requesting to borrow some wheat. Young replied that he was pleased to hear from him. However, "with regard to the wheat you wish to borrow you should have it with pleasure, but we have not got it," he told Watt. Because of a shortage, the general tithing store was empty. The church also had to borrow. "I have some flour that you can have any time you like to send for it . . . and indeed very little flour, still I am willing to share with you rather than you should suffer,"[4] Young offered. After this kindly letter arrived, Watt showed it to Christopher Layton, bishop of the Kaysville Ward, who asked if he could help Watt obtain some wheat through President Young. Watt did not think Layton could "but told him he might please himself." Layton spoke to Young about Watt's need, and Young told the bishop that Watt should provide Young with good security. Watt said he intended to do that. "However, it turned that I did not get flour from you or him. I found

1. "Kaysville Ward Manuscript History," Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
2. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, July 7, 1871, holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).
3. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, August 23, 1871, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.
4. Brigham Young to George D. Watt, May 5, 1871, outgoing correspondence, Latterpress Copybook, 12: 665, Young Papers.

other friends, and am gratful for your kind intentions," Watt wrote back to Young.[5]

In the meantime, Layton had announced that Watt needed wheat at a sacrament meeting in the Kaysville Ward. When writing to Young, Watt remarked, "What right has bishop Layton on the instance of my wishing to borrow a little breadstuff, to drag the matter before a public meeting, and make out that a prophecy of bro. Brigham's was fulfilled that I should beg my bread?" Watt wondered if the purpose was to make him humble, but "it never can be accomplished in this way. Espionage, or adversity only stiffens my neck and sets me in defiance, while generous kindness, and smiling friendship melts my soul into tears of gratitude and resolves of eternal affiance." Instead, he retreated to the sanctity of his home, "where I love to be, and where I am known respected and honored." He refused to go to a meeting "to be stared at by old and young as a person who is sure to apostatize because the bishop said so, to sit there like a poor trembling mouse, a mark for every jackanapes that stands up to throw at. *I will not do it."* He then realized how angry he sounded and introspectively wrote, "Excuse me Sir. I have been wounded in the house of my friends, and I have written the above while the hurt was bleeding." Feeling that he needed to reassure Young, he commented, "Brother Brigham I have for you the deepest respect, and sympathy. I have always held you to my heart as a very dear friend."[6]

Watt and Layton had previously had their differences. In June 1864, Layton had been involved in moving Watt's sheep without his knowledge to an area in Weber Valley. John Thornley, an old friend from Preston, England, who took care of both his and Watt's sheep, had told Watt that he had been forced to move their sheep to the ward's designated feeding ground. The men in the ward had previously agreed to the move. However, Thornley had felt pressured into agreeing and did not move their sheep until John Gailey, Bishop Layton's counselor, approached him with threats of the loss of his priesthood position in the Kaysville Seventies Quorum. Thornley told Watt that some of their sheep had died of starvation as a result.

Watt wrote to Layton, complaining about the injustice of that situation. He felt that Layton had coerced some of the men in the ward. Their herd had plenty of feed, unlike the other sheep herds. Watt thought that if the people in the meeting felt that they should move their sheep, "move them and leave mine alone. If I wish to move my sheep and it does appear to me that it is best for the property that God has made me steward over I will do it, but I do not consider that Bishop Layton or his counselor has any business to threaten my fellowship to make me obey them in this matter." He did not think that it was "right to use such a holy thing as a man's fellowship

5. Watt to Brigham Young, August 23, 1871.
6. Ibid. Underlining in original.

to make him do a thing which doesn't particularly relate to spiritual and holy duties." He wanted his sheep on his own land where they could be cared for. "You and your neighbors have eaten out the range immediately around you, and you are obliged to move your stock, now give us the same privilege of eating out the range where we are and we shall have to be subject to not a law of the president but to the law of necessity," he told Layton. He assured Layton that he had nothing against him personally but felt that it had been unnecessary to move his sheep to the ward feeding ground.[7]

Bishop Layton, by the hand of John R. Barnes, his clerk, wrote Watt and denied that he had made a law without the sanction of the people. In the spring, a priesthood meeting of all the men in the ward had unanimously agreed to the proposal. They had found a suitable pasture in Weber Valley. "Most of the brethren whent to work and moved their sheep to the place appointed where they are now doing well. A few however who seek only their own aggrandizement and care but little if any for the good of community held back a long time," Layton's letter claimed. Those individuals finally moved their sheep and suffered losses. The move generally had benefited cattle and sheep. "You say I have taken your property from you without your consent. In reply I beg to say I am not guilty of Larceny in any shape or form."[8] Presumably Layton sent Watt and Thornley's sheep back to them. Watt harbored no ill feelings toward the bishop. Outwardly their relationship was normal, but Layton remembered these allegations and might have reveled in the thought in the 1870s that Watt was struggling.

After Watt moved to Kaysville, teachers, who were assigned to watch over families in the ward and keep them on the straight and narrow path, regularly visited him; they were always questioning their families about whether they were praying and living the tenets of the church. After one such prying visit in August 1871, Watt fired off a letter of protest to Brigham Young. The teachers had asked him whether he practiced secret and family prayer, honored the priesthood, believed in tithing, took the *Salt Lake Daily Tribune and Utah Mining Gazette,* and associated with the Godbeites, especially Amasa Lyman, a former apostle.[9] Watt had told them that he prayed both in secret and with his family every day. He believed in paying tithing and also aiding other good causes with his means. As far as honoring the priesthood, "If you mean to pay due respect to men in office in the Church, Yes; this I have always done, and always expect to give honor where it is due." He admitted that he took the *Salt Lake Daily Tribune,* but he did so to keep himself

7. George D. Watt to Christopher Layton, 1864, shorthand, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006).
8. Christopher Layton per J. R. Barnes to George D. Watt, June 29, 1864, holograph, Watt Papers.
9. Lyman had turned from his Mormon origins and now believed in the Godbeite version of spiritualism.

informed about what it was up to. "Its mineral department is an exaggeration, and used to flood the country with people from abroad, to rob the Mormon people of their municipal legislative rights. . . . The communication and editorial department appear to me to be full of snap snarl and fight. As a whole I think it is an ambitious, shallow pated, boasting, insulting, pugnatious, snarling, senseless sheet," he told the teachers. As far as his association with Godbeites, he commented that he had known Amasa Lyman and William Godbe a long time, and "I do not see that a change of religion should interfere with the performance of the common civilities due to all persons." Watt said he did not think that the Godbeites had "a combination, aim or purpose that may at all be relied upon, a mere bubble upon society's wave."[10]

The teachers asked him why he did not attend church more regularly. He replied it was because of the distance and his horses needed a rest. To Young he admitted the chief reason was "I cannot sit and hear personal castigations administered from the stand to myself and friends, instead of the consolations of religion and the necessity of observing its moral precepts." He had had other teachers ask him similar questions throughout his life, but this time they offended him because he knew his life was not attuned with those principles. He wrote that Bishop Christopher Layton had made "insinuations against my character as a gentleman and a Saint in a very inconsiderate, untruthful and unbrotherly manner."[11]

His family had listened to such accusations in a meeting, and they no longer would attend the Kaysville Ward, Watt continued. "At one meeting he told the people that President Young had asked him if he was afraid of G. D. Watt. . . . That if he was afraid of me you would send one here to attend to my case, for you would 'make' me honor the priesthood." Watt had angrily told Bishop Layton "that neither Bishop Layton nor Brigham Young could 'make' me do anything." He could not understand what Bishop Layton had told Young "to have called forth such extreme expressions from you." He felt that he was not complaining, "but I have a right to defend myself, which right I expect always to exercise. Do I not hold the priesthood of the Son of God as much so as any of you, and should it not be honored in me?"[12]

A day later, he wrote a letter to Martha, who was in Manti helping her aged parents. He discussed the farm, the crops, and the family. He then repeated most of the letter he had sent to Brigham Young the day before, telling her about the visit of the teachers, including most of his comments about Layton, and ending with the phrase, "I will not do it." He ended the letter, "Kiss the children for papa. . . . All here join me in love to yourself."[13]

10. Watt to Brigham Young, August 23, 1871.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 24, 1871, holograph, Perry Special Collections.

The exchange with Layton and the teachers only drove Watt closer to his former friends among the Godbeites.

After the encounter with the teachers, Watt recognized that he needed further spiritual help. John Smith, the church patriarch, came to Kaysville in 1871 less than a month later, and Watt requested a patriarchal blessing from him. He thought the blessing would give him spiritual guidance. Smith, an old friend, told him in the blessing that even though he had seen "many changes and trying events recently that his life had been preserved and have given thee peace of mind. Therefore I say unto thee be prudent, seek to know the will of the Lord and hold sacred thy covenants for the Eye of the Lord is upon thee." The Lord knew "of his integrity." He still had work to perform, and his name would be held in "honorable remembrance and handed down with thy posterity from generation to generation." Smith warned Watt to be on his guard "and adhere strictly to the promptings of the Monitor within thee." He was a choice son of the blood of Joseph and entitled to many blessings. "And I say unto thee let thy faith fail not and thy days and years shall be prolonged until thou art satisfied with life."[14]

It is difficult to tell when Watt finally turned to Spiritualism. He knew about the religious philosophy through the Godbeites. He had first allied himself with them because of their opposition to the Mormon cooperative. Possibly Watt began to embrace Spiritualism as early as the summer and fall of 1869, but he sincerely repented of his folly. His negative Kaysville ecclesiastical experience, though, reunited him with his former merchant friends.

Spiritualism confirmed the Godbeites' religious experience without the unique Mormon connotation. They felt that Joseph Smith, as a gifted medium, had frequently misinterpreted his spiritual experiences. Spiritualists received their revelations through mediums, who sometimes in deep trances spoke for the spirits or angels beyond the veil of death. These spirits communicated by table moving and the use of the planchette, which was like a Ouija board. The spiritualists in Salt Lake had several well-known mediums visit the city and give lectures on Spiritualism as well as hold séances. Most of the mediums who came to Salt Lake City were men, but many families in Zion held séances with mediums who were either women or older children. Watt on his trips to Salt Lake attended a few of the lectures given by some of the leading spiritualists of the time.[15]

At first the Godbeites held their meetings in the Thirteenth Ward and the Masonic hall, but after William Godbe generously donated land, they

Underlining in original.

14. John Smith, "Patriarchal Blessing of George D. Watt," September 17, 1871, microfilm of holograph, Patriarchal Blessing Collection, LDS Church Archives. For other blessings in the area, Smith used a clerk. For Watt's blessing, he had no clerk. Perhaps Watt did not want a member of the ward to know he needed Smith's help.

15. See Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), chaps. 11, 14.

constructed a building called the Liberal Institute at a cost of fifty thousand dollars. The seating was shaped like a half octagon with the pulpit in a corner of the building. The institute had portraits on the walls, including George and Martha Washington. It provided a space for religious services, debates, lectures, education, entertainment, and social relaxation. The building seated a thousand people.[16]

During this time, certain spiritualistic phrases entered Watt's letters. In July 1871, in a letter to Martha, he wrote that he thought of her and the children every day and "throw a desire to the Angels to watch over you and keep you from all harm." He also used another phrase with a spiritualistic connotation: "Let us live to do each other good and no wrong that our garments may be pure and white in the glorious summerland."[17] In October 1873, he told Martha, "Praying the guardian of the Angels to be around you and the children constantly."[18]

Watt had struggled long and hard, but finally his Mormon faith failed. His neighbors, his old friends, and perhaps the hardship of the farm changed him, and he substituted Spiritualism for his Mormon faith. On April 12, 1874, the *Salt Lake Tribune* announced that George D. Watt would give a lecture at the Liberal Institute that evening on "Why I Joined the Mormon Church and Why I Left It and Became a Spiritualist." The newspaper described him as an entertaining speaker and said his subject was one that both Mormons and non-Mormons could listen to profitably.[19] In an overflowing hall, Watt related his boyhood experiences and conversion to Mormonism. He stated he had found a lack of power in the priesthood and that the Mormon Church's power and gifts were not real, only a matter of faith.[20] He believed that he had always been a spiritualist. He finished with an explanation of the Order of Enoch, or the United Order, which was "for the people to give themselves and all they possess to the Lord Brigham and allow him to dictate where they shall live, what labor they should follow, and what they should do with the proceeds of their labors." Watt said he thought that meant "to give up their individuality and become slaves to the priesthood, and be fed, clothed and housed as the priesthood might dictate." He, however, said nothing about his days in Brigham Young's office.[21]

16. Ibid., 275–76.
17. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, July 7, 1871. Parley P. Pratt, in his book *Key to the Science of Theology,* refers to angels as men who died and now have a "human body of flesh and bones, immortal and eternal." See Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology,* 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1891), 115. This idea could have influenced Watt's belief in what he called angels, but Spiritualism teaches that the angels are spirits of human beings who have passed through life.
18. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, October 13, 1873, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
19. "Elder Watt at the Institute," *Salt Lake Tribune,* April 12, 1874, 1.
20. He made a similar argument when he left James Fielding's church back in Preston.
21. "Geo D. Watt at the Institute," *Salt Lake Tribune,* April 15, 1874, 1.

An anonymous writer to the *Tribune* commented, "The lecture of friend Watt was gladly received by many of his old time brethren. . . . His plain and unvarnished tale has had more effect upon his hearers than would the most polished effort of any learned orator and he has caused many to think of the impositions practiced among them."[22] Edward Partridge Jr., a stake president in Fillmore, also attended the lecture and observed that the "Hall was full and the audience paid marked attention and frequently applauded when some good hit was made." He acknowledged that Watt "had written a very good piece, ably got up and delivered in good style, which looks very plausible from his stand point."[23]

A month before Watt's talk at the Liberal Institute, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a poem entitled "The Mormons Order of Enoch," written by a person with the pen name of Georgius, which could have been a play on Watt's first name. He had written some poetry more than twenty years earlier, and even though this was not very good poetry, it probably was not his. Then on March 13 and 15, an author with the pen name of "W" wrote two articles titled "Brigham's Enoch" and "The Gobbling Prophet." He made an economic argument against Young, stating that his riches had caused untold poverty among the lower classes. This author said that cooperation was a correct principle, but Brigham Young interpreted it as gathering all the riches together for himself. He also said that he did not "write in bitterness of spirit towards Young or the Mormons, but with an uncompromising hostility to oppression and wrong." The pen name—the same one Watt used in his early articles in the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*—and the economic approach seem to mark these articles as Watt's. He had turned his head and heart away from his former beliefs.[24]

Watt had finally declared himself in opposition to Mormonism and all it stood for. Several weeks later, a short notice in the *Deseret Evening News* simply stated, "Kaysville, May 3, 1874. The undersigned hereby certify that George D. Watt was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, on the above date, for apostasy. C. Layton, Bishop, James Walker, clerk."[25]

Watt had started his original spiritual search many years earlier in James Fielding's congregation in Preston. When he met the Mormon elders, he joined them and became a stalwart member of the faith for thirty-seven years. He learned much about the church from the leaders because he recorded their speeches. He had no qualms about Mormon doctrine or

22. "When Will He Lecture Again?" *Salt Lake Tribune,* April 15, 1874, 4.
23. Edward Partridge, Journals, 1854–89, 9 vols., 2: May 10, 1874, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
24. "The Mormons Order of Enoch," *Salt Lake Tribune,* March 7, 1874, 4; "Brigham's Enoch," *Salt Lake Tribune,* March 13, 1874, 3; "The Gobbling Prophet," *Salt Lake Tribune,* March 15, 1874, 4.
25. "Kaysville, May 3rd 1874," *Deseret Evening News,* May 20, 1874, 7: 249.

theology at that time. He tried to do what the church leaders wanted him to. His argument with Brigham Young ended that period of his life. When Young accused him of not being at work when he was needed, he was speaking the truth, although he handled the situation injudiciously and publicly.

When he left Young's employ and became a storekeeper, Watt's wanderings really began. He separated himself from Young and other church leaders over economic policy. His bitter encounters with Bishop Layton widened the breach. He formulated his doctrine of spiritualism in a series of speeches that began on April 12, 1874. Earlier in the year Watt also pontificated in Ogden in January 1874 at the inaugural services of the Ogden Liberal Hall.[26] These lectures took the same course as his own conversion to Spiritualism.

A month later at the Liberal Institute, Watt again attacked the United Order and expressed his views on the failures of the priesthood. In June the Reverend C. C. Strattan, a visitor, deferred his lecture so Watt could speak. He warned the Mormon workers of Utah about Young's economic system, but then began assailing the theological doctrines of Mormonism. In July he spoke on the claims of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and he followed that in December with a presentation entitled, "My Former Ideas of God. How I Became Possessed of Them and Why I Rejected Them." After thinking of religious topics through the winter, he preached about Spiritualism at the Liberal Institute again in May 1875. The lecture, to the Salt Lake Society of Progressive Spiritualists, was entitled, "The Phenomena of Spiritualism and Its Uses."[27]

His lectures at the Liberal Institute fulfilled his inner desire to express his views on religious topics. No Watt articles appeared again in the *Salt Lake Tribune.* The newspaper covered more salacious tales, advertising the book *Tell It All by* Fanny Stenhouse, the wife of Thomas Stenhouse who had also left Mormonism with the Godbeites; and Ann Eliza Young's book, *Wife No. 19,* by a former wife of Brigham Young, which spoke against polygamy.[28] The *Tribune* wanted more sensational stories for its campaign against Mormonism.

After 1875 Watt did not speak at the Liberal Institute. Probably he became too involved on the farm. Because of his beliefs and his outspoken views, he became isolated from neighbors and friends. However, he found it difficult to cast off Mormonism socially. Even though he had been

26. Walker, *Wayward Saints,* 270.

27. See the following articles in the *Salt Lake Tribune:* "Another Lecture by Geo. D. Watt," June 7, 1874, 4; "Lecture by Mr. George D. Watt," July 19, 1874, 4; "Mr. Watt at the Institute," December 6, 1874, 4; and "Salt Lake Society of Progressive Spiritualists," May 9, 1875, 4. After the first talk, only the title appears in the newspaper. It is possible that Watt gave other lectures, but the *Tribune* did not cover them.

28. "Agents Wanted for 'Tell It All,'" *Salt Lake Tribune,* July 9, 1874, 3.

excommunicated, he did not want to be separated from the Mormon people. He lived among Mormons, and he needed their sustenance, love, and acceptance, but he did not receive it. Instead, he was called a "son of perdition," an "apostate," and a "traitor."[29]

Watt no longer believed that priesthood blessings helped heal the afflicted. Most spiritualists believed in laying their hands on the sickly person and, by "physical magnetism," driving the illness out of the body.[30] In December 1875, while Martha was visiting with her parents in Manti, her father, William, became ill. Watt felt that Martha could comfort "your sick father" by her tender nursing. He advised her to "place your hands often on his head and desire at the same time his speedy recovery, and the good angels through you will bless him and restore him to health and comfort." He also told her to call in some of her father's friends every day, "but let them be robust healthy and honest men, care not if they are ignorant tailors, and let them touch him." He thought it was all right if they prayed and anointed him in the Mormon fashion. He advised her to converse with him cheerfully, which "will inspire him with confidence—with faith." She should feed him "with that he desires to eat, and be not discouraged if he only eats a spoon full at a time." He thought that she should move her father from the bed "everyday" and change the bed linen and his clothes often, "that he may not inhale the sickly exalations of his body and thereby enhance his trouble." He advised, "By following the above instructions and keeping from him doctors drugs, you will reap the reward of your labors in seeing your father restored to health and life."[31] Although Watt thought that his father-in-law would return to health, he died on December 27, 1875. Martha stayed in Manti throughout the holidays to help her mother.

In the next few years, Watt read widely. He changed his views somewhat from his original spiritualist beliefs. He still believed in the spiritualistic concepts about God and man, however. He had originally believed that the angels spoke to human beings in séances. He had attended many séances himself in Salt Lake City. He had also participated in séances in his own home where tables moved, but it is difficult to know who the medium was, probably one of his wives.[32] Although he accepted the idea of spiritual

29. Most of this can be gleaned from the long letter to John Taylor; see George D. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878, holograph, general correspondence, John Taylor First Presidency records, LDS Church Archives.

30. Walker, *Wayward Saints,* 254

31. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, December 6, 1875, holograph, Perry Special Collections. Underlining in original.

32. Elizabeth was there when séances took place, but her devotion to her church probably excluded her from being the medium. It had to be one of the last two wives, either Sarah or Martha or both. Sarah, for unknown reasons, was rebaptized after she began to attend the Layton Ward. It's unclear why since she had never been excommunicated. Elizabeth told Zipporah Layton Stewart, her granddaughter, that she had seen tables move in the

intervention wholeheartedly at first, it did not appeal to him intellectually. Not that he had to prove all things; he accepted concepts of spiritualism by faith also.

He also studied the science and philosophy of the day and acquired a small library to satisfy his own reference needs. While he did not completely find eternal truths in books, either, he began to recognize that God revealed things to humanity in different ways. Revelations or "revealments," as he called them, could result from quite natural phenomena. Rain was just an example, and when it rained, he sometimes took his wives and children into the field and, with arms extended, thanked God for the moisture.[33] He also studied the philosophers of the past. His beliefs appear to have rested primarily in Spiritualism and secondarily in Mormonism with science and philosophy interwoven into the fabric of the two.[34]

Watt asked for readmittance into the church two times, but his beliefs differed basically from Mormonism. He seemed to have forgotten that Mormonism had certain tenets that could not be altered just for him. Finally in 1878, he wrote a long letter to President John Taylor, who was now the leader of the LDS Church. The letter is a philosophical treatise that, because of its language and concepts, is difficult to understand. It reveals a man who is able to grasp and explain complicated religious concepts, sometimes not clearly, nor in simple terms, but in the words of a student of philosophical theology.[35]

He asked for readmittance into the church but wanted to explain his present beliefs to Taylor: "The object of this letter is, to lay before you, briefly, the salient points of my convictions and belief as I find them today." He believed in an impersonal God, as he defined it, "in the unchangable and infinitly extended God—the soul of universal nature." He felt that God was "the fountain of all truth, light life and intelligence, stamping himself in degrees, planes, and phases upon the infinite arcana of matter."[36]

Watt believed that every "power principle and law, which pertains to the spiritual and physical constitution of matter, have their roots deep in this inpenitrable mystery, from which they draw their progressive strength." He wrote that God could not love or hate as men love or hate, hear "as men hear, or speaks as men speak." Also, this "Infinite Presence" could not have

house. Stewart relayed that information to the author.

33. Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt* (n.p.: privately printed, [1958]), 99.

34. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878. This paragraph paraphrases most of Watt's beliefs, which are explained in detail in the next few pages of the chapter.

35. In a few cases, Watt uses words for which there seem to be no definitions. The word "astroaligorical" is left to the reader's interpretation. He also refers to the "law of the ubiquitous Allmighty power—the law of integration." The author has not found such a law or theory; perhaps it is a spiritualist term.

36. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878, p. 2.

a likeness and be incarnated in man. He was an "essence," who could not be angered by disobedience or placated by prayers or ceremonies.[37]

Watt believed that Jesus Christ was a good man who had come to earth almost two thousand years ago to introduce moral and religious reforms; "there is a soul of truth in all he said and did is abundantly substanciated in the vitality and endurance of the systems of theology which has been founded upon it." He believed that Christ had saved humanity through these reforms, not through atonement. "In this sense I understand Jesus Christ as the Savior of men . . . which was enshrined in his pure mind and exemplified in his holy life."[38]

Watt did not believe in the fall of humanity; rather, human beings had been progressing from ages past to the present. Each person had "steadily advanced . . . from the lowest point through the evolutions of matter and mind to his present attainments." Watt did not believe "in the efficacy of sacrificial blood."[39]

He also did not believe in the devil. "I can see no room or use for a personal devil," he stated. This individual was a mythical personage; beliefs in it had denied people revelations from heaven. The "whisperings of angels and other holy manifestions in their . . . endeavors to reach humanity" had sometimes been attributed to the devil, "thus rendering their approach almost imposable."[40]

Watt recognized the Bible as "repositories of biographical, historical, moral, and spiritual truth" but not as an unerring guide: "To accept sacred writings as infalable guides and rules of faith is equivalent to confining infinite capacities to finite limits; which is an impossability." He thought that the Bible was "a very beautiful astroaligorical expression of the uncultured notions of primitive man regarding the wonderous mystery of creation around him."[41]

Watt believed that eternal progression went beyond death. The angels were "advanced mortals who do exercise in the care and the advancement of their brethren who are lower down in the scale of existance." All mortals and immortals were God's children "in different stages of advancement."[42]

He believed that God spoke in many ways. He had studied other religions or, as he put it, had rummaged among the dusty record "resurrected from the filthy rags of mummied myths." He thought he was one of the first

37. Ibid., pp. 2–3.
38. Ibid., p. 5. There is no discussion of the Holy Ghost in Watt's long letter. Most Mormons in the nineteenth century did not classify the Holy Ghost or Spirit as a member of the Godhead, but rather as a divine substance or fluid. See Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 29–30, 38–42.
39. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878, p. 6.
40. Ibid., p. 4.
41. Ibid., p. 5.
42. Ibid., pp. 5–6.

to arrive at these eternal truths and the Mormon Church must eventually accept them. He thought the LDS Church contained reformative energy and was the only Christian church that could advance out of what he called the "ungodly notions which has characterized Christian sects from the first inception among mankind." The church needed to coexist with other faiths for a time so these other faiths would not suppress it. It now had to have a revolutionary reformation from within.[43]

Watt hoped that everyone who wanted to live with the Saints would be accepted: "I cencerely [sincerely] hope that the day is not far distant when those conditional bars—upon which all men, in the church and out of it, differ more or less in opinion and belief—will be removed."[44] Beliefs by members could vary widely; close social association among members was more important.

Watt felt that even though he had changed his beliefs, that should not prevent him from associating with his old church and friends. It was difficult for him to understand how a person can be "justly severed from the association of his friends purely on account of a change of conviction and faith if it is his wish still to be associated with them." Many men—"good and true—has for this been severed from your church whose destiny is unchangably cast with the Mormon people. Who care not to live with any other people."[45]

Watt considered himself as righteous as anybody in the church. More importantly, the "presence of his family has been shunned with freezing persistancy, and debarred from their usual social contact with neighbors and friends as though they carried with them the poison of the deadly Upas."[46] He and his family had to socialize among themselves: "We have been forced to take shelter within our lonely environments to comfort each other as best we could, often shedding tears of grief and vexation, in our heart yearnings for that intercommunication with friends to satisfy our longings for those social delights which well poised man and woman require." He felt that this exclusionism was an untrue attribute of religion.[47]

Watt thought this feeling of coldness had started to melt, "gradually giving way to the aura of love and friendship," after John Taylor had become president of the church. Watt repeated a theme he had often stated in his letters: "While love sings, and friendship pleads resistance dies. When

43. Ibid., p. 7.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 8.
46. The Upas is a poisonous tree found in Southeast Asia. The poison comes from the sap, which exudes out of the bark. According to legend, the Upas could kill all animals and vegetable life for miles around because the air around the tree was poisonous. Europeans at one time thought that natives of Southeast Asia tied people to the Upas tree to kill them.
47. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878, p. 9.

coercion gives place to the guiding hand of love and wisdom, trusting confidence displaces jealous doubt and cowardly fear." He then concluded his long epistle, "Its imperfections I must trust to your clemency; its aim I shall leave you to jud[g]e of from the spirit of its contents, and in its author you may trust for honesty love and friendship."[48]

The letter remained on his desk unsent. More than a month later, he added a postscript. He did not want Taylor to believe that he considered himself blameless for his separation from his former friends and associates. He explained what had happened: "While conscious of no wrong doing to man woman and child, during the pilgrimage of my life, either in act or intention, but constantly devoted to one ruling thought of my life, to work and to die in the harness for the triumph of truth and God's Kingdom on earth," he was suddenly "crushed, by a public charge of meanness and sly robbery, by one against whose affirmation I had no appeal." He must have been referring to the argument with Brigham Young. "I could only see my character as an honest man gone among my friends and brethren, my future efforts to do good defeated, over thirty years of labor and struggle a blank, and branded as a scoundrel to the end of my life." For that reason, he had left the office. "I have since discovered that I might have taken a more reasonable view of the matter. But feeling outraged and abused, I was chagrined and insensed. I did not take time to reason, but in strict accordance with my impulsive nature kicked over the bucket and spilled the milk."[49]

Thus began his spiritual wanderings. After that he had joined the Godbeites and learned many of the doctrines he espoused in this period of his life: "My mind gradually lost its fixedness to the one purpose, and merged into a state of mobility. I have wandered over the arid and hop[e] less wastes of infidelity, I have wrestled with the ghostly mirage, and to me, unprofitable manifestations of modern spiritualism. . . . I have looked upon the hard cold and polished surface of exact sciense, to find at last some comfort and spiritual food in the more inductive revealments of true phylosophy." It is not clear which philosophers he read. He reaffirmed that he was convinced that Mormonism held the potential for complete truth: "Deep beneath the surface of the Mormon system of theology I can discover, marked out in unmistakable lines, an unlimited scope of possible attainments for the immeasurable capacity of the immortal mind of man, which offers a restfull hope to the searching and perturbed spirit of the weary wanderer through this vale of tears." However, "if your humble friend may never again—in consequence of the important changes in his faith—be permitted to be associated as formerly with this section of the grand army of God, he is contented to be a camp follower, minus the usual insults

48. Ibid., pp. 9–10.
49. Ibid., p. 10

and indignities."[50] He signed the letter again with the intention of sending it to President Taylor, but it remained unsent.

Two weeks later, he added more to the letter. He discovered when he reread it that he had not included anything about Joseph Smith, who was an essential part of his religious philosophy. He began a two-and-a-half-page discourse on Smith and his contributions; he also explained his beliefs in eternal progression and his difficulties with modern Spiritualism. In reference to Smith, Watt said "that the two forms he saw in the woods had been two mortals—father and son—advanced to immortal dignity through righteousness, who made choice of him as their agent, and to whom they entrusted their particular priesthood or calling." These two "immortals" had chosen Joseph Smith "to organize a system to embody all dispensations in one is, to me, a most natural and unavoidable consequence." He believed that Smith "was chosen and authorized by the angels" to be in charge of that dispensation.[51]

Watt said he believed that the church of Jesus Christ, both anciently and presently, was founded in Spiritualism: "In the above brief deleniation of my faith regarding the mission of Joseph Smith, of course, you see spiritualism." Modern Spiritualism, however, was homogeneous, indefinite, uncertain, and seemingly devoid of purpose. The Mormon Church was integrated, well defined, organized, coherent in its purpose, and useful to humanity. Watt thought that the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants owed their very existence to what he termed "celestial spiritualism. And is not the Church, with its priesthood ordinances and dignities its legitimate offspring and exponant?"[52]

Watt finally closed his long epistle:

> I have doubtless exhausted your patience. I have had to write what I have written to satisfy myself. I have opened to you my heart, and explained to you-imperfectly-my present faith; that if I am again permitted to enrole myself as a member of your church I may do so as an honest man, and not as a sneak and an embicile. If I cannot do this with the full confidence of yourself and your brethren that I will conduct myself discretly and honorably while I am enjoying the privileges and hopes engendered by such a position. I would rather remain as I am than be received with jealous distrust.[53]

After fourteen pages and almost two months, he ended his letter by initialing the last addendum and sent it off to Salt Lake City.

When Taylor received the letter, he understood certain points, but some were so philosophically complicated that he gave it to his clerks to digest

50. Ibid., pp. 10–11.
51. Ibid., pp. 12–13.
52. Ibid., pp. 13–14.
53. Ibid., p. 14.

the points. Even the clerks must have had difficulty, but they finally outlined five beliefs where Watt differed from orthodox Mormonism. The first was he did not believe in a personal God. The concept of a personal God was basic to Mormonism and had been since the days of Joseph Smith. Secondly, he did not believe in the devil. To Mormons this personage, who enticed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, was responsible for all temptations. Third, he saw little use for the Bible. Actually he recognized its virtues, but he could not accept all of its teachings. Fourth, he could not believe in the atonement of Jesus Christ. He recognized him as a good man and reformer but not as a God who atoned for the sins of the world. Fifth and last, Watt did not believe in the fall of humanity. He felt that human beings had started as almost nothing and steadily progressed from earliest times to the present.[54]

Taylor must have sympathized with Watt's need for love and acceptance. He understood that excommunication also meant the loss of old friends and associates, but he also knew that conviction and belief were what made Mormons. Watt no longer held those beliefs; thus, he could not be readmitted into his old faith. It is possible that Taylor sent Watt a short letter explaining this to him. It is more probable that he sent someone to Watt to explain Taylor's beliefs.

Sometime after writing that letter, Watt began a lengthy autobiography of his life. He described his boyhood in England, his experiences throughout his life near Brigham Young, and his movement to Spiritualism. When he finished, he sent it off to Edward Tullidge to publish. Watt's death came before publication, and thus the manuscript languished and was lost.[55]

54. "George D. Watt's Statement of His Faith," Watt Papers. A cataloger incorrectly placed this document in the Watt Papers

55. Watt's obituary in the *Salt Lake Herald* was taken from this autobiography. The newspaper reporter read it before writing the article on his death. That is the last mention of the autobiography. See "Geo. D. Watt Dead," *Salt Lake Herald,* October 25, 1881, 8; or "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," October 24, 1881, LDS Church Archives.

13

FAMILY AND FARM LIFE IN DAVIS COUNTY

> We have been busy in the harvest field but we shall be more so as soon as the bulk of our wheat ripens. I hope you enjoy your visit to the full measure of your expectations, and that you and the children enjoy good health. I guess Willy, as usual is very busy every day trying to do something. I should think that his Grandmother will get tired of answering his constant question of 'what's that.' Little Grace will be grown since I last saw her. Kiss the children for Papa. May you and the children be constantly blessed.
>
> George D. Watt to Martha Watt, April 16, 1871

When Watt moved his family in 1869 to his farm about three miles northeast of Kaysville, he was fifty-eight years old and had four wives.[1] By then Elizabeth had given birth to four children, and Sarah and Martha each had one child.[2] Watt found himself with a very young family and three wives who were still of child-bearing age. He rejoiced whenever a new baby arrived. In August 1869, a few months after the birth of Martha's oldest child, he wrote, "I bless you, my dear, and our boy, and pray that

1. When the Watt family moved to the farm, it was in the Kaysville Ward. In 1885 this area was incorporated into Layton.
2. Elizabeth's children born in Salt Lake City were Richard, November 26, 1860; Isabell, March 6, 1862; Alice, May 21, 1865; and Georgeina, February 28, 1868. George William, Martha's baby, was born on March 26, 1869. Sarah's Ermina Elizabeth was born on May 27, 1868, in Kaysville.

from you may spring a race of men, who shall be mighty for God and the right." That same month he and Sarah had to care for a terribly ill, fifteen-month-old Ermina Elizabeth, whom he called Minny: "Our little Minny has given up entirely and is a down sick child. Her mother and myself have done nothing but wait on her for three days. I thank God that to day she is much better, and we have hope that she will survive this sickness," he wrote to Martha. It was more important to him to have his family than all the riches of the world: "For it does appear to me that I would rather lose all that I own of this worlds goods than lose one of my wives, or one of my children."[3]

Watt's ties to the area around Kaysville were strong. He had owned land in the southwest quarter of section 10 since at least 1860. The farm site, composed of 160 acres, was situated high above the valley floor. Sarah had lived there about a year before he moved there himself. His son George Jr. had also moved there by the spring of 1869.[4] John Thornley, his nearest neighbor, lived roughly a third of a mile south. Watt had known Thornley's father in Preston, England, and may have been instrumental in his conversion and baptism.[5]

He moved all of his wives and children to Kaysville, where he had two houses built near each other with lumber from Millcreek Canyon. The larger house consisted of three apartments. Each apartment had a downstairs with a sitting room, a kitchen, a dining area, and a bedroom; a front and back bedroom comprised the upstairs. The stairs were very narrow and steep. Elizabeth took care of Watt's mother, Mary Ann.[6] The smaller house, which was about a hundred yards away, he built for Alice, who had no children.

The large house sat in the midst of an alfalfa field. It was whitewashed twice yearly and had dark green trim. Around the foundation of the house grew pink wild roses. The interior was plastered and had lace curtains and blinds at the windows and homemade rag rugs on the floor. The furniture was characterized by simple chairs and good carved beds; Elizabeth's bed was a gift from Brigham Young. The wives kept the house clean by almost daily washings. The outbuildings consisted of a root cellar, a toilet house, a granary, a barn housing a team, wagon, and milk cows; and at least one chicken coop. On the east side, between the house and the granary, was a well that the family used for culinary purposes. The house and outbuildings were connected with boardwalks, a necessity in wet weather when the soil became extremely muddy. Alice's house had two bedrooms, a sitting room,

3. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 20, 1869, photocopy of holograph in author's possession.
4. On July 28, 1869, George Jr.'s wife had twin daughters in Kaysville who died the same day.
5. "Burial of John Thornley," *Salt Lake Herald*, December 6, 1907, 2.
6. Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt* (n.p.: privately printed, [1958]), 94.

and a kitchen. She also had, in close proximity, a toilet house, root cellar, and summer cook house.[7]

In the large house, Watt placed his three youngest wives: Elizabeth in the east apartment, Sarah in the center, and Martha in the west apartment. He had sixteen children by his three wives after he left Salt Lake City, five of them by Elizabeth. The last one, Rachael, was born on January 11, 1879. He had six more children by Sarah. The last, Cora, was born on March 4, 1881. And he had five more children by Martha. Her last child, Ida, was born on February 20, 1880.[8] By having this number of children in his sixties, Watt seemed to be denying his own mortality. He probably felt that he would remain to provide for his family and not die until he was ready.

Some men with plural wives provided separate houses for each one, sometimes in different communities. In Salt Lake City, Watt had usually had a house for each wife. When he moved to Davis County, he brought them together in separate facilities. To avoid conflict, the wives needed to feel that he was treating them all fairly. Essentially that was impossible with four women vying for one man's time and affection. A polygamous household, where the wives were near each other, was a complicated organization.[9]

Watt coordinated the activities of his household and expected the wives to follow his counsel. The wives tried to live in harmony with one another and put aside their petty differences. As Martha explained to a granddaughter late in her life, if there were problems or something did not go as expected, Watt called all the wives together and discussed the matter with them. He never accused a specific wife of causing the problem but merely said that if one of them was the cause, she should correct her actions. After these meetings, Martha always felt sure that Sarah was the cause.[10]

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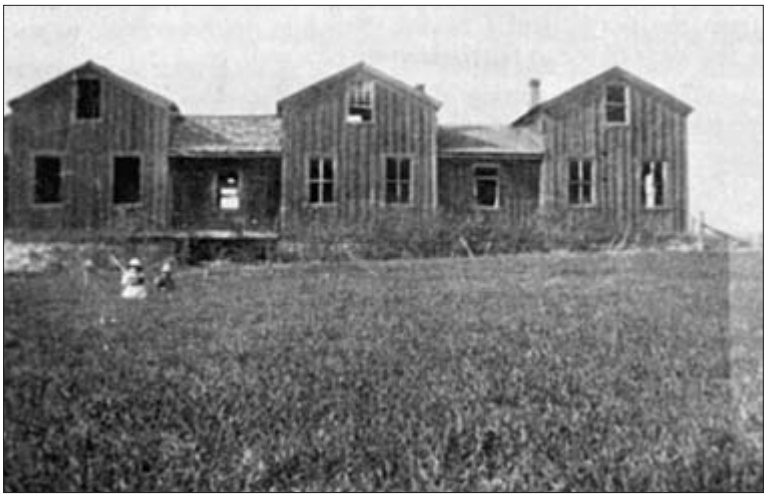
7. Jane Layton Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," pp. 1–19, typescript, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
8. Elizabeth's children born on the farm—John Golightly, Andrew Kennen, Jane, Julia Ann, and Rachael—were born from December 1870 to January 1879. Sarah's children—Mary Ann, Jennet Darling, John Harter, Eliza Elizabeth, Minerva, and Cora— were born from April 1870 to March 1881. Martha's children—Grace Darling, James Arthur, Annie, Mary, and Ida—were born from February 1871 to March 1881. John Harter, Sarah's son, and John Golightly, Elizabeth's son, were born about six months apart. The two boys were always differentiated by their respective nicknames of Black Jack and Red Jack because of the color of their hair.
9. For some studies on polygamy, see B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); and Dean L. May, "People on the Mormon Frontier: Kanab's Families of 1874," *Journal of Family History* 1, no. 2 (1976): 169–89.
10. Hazel Anderson Bigler, interview by the author, April 22, 1979, transcript, LDS Church Archives.



From Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack, England's First Mormon Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt

Watt large house in Kaysville

The four wives appear to have been completely devoted to Watt. Alice commented that she wanted to be sealed to him for eternity.[11] Elizabeth remembered his tenderness toward her. She spoke lovingly of her dear George—deWatt, as she called him.[12] Sarah must have also cared deeply for him, but she never voiced her feelings. Martha, later in life, when her children and grandchildren did something she liked, always said they were just like George D. Watt.[13] They made these comments many years after his death.

Watt lived with Alice because the other house was full of young children. She fed him most of the time and laundered his clothes. Alice became an older sister to the younger wives.[14] She often supplied much-needed food out of her private funds. She also frugally saved money from the eggs she sold, which helped support the family. Martha's daughter Annie remembered Alice's generosity many years later. She said, "Saturday seemed a holiday to us children, for on that day the rations for the next week was carefully weighed and measured out [to] each woman according to her no. [number] by my father." Sometimes the quantities were too small for hungry children. "Aunt Alice, bless her heart, when she saw the piles were too little, would take her own money and buy more."[15]

11. Ibid.
12. Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," p. 5.
13. Hazel Bigler interview. Emotions of the women in a polygamous household are difficult to assess. The Watt women never discussed their feelings openly. The few sources we have tell us only that these four women loved and respected their husband.
14. Ibid.
15. Annie Watt Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939, photocopy

Elizabeth became a firm foundation for the family primarily because of her attitude toward the church and plural marriage. She did the baking for the family since she had learned it from her father, who ran the Globe Bakery in Salt Lake. Zipporah Stewart, a granddaughter, remembered her often "standing in the pantry, where she held a big pan in one arm and stirred in flour with the other—always coming out with something delicious."[16] Besides caring for Watt's mother, who lived with her, Elizabeth nursed the other women during their times of confinement, when their babies were being born. It was also in her home where daily family prayers were held and often a type of family home evening with singing, visiting, and storytelling. If Elizabeth was upset with someone, she had a tendency not to talk to that person. When this happened to Watt, he went to Alice to find out how he had offended "Lizzy."[17]

It is difficult to assess Sarah's feelings. She was a very private person, and when she left to live with her children after Watt's death, she often retreated to her bedroom when people came to visit the family.[18] Apparently she followed Elizabeth's lead.[19]

Since Martha was the last wife, there was some feeling among the other wives that Watt was partial to her. Martha was an outgoing person and sometimes became emotional. At least once when Martha was feeling despondent about the poverty of her family and the age of her husband, she cried. Watt took her into his arms and comforted her.[20]

At times the other wives saw him comforting Martha and believed that she was his favorite. Before Martha had entered the family, Elizabeth felt that she was the favored wife among the younger women. She was always proper and dignified. She worked hard to overcome her feelings and not show her emotions to others. Martha could not be dignified and suppress her emotions, and that sometimes caused a problem. Later in life, Martha felt that there were no great problems between her and Elizabeth but that the problems among the wives usually originated with Sarah. In the last few years on the farm, Martha became convinced that Sarah was the favored wife, which may account for her feelings of anxiety about her. If the birth of children is any indicator of favorites, Martha may have been right because Sarah gave birth to the last two children in the family: Minerva in 1880 and Cora in 1881, the year when Watt died.

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of holograph, LDS Church Archives. The family income after the business failure was indeed small.

16. As quoted in Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," p. 4.
17. Ibid., p. 5; Bigler interview.
18. "Davinie Watt Lythgoe Life History," p. 9, copy in author's possession.
19. Ibid., Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert,* 106.
20. Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert,* 106.

The Watt family had some conflicts, but this was a natural consequence of the many different personalties in the home.[21] The story that came down to the grandchildren was that the family lived together peacefully. As Alean Ellison Layton, one of the granddaughters wrote, the wives "lived in perfect harmony together, everything being divided equally among them."[22] It is more likely that they had their differences, but the children never picked up on them because most of them were very young when their father died. To them it seemed like one large, happy family. They played together as brothers and sisters of an extended family. Annie, Martha's daughter, remembered what a painful experience it was to be separated from the other children when Martha remarried and moved.[23]

Mary Ann Brown, Watt's mother, originally had gone with Jane, her daughter, to Nebraska. Within a few years, however, she returned and began living with Elizabeth. The children loved to visit their Grandmother Brown. They would find her in a rocking chair in her room, dressed in a black dress with a white lace-trimmed apron and cap. Sometimes they snuck up behind her and threw her apron over her face to hear her say, "Oh gee over." She loved to tell them stories about her home in the British Isles.[24]

Grandma also assisted Watt in his cobbler shop, a room attached to Martha's home. Every fall Watt made shoes for his family, a craft he had learned as a boy, and she waxed the thread for the shoes. One time the children took the wax to use as gum. When Watt discovered it, he told them that wax was expensive, and it had to be returned.[25] Grandma brought her half-filled chamber pot from her room, and the children placed the wax in the pot, where they would not think of taking it again.[26] In 1873 Grandma Brown made a request through Watt for Brigham Young to return a bloodstone that Watt had left in Young's safekeeping more than twenty years before. Young, who had used it as a piece of jewelry for one of his wives, graciously gave it back.[27]

Watt died when most of the children were very young, and they remembered him little or not at all. Elizabeth Watt Nalder, Sarah's daughter, remembered walking up the lane with her hand in his when she was about four.[28]

Death came to the Watt household in 1879 and 1880 when three children died on the Davis County farm. Early in 1879, several of the children came down with what the family thought were severe colds. Grace, Martha's

21. Bigler interview.
22. Alean Ellison Layton, "Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt," typescript, in author's possession.
23. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.
24. Ibid.; Layton, "Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt."
25. Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert,* 98.
26. Ibid., 96; Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.
27. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, July 24, 1873, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.
28. Minnie Bybee, ed., "The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder," 1957, typescript, in author's possession.

oldest daughter, succumbed first on February 15 of diphtheria, and one day later, Elizabeth's youngest, Julia Anne, died officially of croup, although both deaths could have been from diphtheria. The family buried the children in the small cemetery in Kaysville. One year later, on February 18, 1880, Sarah's youngest daughter, Minerva, who was only three months old, died, but there was no cause specified in the Kaysville Cemetery records.[29]

The children were often frightened by strange noises emanating from the attic. One day Martha climbed up and found a rat colony. She discovered spoons, forks, and even some jewelry, which she presumed had been lost by the children. The house also was infested by bedbugs, which inhabited the children's beds. The mothers used to destroy them with whatever was handy, often scorching them with lighted candles as they crawled down the wall. The bugs probably were brought into the house by the swallows that made their nests in the eaves.[30]

Annie Watt Anderson, Martha's daughter, who was only seven when she left Kaysville, remembered the great number of mice, especially the long-eared ones, and the rats that stole their pewter spoons. She also visualized the wide open spaces and the glistening snow across the hills and fields. The numerous stars looked as if they could be plucked out of the sky, and the farm had "myriad of rabbits that took the tender grain, and caused yearly crop failures."[31]

When they arrived in Kaysville, the older children went to school in a one-room log cabin about three miles from their house. In 1874 School District 13 built an adobe one-room schoolhouse not far from their home; it had about thirty students, all taught by one teacher. Elizabeth Watt Nalder wrote that when they went to school in the winter, they had to "wallow" through deep snow drifts.[32] The school had a large potbellied stove in the center of the room, which the older boys supplied with sagebrush in cold weather since it was the most plentiful fuel.[33]

In 1913 Mary Edwina Whitesides, who lived in Layton and taught school, wrote that the school was four miles from her home. Her experience, even though almost forty years after the Watt children, was probably not much different from theirs. She arrived at nine, and the children started coming shortly after. She described the school as isolated, and yet there were thirty-four students who came from somewhere. "You would naturally

29. Kaysville Cemetery records, February 1879, February 1880, holograph, Kaysville City Recorder's Office. Arrangement in the cemetery records is chronological. See also Utah State History, Utah Burial Results, http://history.utah.gov/apps/burials/execute/burialresults. This database does not give reasons of death.
30. Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert,* 95.
31. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.
32. Bybee, "The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder."
33. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939. Harris Adams told the author where the two schoolhouses were located.

suppose they were bobbing out of gopher and badger holes," she observed. Whitesides explained that her students listened with awe to stories about distant places: "My but they are surprised to find out the world is so big when I tell them about Salt Lake City and they listened about the Panama Canal like it was a fairy story."[34]

In Kaysville the notorious east winds that swooped down the western face of the Wasatch Mountains could reach hurricane speeds. One day the children decided to make a game of the wind. They found a long board from the granary, put it behind their backs, and let the wind push them west toward the house, but they ran into the well. The impact threw Andrew, who was probably five years old, into the cold water. The mothers let Richard, the oldest son, down in the old wooden bucket. He saved Andrew, and everyone pulled the two boys to safety.[35]

On another spring day in another year, the wind was so fierce that Watt decided that the family should avoid possible danger by seeking shelter in the root cellar at the west side of the house. They heard the house groan while they were there. The next morning they found most of the shingles scattered across the plains. All the family helped clean up the debris, and then Watt, George D. Jr., and Richard had to take time from farm work to reroof the house.[36]

The farm was unusual because it was a dry farm with no water for irrigation. The well supplied the family with water, and the wives probably also watered the roses from it.[37] John Thornley and Christopher Layton had tried dry farming with wheat and corn the year before Watt arrived. Watt was the first to try it in his area on the sand ridge. The land was excellent. Thomas Harris, who had moved to the sand ridge in 1862, said with irrigation water, the soil was very fertile and produced the best of hay, grain, cane, corn, and squash.[38] Watt's land was composed of loam about twelve inches thick. On the northeast side of his 160 acres was a wet area, and after his death, the family piped the water to the houses. On the southeast side of his property ran the north fork of Kay's Creek, which Watt used as a watering spot for his animals.[39]

There was a seasonal order about life on the farm. Every October the family planted wheat and barley. Spring wheat could not be planted because

34. Mary Edwina Whitesides to Ethel Hales, December 1913, photocopy in author's possession.
35. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.
36. Annie Watt Anderson, "History of Martha Bench Watt Kilfoyle," p. 3, typescript, in author's possession.
37. The countryside was dominated by sagebrush, which everybody in the Watt family helped to clear at one time or another. A large stack of the thickest wood stood in a pile north of the big house. It was abundant, but it generated poor heat in the long winter months.
38. "Life of Thomas Eagles Harris," typescript, LDS Church Archives.
39. Harris Adams provided the information about the soil and wet area.

the seeds needed the winter's moisture. In November and December, Watt made all of the family shoes. In March and April, the family planted potatoes and corn. After that they needed to keep the weeds out of the crops. In August and September, they harvested the fall and spring crops. Then Watt, George D. Jr., and Richard began to cut the barley and wheat, starting with the barley, which ripened first.

Watt and George Jr. rode to Kaysville one day in 1871 to collect the mail at the post office but mostly to look at the crops. Watt took a wagon and drove down Canyon Road, now Church Street, which cut through his property. The horses turned south on Fort Lane and continued to a place called Five Points, where Fort Lane intersected with Territorial Highway 1. This highway was the main road from Salt Lake City to Ogden. Then the two men drove to the town of Kaysville. They saw farms readying the soil for planting all along the six-mile stretch. Watt wrote Martha, who was in Manti, that he thought their farm probably would average more like thirty bushels of wheat per acre that year.[40]

Watt also had other responsibilities in Davis County. In 1871 the county court appointed him the road supervisor for District 17, which included his farm. However, he gave the job up in 1873, probably because the small pay was not worth the time he spent.[41]

Watt used the Kaysville Cooperative as a convenience store, purchasing only necessities. The store ledgers record that from September 1869 to January 1870 he purchased building materials for his new house, including shingles, nails, and lath, and a pair of shoes for one of his children. He also had to buy sugar, matches, and coffee.[42] He did not do any more business there than absolutely necessary, preferring, because of the quantity and variety, to go to ZCMI in Salt Lake City.

By 1871 Watt had eight cows, two horses, two mules, one pig, two wagons, and one clock, which the family had brought from Salt Lake City. He also had chickens for eggs and meat. Watt divided the chickens among the wives, and they sold some of their eggs for their personal income.[43] In an 1871 letter, Watt mentioned that there had been a great mortality among the chickens for unknown reasons. Sarah and Martha had very few chickens left, and Alice had lost thirteen in one day.[44]

40. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, April 16, 1871, holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).
41. Davis County Court, minutes, June 5, 1871, vol. 2, p. 51, 1871–73, Davis County Courthouse, Farmington, Utah.
42. George D. Watt account, Kaysville Cooperative Mercantile Institute, ledger, 1869, vol. 1, p. 150, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.
43. Davis County Assessments, 1871, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-810, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.
44. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, July 17, 1871, holograph, Perry Special Collections.

Watt raised some excellent hogs also. In 1874 an Ohio Chester White pig of his dressed out at 810 pounds.[45] In 1875 Watt had a total of thirty cattle, which he probably grazed on the unplowed ground. By 1877 the number of cattle had dropped to ten.[46] In 1871 he started with two horses. In 1874 he had a horse die that he was not able to replace. Now he had only one horse to pull the plow and the wagon. In 1880 one more horse died, but in 1881 he added two more horses. Perhaps in the year without horses he either had a neighbor take care of his land, or he used oxen.[47]

The value of his land declined according to the tax assessor. Its value in 1871 was $2,285, and by 1880 it had dropped to $1,669. He paid a territorial tax of $5.10, a school tax of $5.10, and a county tax of $8.50. He must have been assessed other taxes, or else taxes were higher in other years because in 1875 Watt mentioned to Martha that he had to borrow $85 to pay his taxes.[48]

According to the 1880 agricultural census, Watt was farming only fifty acres. He had fifteen acres in barley, and in 1879, according to the tax-assessments rolls, he harvested 175 bushels, only 11 bushels to the acre. He had twenty-five acres in wheat and obtained 160 bushels, a little more than 6 bushels per acre. He also had ten acres in alfalfa, a relatively new crop to Utah.[49] Watt was one of the earliest farmers to raise alfalfa.[50] He planted one acre in apple trees and cleared twenty more for pasture. Of those twenty acres, he mowed seventeen for grass to help feed his cattle through the winter. He must have had a garden someplace on the farm, perhaps in the wet area north of the large house.[51]

When Watt arrived on the farm in 1870, he began to diversify a little. He increased the number of cows to twelve, and in 1879 they produced 450 pounds of butter. He also began raising honeybees, and in 1879 he sold 290 pounds of honey and 3 pounds of wax.[52] By 1880 he was planting fall crops of wheat and barley. He probably perceived these as more commercially productive and better for a dry farm.

45. "Butchering," *Deseret Evening News,* April 8, 1874, 7: 156. The newspaper reported that it was the largest pig ever raised in Utah.
46. Davis County Court, minutes, June 5, 1871; Davis County Assessments, 1877, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-810, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records.
47. Davis County Assessments, 1881, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-811, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records.
48. Davis County Assessments, 1871, 1877; Davis County Assessments, 1880, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-811, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records; George D. Watt to Martha Watt, December 6, 1875, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
49. U.S. Agricultural Census for Utah, 1880, Kaysville, district 16, p. 9, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives; Davis County Assessments, 1879, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-811, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records.
50. Andrew Jenson, "Layton Ward Manuscript History," typescript, LDS Church Archives.
51. U.S. Agricultural Census for Utah, 1880.
52. Davis County Assessments, 1879.

The family barely survived on the farm. The first year Watt did not produce enough to sustain him through the next summer. In March 1875, he asked the Davis County Court, a body equivalent to a county commission, for a remittance of taxes for two years, but it was not granted. Later on that year the county court remitted $3.75 county tax and $1.25 territorial tax.[53] In 1879 Watt paid seventeen dollars for farm labor and made only three hundred dollars.[54] Farming was difficult. Watt's farm was vulnerable to the natural elements. Grasshoppers and rabbits were an ever-present problem. The lack of water and sufficient fertilizer took their toll on the land. As early as 1872, he had to sell his viola to Brigham Young to have enough cash for the farm.[55]

Watt's age was also against him, and the work was hard. He was fifty-eight when he went to Davis County. However, he had his son, George Jr., to rely upon. For a time, George Jr. probably did all the heavy work. By 1873, however, Watt had become tired of his oldest son taking up space in the house. "I told George that he must move out of my house this fall, and he is laying his plans to do so, how he will succeed I do not know," he complained. He was anxious to have George Jr. and his family leave, "for I cannot longer bear to have my wives and children cramped up, as it were, in a nut shell."[56] It is not clear how much longer George Jr. remained in Kaysville, nor how much he helped his father on the farm. In 1879 he moved to the mines in Butte, Montana. In that same year, Richard, Watt's next son, was eighteen years old, but even though he was a great help, he may not have been able to do as much as George Jr. had. The elder Watt grew weary under this strain. When he wrote in 1875 to Martha, who was in Manti helping her sick father, he said to tell the children about "poor old papa." His last words in the letter were "I remain Dear Mattie your affectionate blundering old husband."[57]

The old specter of poverty was always there, but Watt believed that life for his family could become better. He dreamed that his farm would produce an abundance to bring his family a good life, but these dreams never materialized. It was a continual struggle for him to meet the needs of his ever-growing family.

The Kaysville Co-op daybook gives us an insight into George D. Watt's life during the month when he died. Only one or two of the family made the journey to Kaysville, and that individual usually asked each of the wives what she needed from the store. Richard, Elizabeth's twenty-year-old son, was usually the person who made this trip. On October 6, 1881, Watt was

53. Davis County Court, minutes, March 1, 1875, October 15, 1875, vol. A, p. 114, Davis County Auditor's Office. I am indebted to Harris Adams for these entries from the courthouse records.
54. U.S. Agricultural Census for Utah, 1880.
55. Receipt, September 17, 1872, holograph, invoice books, Young Papers.
56. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 26, 1873, photocopy of holograph in author's possession.
57. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, December 6, 1875.

preparing to harvest his barley. The threshers had scheduled his farm in a few days, and he needed to be ready for them.[58] He could not chance the wagons falling apart at harvest time, so he sent Richard to Kaysville to buy five pounds of oil and a can of axle grease to lubricate them. Two days later, Richard went back to purchase necessary food for the family, including sugar, rice, tea, tapioca, lard, and bacon.

On October 10, John Thornley rode up to the Watt home, and Alice asked him to buy thread and worm tablets, probably for her pigs. Two days later, Elizabeth and Richard traveled to the store. Elizabeth bought some unlisted articles while Richard weighed sacks of barley, which totaled 2,833 pounds, used as credit for their purchases. Richard also picked up a lantern and ten cents worth of candy, which may have been enough for the entire family. Seven days after that, an unknown friend stopped at Elizabeth's, and she sent some of her butter to the store as credit, which George W. Barnes, the clerk, listed as "per stranger." On Thursday, October 20, Richard, with a heavily loaded wagon, brought in 3,604 pounds of barley from the threshing machine for credit. Will, Martha's oldest son, who was eleven years old, rode with Richard, and the storekeeper let him have a pencil for his mother. Two days later, Richard brought in another 2,038 pounds of barley for credit. He also bought crackers and cheese, perhaps for himself or his father, who had a craving for it, and some cigarettes for himself.

58. Threshers must have been a welcome sight for those farmers who remembered threshing wheat and barley the old way. I found a poem about threshers that included George D. Watt's name.

> t was the first of September—
> Hen's birthday it was—
> We were over the river
> Threshing a job
> When father George Watts
> Got caught in the rod.
> He must have been stout
> For his clothes were all stripped
> And his eyes were bunged out.
> He was a heck of a sight
> To be running about.
> Hurrah, Hurray the threshers we dread;
> We are a sad looking bunch
> And only half fed.
> Hurrah, Hurray the threshers we dread;
> We hardly have time to go to our bed.
> By Mont Maxfield; in author's possession.

There is no evidence to indicate the year when this happened. We know that the threshers came a few days before Watt's death in 1881. If it happened that year, the encounter with the threshing machine might have hurt enough to cause his death a few days later. That probably did not happen, however, because he took a load of grain to the store after that, which must have meant that he was healthy.

On October 22, two days before his death, Watt drove to the store to take care of some business that only he could transact with his wagon loaded with 2,183 pounds of lucerne seed, which the store credited him. Needing money for the threshers, he also drew out $101.11 in cash, and then for unknown reasons—perhaps for Richard's salary—he transferred $65.90 from his account to his son's account. He also bought a pair of shoes, probably for himself since he made the children's shoes, and some cheese.[59]

Not much is known about his sick times. Watt did not complain to others about ill health. He commented to Martha in 1868 that he no longer had his usual spring headache.[60] In 1871 he complained that he had just returned from a visit to Salt Lake City and was much fatigued.[61] In 1873 he said that his health for the last three to four weeks had "not been quite so vigorous." There is no record of him suffering with ill health for great periods of time.[62]

On the morning of October 24, 1881, Watt had returned for breakfast at Alice's house after his usual morning chores. How many people were there besides Richard and Alice is unknown. They talked for a few minutes, and then about 10:30 a.m., he asked for another cup of tea. The *Ogden Daily Herald* wrote that he was seized with a "faint of the stomach." He then told those who were there he was going to die, and within a few minutes, without a struggle, he expired.[63] A few minutes before his death, Richard burst out the door and ran breathless to the larger house, shouting, "Come quick! Father's sick." They all rushed down to the little house, but they were too late.[64] The families were heartbroken.[65] At 2:30 p.m., Christopher Layton, now a counselor in the stake presidency, sent a telegram to John Taylor announcing Watt's death.[66] The *Deseret Evening News,* which had been silent on Watt's activities since his excommunication, published an obituary.[67]

The *Salt Lake Herald* wrote a longer article. It had a copy of his autobiography and reviewed it before writing the obituary. "Being a self-made man of strong character, there is not a little in his career which is remarkable, and not a little which commends itself to the young man struggling for a place in the world," the obituary read. It reviewed his life and some of his major accomplishments: "He was a religious devotee and pursued the subject assiduously throughout his entire career." The article mentioned that

59. George D. Watt account, Kaysville Cooperative Mercantile Institute, Daybook, 1881–83, October 6, 8, 10, 12, 19, 20, 22, 1881, holographs, Heritage Museum, Layton, Utah.
60. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, May 9, 1868, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
61. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, July 7, 1871, holograph, Perry Special Collections.
62. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 26, 1873.
63. "Geo D. Watt Dead," *Ogden Daily Herald,* October 24, 1881, 3.
64. Annie Watt Anderson, "History of Martha Bench Watt Kilfoyle," p. 5.
65. Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert,* 108.
66. Christopher Layton to John Taylor, October 24, 1881, holograph, general correspondence, John Taylor First Presidency records, LDS Church Archives.
67. Untitled, *Deseret Evening News,* October 24, 1881, 14: 3.

he had often spoken in public in Salt Lake City "and had the reputation of being a man perhaps as well versed in the theological lore as one could find." He was one of the most reliable stenographers in the country. "A man naturally of great individuality and strong convictions, it could not be expected that he would fail, at times, to conflict with others upon important matters," the writer noted. The newspaper wrote that he was "honest, truthful and sincere." It claimed that he could have accumulated great wealth, but his heart was so wrapped up in "religious matters of the abstract" that he failed to do that, and he died comparatively poor. The newspaper thought that many would mourn him and "will remember him with favor as a friend and for earlier days of congenial fellowship."[68] Many of his neighbors probably felt like Jane Hooper, a resident of Kaysville, who said that he had once been highly thought of but for several years had been an apostate; she considered him a wicked man, "but he has gone to be judged for the good and evil he has done."[69]

With the funeral pending, the wives took stock of their "church clothes" and found them wanting. Martha went to the store and bought some hose and cloth for herself; some ruffling, crape cloth, and gloves for Elizabeth; and crape, other cloth, and gloves for Alice. She also purchased some sugar, probably to make treats for the guests afterward, and some much-needed soap. The wives spent the next few hours fixing their old dresses, adding a ruffle and handkerchiefs so they would look neat and proper.[70]

Watt's funeral took place on October 27 in the Kaysville Ward meetinghouse and was very well attended by many friends from Salt Lake City and also many local people. He had a regular Mormon service, and according to family tradition, John Taylor allowed him to be buried in his temple robes, although that seems doubtful. Taylor had seen Watt's long letter about his belief in Spiritualism. John Thornley, his old friend, spoke, but the rest of the program has been lost. Thornley likely praised him for his individuality and helpfulness to him throughout his life. Watt was buried in the Kaysville Cemetery.[71]

Following his death, Watt's four wives remained on the farm, but it was very difficult to feed twenty-three mouths. The family was destitute. In 1882 Christopher Layton paid the taxes for them. In 1881 the total value of real and personal property was $1,884. By 1889 the total value was only $1,195. The family's cattle had declined from nine to six. They had four horses and mules in 1881, and by 1889 that number had decreased to three. For sev-

68. "Geo D. Watt Dead," *Salt Lake Herald,* October 25, 1881, 8; "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," October 24, 1881, LDS Church Archives.
69. Jane Wilkie Hooper, Diary, October 24, 1881, LDS Church Archives.
70. George D. Watt account, Kaysville Cooperative Mercantile Institute, Daybook, 1881–83, October 25, 1881, p. 112.
71. Davis Stake High Council, records, November 16, 1881, LDS Church Archives.

eral years after Watt's death, the county remitted part of the taxes because the family was classified as indigent.[72] Elizabeth's oldest son, Richard, who was twenty when his father died, became the manager of the farm. He was a responsible young man, but he had no other men to rely on. The next oldest son, Will, Martha's boy, was only eleven when his father died.

Sometime before his death for some unknown reason, Watt made each wife promise that she would not remarry, but he did not expect to die as soon as he did. Also the promise could have been requested in jest.[73] He wanted the wives to live together, but it was an impossible dream. Alice had almost no chance to remarry, but the last three wives were much younger. Elizabeth was forty, Martha thirty-four, and Sarah only thirty-one when Watt died. Each of the younger wives had several small children, however, which reduced their prospects of remarrying. About a year after Watt died, Frank Kilfoyle, who was about ten years younger than Watt, courted and married Martha. They lived for a while in the big house but moved to Kaysville to be nearer to Kilfoyle's work. It was during this period that four of Martha's children—Will, James, Mary, and Annie—left their home in Kaysville and walked the three miles back to the Watt farm to play with their other brothers and sisters. They were disappointed because Elizabeth had put them to bed, and she later sent Martha's children back in a wagon.[74]

Kilfoyle was a laborer, and it was difficult for him to provide for his family. Martha's brothers finally offered her the old house on Main Street in Manti. Life was still hard in Manti, but at least the family had a home. Martha had three children by Kilfoyle, but one of them died as a baby and was buried in Kaysville. Tragedy struck Martha again in 1888 when Kilfoyle died. After his death, she remained a widow the rest of her life.

Martha often received food from the Presbyterian Church across the street. The LDS bishop apparently did not help her, or perhaps Martha refused his assistance because of the conflict with Bishop Layton in Kaysville. Martha's children also received a modicum of education from the Presbyterian school. She took care of the church in return for the children's education and some foodstuffs. After schooling in Manti, the youngest son, Frank Kilfoyle, went to Brigham Young University in Provo.[75]

In reality Martha's life with Watt had been only a twelve-year interlude from her life in little Manti. She looked back with fond memories on this period. After her children left home, she spent most of her life with her

72. Davis County Assessments, 1881, 1888, 1889, ser. 6030, accession 2041–42, microfilm of holographs, roll 2-778, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records, Utah State Archives.
73. Bigler interview.
74. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.
75. See T. Edgar Lyon, "Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas, 1865–1900 (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1962), section on Presbyterians; see also Jesse Smith Bushman, "A Qualitative Analysis of the Non-LDS Experience in Utah" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1995).

daughter Annie. She had her own room and a government pension of about thirty-six dollars a month because Kilfoyle had been a soldier. She gave her granddaughter her tithing money to take to the bishop, but for unknown reasons, Martha never went to church herself.[76] She died in 1926 in Portland, Oregon, while visiting one of her daughters. She was brought back to Manti and buried next to her second husband.

Sarah continued living in the big house with her children. In 1884 she was rebaptized, although it is unclear whether she had ever been excommunicated. People in that day were rebaptized for reasons other than readmittance into the church. In 1890 she became the second counselor in the new Relief Society in the Layton Ward. To provide for her family, Sarah washed clothes in other people's homes on a washboard for fifty cents a wash.[77] Elizabeth Watt Nalder, Sarah's daughter, remembers her mother making her clothes, and then Elizabeth would try them on and parade "across the room for mother to check the 'fit' and the way it 'hung.'" Sarah also knit her stockings.[78] When all of her children left the farm, she went to live with her children—John, Elizabeth, and Cora—in Southern California, dividing her time among them and busying herself with preparing food and crocheting. Sarah never showed emotion or divulged her secrets to others. Her granddaughter never remembers sitting on her lap "or getting a hug or kiss or having her say, 'I love you.' Of course, in those days people didn't show affection for others as they do today."[79] She died in the home of Elizabeth Watt Nalder, her daughter, in Inglewood, California, in 1932 at the age of eighty-two and was brought back to Kaysville to be buried next to her husband. She had been a widow for fifty-one years.

Elizabeth began to help her son Richard with the farm by selling dairy products. In 1883 she was named the administrator of the George D. Watt property, which the court awarded her. A few years after Watt died, she became ill with typhoid fever and took many months to recover. Some of the children were not baptized during Watt's lifetime because he was an excommunicated Mormon, and so after his death, she had the rest of them baptized.[80] She was also a Sunday school teacher for ten years.[81]

In 1889 the Kaysville second ward, later renamed Layton, was organized with Daniel B. Harris as the first bishop. Layton, named after Christopher Layton, was about twenty-five miles north of Salt Lake City. The Watt property was about two miles northeast of the town center.[82] Bishop Daniel B.

76. Bigler interview.
77. Bybee, "The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder."
78. Ibid.
79. "Davinie Watt Lythgoe Life History," p. 9.
80. Kaysville Ward, record of members, 1882, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.
81. Layton, "Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt."
82. See Andrew Jenson, "Layton Ward," in *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1941), 419; Jenson,

Author's Collection

Elizabeth Golightly Watt and Family, ca. 1896

Harris chose Elizabeth Watt as the first Relief Society president of the new Layton Ward. The women sustained her by a unanimous vote with Mary A. Adams as the first counselor and Sarah Watt as the second one. In her acceptance speech, Elizabeth thanked all the women for their kindness. Sarah also thanked them.[83] Elizabeth found that it was convenient having Sarah close at hand to help take care of Relief Society duties. In March 1891 she and Sarah visited the sick in the ward.[84] She remained Relief Society president for fourteen years.[85]

Elizabeth and Sarah supported their families by selling dairy products and farming.[86] Elizabeth Watt Nalder remembers Elizabeth and Sarah feeding the threshing crew of about thirty men: "Mounds and pounds of meat, potatoes, vegetables, bread, butter, milk, pudding and pies must be gathered and prepared." For meat they bought and butchered a sheep. "Our potato patch was raided to get new potatoes; puddings were mixed, fruit-filled, rolled and boiled in a cloth, then served with dip or sauce." When

"Layton Ward Manuscript History."

83. Layton Ward, Relief Society records, September 17, 1890, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
84. Ibid., March 19, 1890.
85. Ibid., also see Layton Ward, roll book, 1904–10, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
86. Layton, "Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt."

Author's Collection

Sarah Ann Harter Watt and Family, ca. 1895

they loaded the tables with the feast, the children waved tree branches over the food to keep flies away.[87]

In Elizabeth's room was a lidded four-by-six-foot wooden box that contained her treasures, including pictures, gifts, clothes and Watt's proposal letter. She called it "me box" and showed its contents to very few people. On top of her box was Watt's picture, and whenever she saw it, she commented, "Nice man, Grandpa Watt, always so tender."[88]

Elizabeth's family expanded into the rooms in the big house that Martha's family vacated. When all of her children except Andrew had married, Elizabeth and Andrew went to live with her daughter, Alice Layton, in the town of Layton. Andrew, who had an inflammation of the kidneys called Bright's disease, needed to be near a doctor. In 1902 two of her children died: Andrew of Bright's disease and Isabell Watt Williams of unknown causes. Then Elizabeth returned to the farm on the hill to nurse Alice. Her daughter Rachel and her husband, James Whitesides, also came to live with them on the farm. In 1907 Alice deeded her property to Whitesides. She died on November 21, 1909, and Elizabeth stayed a few more years in the little house. [89]

87. Bybee, "The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder."
88. Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," p. 11.
89. Davis County Recorder's Office, Land Record, July 17, 1907, book Y, p. 174 (September 14, 1912). Perhaps Alice wanted to leave the property to Elizabeth, but Elizabeth convinced her to deed it to James Whitesides, her daughter Rachael's husband. According to Kennan Whitesides in Jane Stromquist's "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," his family lived with Alice. Perhaps Elizabeth lived in her old apartment in the big house.

During this stage of her life, she became concerned with temple ordinances for her ancestors and family. According to Mormon doctrine, ancestors need to be baptized vicariously and have other saving ordinances performed by their relatives in the temple. Elizabeth got great joy from sending her family names to the temple.

Franklin D. Richards had spoken to John Taylor, the president of the LDS Church, about Watt and his family a year after his death. They had even discussed the prospects for him in the afterlife because of his beliefs at the time of his death.[90] At this time, Elizabeth became concerned about his salvation. She wanted him reinstated in the church with his vital temple ordinances renewed. In 1886 she wrote a very polite letter to President Taylor informing him that her son Richard was going to the temple and asking if he could do the work for Watt. Taylor responded that the time was not yet right and "it would be better to let everything stand in his case, as it is, for the present."[91]

A few years later in 1891, Elizabeth finally decided to travel to Salt Lake City to see the president of the LDS Church, now Wilford Woodruff. As she was waiting for the stage, she noticed President Woodruff across the road in his carriage. She quickly walked over and asked him for help. He told her to send Richard to the Logan Temple the following year, and he would be able to perform the ordinances for his father, which he did.[92]

Elizabeth tried to maintain good relationships with Watt's other wives. Sarah was her Relief Society counselor. She also visited Martha in Manti several times, and Martha visited her. Hazel Bigler, Martha's granddaughter, remembered the visits to Manti: "oh, such happiness and such love—those old women with their arms around each other. . . . they were these little English ladies who just adored each other, and they had the grandest time."[93]

Elizabeth eventually left the sand ridge and her little home to live with her children. She lived with her oldest living daughter, Alice, until she died in June 1920. Then Elizabeth lived with Jane Ellison.[94] For several years, she lived with her daughter Rachael Whitesides, who ran a boardinghouse

90. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, April 3, 1882, LDS Church Archives
91. Elizabeth G. Watt to John Taylor, November 16, 1886, general correspondence, John Taylor First Presidency records; John Taylor to Elizabeth G. Watt, November 24, 1886, Letterpress Copybooks, Taylor First Presidency records. Based on Taylor's answer, it is doubtful that he gave permission for Watt to be buried in his temple robes.
92. Logan Temple records, Baptisms for the Dead, February 3, 1892, book N, p. 50, microfilm of holograph, film no. 177853, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. The small writing above the entry reads, "and all former blessings sealed upon him as per written instructions of the Presidency of the Church, on file dated December 26, 1891." On February 2, 1892, Richard journeyed to Logan, and the next day in the temple J. E. Roueche baptized him, N. C. Edlefson confirmed him, and he restored all Watt's former blessings vicariously.
93. Bigler interview.
94. Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," p. 15.

next to the sugar factory in West Layton with her husband. She helped feed the men who lived there until she slipped while carrying a kettle of boiling water and fell, breaking her hip. It took her months to recover from this accident, and her leg was never strong again. After that she sat on a pillow in her rocking chair in a corner of the living room. When she wanted to move, she tucked the pillow under her arm and shuffled along the floor, pushing the chair before her or holding another person.[95]

Elizabeth's life after marriage was divided into sections. The first part took place in Salt Lake City, which she enjoyed immensely, reveling in her life as a prominent woman in her new home with her husband. Her second stage was one of poverty in Davis County while Watt lived and even greater poverty after his death. In 1890 she found new life serving her church. After that she became more of a guest in the homes of her two daughters. She never complained and asked for little. She finally died on September 18, 1930, at eighty-nine, having been a widow for forty-nine years.

The old townhouse was abandoned sometime after 1898, when Elizabeth left. The windows were broken, and the house slowly decayed. Only one photograph of it exists, showing it as a deserted shell. Sometime prior to World War II, the house was razed, but the foundation remained for about twenty more years. Alice's house, which was smaller and more useable, survived, although it was much changed by new additions.[96]

The memory of George D. Watt lived on in his wives, who praised him to their children and grandchildren as a kind and gentle man. The wives did not leave the LDS Church but remained faithful in the church that Watt had abandoned. He probably would have wanted it that way. He had given himself and almost all his worldly goods to the church and the territory of Utah. He was a man with strong character and definite beliefs.

Unlike some of the other Godbeites who left the LDS Church, Watt's life was never lost among the faithful. His claim to fame was his baptism in 1837 as the first English convert. Others, such as Mormon biographer Andrew Jenson, remembered that he was one of the first dry farmers in the territory of Utah, but his accomplishments are greater than that. He acted in the theater and played viola in the best orchestra of that day in Utah. He wrote about economic theory and practical agricultural. But his knowledge of Pitman shorthand and its use to record the sermons of President Brigham Young are undoubtedly his greatest contributions. He also helped create the Deseret Alphabet. Throughout his life he was foremost a religious man, but also a newspaper journalist, a shorthand reporter, an actor, a musician, an artist, an economist, an agriculturist, a philosopher, and a theologian. All of those attributes mark him as a key player on the stage of nineteenth-century Utah life.

95. Ibid., p. 9. Alean Ellison Layton wrote that Sarah fell at Jane Ellison's home.
96. The house is just north of Antelope Drive.

Still Watt will always be remembered for his act of defiance against Brigham Young, when he left the president's office and later the church that had given him spiritual nourishment for more than thirty years and embraced Spiritualism. His actions were prompted by hurt feelings but also his strong character. Andrew Jenson began a biographical sketch of Watt for his *Biographical Encyclopedia* but did not include it in the volume. Jenson wanted to glorify fervent pioneers and stalwart Latter-day Saints, and Watt did not qualify.

After his death, his wives tried to forget being hurt by their neighbors. Alice handled it well because she remembered the better days in Salt Lake City. Elizabeth and Sarah devoted themselves to the church that Watt had eschewed. Martha survived because she moved back to Manti, where she had family who supported her. All of them nurtured their good memories of life with Watt.

George D. Watt's writings reveal him as a human being full of emotion and contradiction. One of his most poignant statements was his marriage proposal to Elizabeth: "I offer myself to you, if you can in return give me this love, and with it yourself, which offering would be prized by me above the glittering and perishable treasures of earth."[97] He could argue emotionally and logically with Willard Richards about Richards not paying him for his work. Yet when Richards died in 1854, Watt called him "one of the best and greatest men that ever trod the earth."[98]

He could address Brigham Young as a brother and a father. While he was employed in Young's office, he seemed to depend upon him for advice and help. After leaving the office, however, Watt cut off this channel of communication. Christopher Layton, his bishop, had predicted in a public meeting that Watt would apostatize. Watt reacted much like his fictional counterpart, "Little George," telling Brigham Young, "Espionage, or adversity only stiffens my neck and sets me in defiance, while generous kindness, and smiling friendship melts my soul into tears of gratitude and resolves of eternal affiance."[99] In his letter to John Taylor, he was introspective and thoughtful when he expressed his religious beliefs, yet he acknowledged his responsibility for many of his problems: "In strict accordance with my impulsive nature [I] kicked over the bucket and spilled the milk."[100]

Over a lifetime, Watt appears contradictory and erratic, yet he remained consistent emotionally. He needed the love and friendship of others. In 1852 he told Willard Richards, "You can lead me but you cannot intimi-

97. George D. Watt to Elizabeth Golightly, 1858, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.
98. "Journal History," March 12, 1854.
99. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, August 23, 1871, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.
100. George D. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878, holograph, general correspondence, Taylor First Presidency records.

date me: while a kind word from your lips vibrates through my soul like the sweetest sounds of harmony."[101] In 1871 he told Brigham Young that only through generous kindness and smiling friendship would he follow. He told John Taylor in 1878, "While love sings, and friendship pleads resistance dies."[102]

To many his life story may seem like a tragedy. He started out as almost an orphan: unkempt, unclean, unwanted, and uncared for. Religiously he began as a Primitive Methodist, journeyed through Mormonism, and ended as a spiritualist. This religious wavering makes him seem inconsistent, yet he consistently sought to be a religious and righteous person. He had little formal education, mostly from a teacher in the poorhouse, yet he became the foremost philosopher of economic theory in Utah. Though he became embroiled in confrontations, he desperately wanted people's love and acceptance. In the final analysis, George D. Watt was a unique individual: a product of his time, yet very much his own person.

101. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 29, 1852, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.
102. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878.

Index

BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY/Historical; HISTORY/ United States/State & Local/West

Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

George Watt's house, middle background, looms over the homes of his employer, the leader of his church, and his eventual nemesis, Brigham Young.

George D. Watt was the first of many nineteenth-century English converts to the Mormon Church. A largely self-taught intellectual, he became a clerk for Brigham Young and the recorder and distributor of sermons by Mormon leaders (in the *Journal of Discourses*). He played the central role in creating the Deseret Alphabet, a unique Mormon orthography that was expected, in a typical demonstration of Mormon goals for self-sufficiency, to improve and distinguish the education and communication of church members. Once a loyal, essential employee of Brigham Young but a man with a strong will, Watt broke with Young and the Mormon Church over wages. Remaining a polygamist, he became a spiritualist, retired to social isolation on his rural farm, struggled to support his large family, but continued to write about what he knew and believed.

Front cover: George D. Watt, c.a. 1860. Courtesy Daughters of the Utah Pioneers
Cover design by Barbara Yale-Read

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