



## Front Matter

*The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3. (Jul., 1973)

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*The Western Historical Quarterly* is currently published by Western Historical Quarterly, Utah State University.

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THE  
Western  
Historical  
Quarterly

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JULY 1973

HOW I GOT THIS WAY

*Don Russell*

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES  
IN WESTERN LITERARY HISTORY

*Richard W. Etulain*

THE WRITINGS OF BRIGHAM YOUNG

*Dean C. Jessee*

VISIONS OF THE NORTHWEST COAST:  
GWIN AND SEWARD IN THE 1850s

*Howard I. Kushner*

PUBLISHED FOR THE WESTERN HISTORY ASSOCIATION  
BY UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY, LOGAN, UTAH

VOLUME IV



NUMBER 3

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# *The Writings of Brigham Young*

DEAN C. JESSEE

In an 1873 letter summarizing his life for the editor of the *New York Herald*, Brigham Young expressed disappointment that his mission was not “better understood by the world.” But he assured his correspondent that “the time will come when I will be understood and I leave to futurity the judgment of my labors and their results as they shall become manifest.”<sup>1</sup> That the predicted age of “understanding” has not fully dawned is evident from the distorted image of Brigham Young that has been perpetuated in the years since these lines were written. The failure of writers to accurately portray Brigham Young is due, at least in part, to the herculean task of assimilating the massive amount of primary source material pertaining to him.

The most significant source of information on the life of Brigham Young is the collection of his papers filed in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. This collection, comprising more than a hundred boxes of records, contains the 47,735-page manuscript history of Brigham Young, twenty-one volumes of letter books totaling 15,000 pages, four personal diaries, nine office journals, seventeen boxes of loose papers (rough-draft letters, addresses, certificates, and other documents), several thousand items of incoming correspondence, four volumes of telegram books, and numerous records pertaining to Brigham Young’s business holdings — not to mention the voluminous printed works and manuscript collections related to him.

Nearly all of the writings that appear over Brigham Young’s signature are in the handwriting of twenty-four men who assisted him in a secretarial capacity at one time or another during the last thirty years of

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<sup>1</sup> Young to James G. Bennett, 10 April 1873, Letter Book 15: 319–23, Brigham Young Collection, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. All Young papers cited are in this collection.

his life.<sup>2</sup> Of an estimated 70,000 pages authored by Brigham Young in the church archives, fewer than 425 were written in his own hand. The other material he either dictated to scribes or directed the most able among his assistants to write for him.<sup>3</sup>

Since a biographer's view of an individual is often obscured by the writings of secretaries or ghost writers, it is of particular worth for him to identify his subject's personal (holograph) writings. The holographs of Brigham Young must form the nucleus of any accurate study of the man. Although these personal writings reveal a deficiency in literary mechanics — a fact that goes far to explain President Young's reticence to write with his own hand — they provide an invaluable window into his character and intellect that is sometimes obscured in his public writings.

The letters dictated by Brigham Young to his secretaries show a maturity of style not so evident in his autograph writings, which are clouded by spelling and grammatical imperfections. On the other hand, the autograph writings reflect a sensitive personality not readily discerned in the voluminous public correspondence. His holographs more closely parallel the Brigham Young described by those who knew him best.

The personal writings of Brigham Young in the church archives consist of three diaries, forty-nine letters, one notebook, and eleven other documents, all written between the years 1832 and 1875. The phonetic spelling of these writings shows a man who had very little formal schooling. Of his education Brigham Young said in a published discourse:<sup>4</sup>

Often, when I stand up here, I have the feelings of a person that is unable to convey his ideas, because I have not the advantage of language. However . . . I rise to do the best I can. . . .

Brother Heber [Kimball] and I never went to school until we got into "Mormonism": that was the first of our schooling. We never had the oppor-

<sup>2</sup> Nearly all of Brigham Young's papers written by secretaries are in the handwriting of the following men: Robert L. Campbell, Thomas Bullock, Willard Richards, Daniel H. Wells, Jonathan Grimshaw, Albert Carrington, Daniel Mackintosh, David O. Calder, Patrick Lynch, George Sims, Thomas W. Ellerbeck, Joseph M. Simmonds, Thomas D. Brown, John T. Caine, David McKenzie, Joseph A. Young, George Reynolds, A. Milton Musser, Hiram B. Clawson, Leo Hawkins, James Jack, Horace K. Whitney, George Q. Cannon, and George D. Watt.

<sup>3</sup> Notations in Brigham Young's office journal refer to his method of corresponding: 17 June 1857, "[President Young] dictating correspondence to his son Jos. A. Young"; 27 October 1857, "President Young remained in the Office during part of the morning dictating letter to Garland Hurt"; 4 May 1860, "President Young directed A. Carrington to answer a few letters."

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, 1851-86), V: August 2, 1857, p. 97.

tunity of letters in our youth, but we had the privilege of picking up brush, chopping down trees, rolling logs, and working amongst the roots, and of getting our shins, feet, and toes bruised. . . . I learned to make bread, wash dishes, milk the cows, and make butter . . . . Those are about all the advantages I gained in my youth.

An explanation of Brigham Young's determination to speak in spite of a lack of oratorical skill may also be applied to his literary efforts:<sup>5</sup>

When I first commenced preaching, I made up my mind to declare the things that I understood, fearless of friends and threats, and regardless of caresses. They were nothing to me, for if it was my duty to rise before a congregation of strangers and say that the Lord lives, that He has revealed Himself in this our day, that He has given to us a Prophet, and brought forth the new and everlasting covenant for the restoration of Israel, and if that was all I could say, I must be just as satisfied as though I could get up and talk for hours. If I could only say that I was a monument of the Lord's work upon the earth, that was sufficient; and had it not been for this feeling, nothing could have induced me to have become a public speaker.

Had Brigham Young been speaking and writing a phonetically spelled language such as German, his autograph writings would have appeared to the reader then and now as literate as those of any intelligent man with a solid education. As it is, the inconsistencies of English orthography evaded him throughout his life. What quirks of spelling he observed and tried to incorporate into his writing served only to confuse the system of "spell as it sounds" he had evolved for himself. He often added a meaningless *e* to the end of a word, probably because he had noticed the silent vowel on some English words and recognized that they did not alter the sound in any way he could observe. *Go* becomes *goe*, *do* becomes *due*, for example. The verb *write* he rendered *wright*, obviously from his having noticed *right* and the *w* on *write*. His natural inclination to spell the two words the same, according to their sound, gave way to a desire to be consistent with a system of spelling foreign to his own.

Stylistically, Brigham Young's prose followed the pattern of the spoken language. In recounting experiences he used short sentences, often omit-

<sup>5</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, IV: August 17, 1856, p. 21. On another occasion Brigham Young noted: "when I began to speak in public, I was about as destitute of language as a man could well be. . . . How I have had the headache, when I had ideas to lay before the people, and not words to express them; but I was so gritty that I always tried my best." *Ibid.*, V: August 2, 1857, p. 97.

ting the punctuation, or joining elements with simple connectives — implied commas, *and*, and *but*. However, he was in no way ignorant of the more complex forms of the language and in some cases demonstrated his facility in their use. In describing the incident on board the *Robert Fulton* cited below, for example, he used three subordinate clauses, a participial phrase containing a noun clause, and an absolute construction, all grammatically connected in one sentence. There is some awkwardness in the flow of the sentence, but no more than would be expected in the attempt of any intelligent man to describe a complex occurrence in a few words. In general, the autograph writings of Brigham Young, read aloud or properly punctuated and transmitted into standard spelling, read as well as the personal letters and diaries of his more formally educated contemporaries. In reproducing the holographs here, I have made no changes except some added punctuation to facilitate clarity and ease of reading, leaving to the reader the responsibility of deciphering the message. Through the unorthodox spelling and sparsely punctuated expressions, the careful reader can more readily approximate the sound of the leader's voice and the flow of his ideas than would be possible had I made any more editorial corrections.

For purposes of study, Brigham Young's holograph writings conveniently cover five geographical periods of his life: Ohio, England, Illinois, the Great Plains, and Utah.

*Ohio Writings.* One small handwritten diary contains Brigham Young's writings from the Ohio period. His first recorded words announce his entry into the Mormon church: "Apriel 9th 1832 I was Baptized under the hand of Elezer Miller and ordained, preacht as oportunity prezented." The diary details six missionary journeys to the eastern United States and Canada between 1832 and 1836. In January 1833 he traveled to Canada with his brother Joseph: I "was gan [gone] till the firs[t] of March tr[a]veled 5 or 6.00 miles held a bout 40 metings Baptized 14 in Canadia 9 of them myself." <sup>6</sup>

Two months after his appointment to the Council of Twelve Apostles in February 1835, Brigham was called by Joseph Smith to assist in opening the door of the gospel to the Indians. In May, while traveling and preaching in western New York, he went to Cold Spring, where he visited "meney of the seed of Joseph [the American Indians] among them ware

<sup>6</sup> Diary of Brigham Young, 1832-36.



two Chefts [chieftains] one a presbeterin the other a Pagon. wee went and praid with the Prsbterin Cheft." <sup>7</sup>

An incident during his mission to the eastern states in 1836 is noteworthy. He writes that shortly after leaving Buffalo, New York, in May en route to Albany on the boat *Robert Fulton*, "there was a young man on bard who had a pistle whoe carleesley snapt it and not noing that it was loded, it being loded hit a man in the lage Jest below the knee — the man's name was John Freeman. he lives in Middleburry Jensee [Genesee] Couny." Two months later he arrived in Boston. "We spent the day in visiting the City and frends and recivd a visit from Preast Talor. we bore testmoney of the book of Mormon and drowned him in his own words and let him goe." <sup>8</sup>

*British Mission Writings*. Two of Young's diaries and fifteen letters, containing more than half of his personal writings, record his British mission experiences of 1839 to 1841.

Departing from Montrose, Iowa, on September 14, 1839, so ill that he was unable to travel without assistance, Young stopped in Kirtland, Ohio, in November, where he found "frends and the Church in a striving to serve the Lord." On November 26 the missionaries crossed Lake Erie to Buffalo, New York. "We had anexelent time on the lakae, the wind arose about one o'clock in the morning. I went up on deck and I felt impres in spirit to pray to the Father in name of Jesus for a forgiveness of all my sins and then I fe[!]t to command the winds to sees [cease] and let ous goe safe on our Jorney. the winds abated and glory & ouner [honor] & prase be to that God that rules all things." <sup>9</sup>

Brigham Young summarized his voyage to England by noting that he and his companions endured "16 days head wind a number of days calm one savere storme 3 or 4 days. some others stormes. agrate deal of the time the ship decks would be washed from end to end." <sup>10</sup> He landed at Liverpool with Heber C. Kimball and Parley P. Pratt on April 6, 1840.

His first written communication in England is a letter to George A. Smith from Ledbury on May 4:

There is a grate caul for Preaching in this regon of contry. there semes to be an opening clear thraught to Bristel. also in Worcester they are want-

<sup>7</sup> Diary, 1832-36.

<sup>8</sup> Diary, 1832-36.

<sup>9</sup> Diary of Brigham Young, 1837-45.

<sup>10</sup> Diary, 1837-45.

ing to here the word preached there. I expect to goe to Manchester soon to help Br P.P.P. [Parley P. Pratt] about the Hym Book but I shall not be long and when I returne I think we shall want to goe south as far as London if the Lord opens the way. . . . I have had an intervew with 2 Priest[s] one a Baptist the other a methodst. but they are jest like the rest of the Priest[s]. they have jest reledon enuph to damb them no inlenation to even inquire after the gospel of Jesus Christ. this is a wicked place but there is a fue that want to be saved.

In a letter written from Manchester to Willard Richards in June, Young reported his efforts to have the Book of Mormon printed and described the costs involved. He concluded with a caution that is typical of his humor: "Be careful not to lay this letter with the new testment wrightings. if you doe som body will take it for a text after the Malineum [Millennium] a[nd] contend about it." He added, "now my Dear Brother you must forgive all my noncense and over look erours."<sup>11</sup>

Writing a week later in response to a request by Willard Richards for permission to visit his wife, Young wittily replied:<sup>12</sup>

thus saith the scripiter he that provideth not fore his own house hold — had — but perhaps he has no house, well has he got a famely? yes he has got a wife. then let him see that she is taken care of and her hart comforted — but stop say som, why doe you not takare of your famely? I doe when circumstances doe not renderet otherwise. there is a difference betwene 3 months jorny and a fue ours ride. now I say to ancer my own feelings com as soon as you can leve things there. this is not by revelation nor by commandment so put it not with the anpistles of the new testement but Brigham sayes come and see your wife. . . . excuse erours and mistakes you must remember its from me.

Brigham Young's apology for his literary shortcomings characterizes several of his writings, illustrates his awareness of inadequate literary skill, and is a factor that explains the relative scarcity of his autograph writings during the Utah years when clerks were available to write for him.

In October 1840 Brigham and Heber C. Kimball wrote from Manchester to George A. Smith in London ordering pocket watches from a local member of the church. This letter also anticipates Young's later taste for fine things.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Young to Willard Richards, 10 June 1840.

<sup>12</sup> Young to Willard Richards, 17 June 1840.

<sup>13</sup> Young to George A. Smith, 14 October 1840.

I want mine with one hand to keep the day of the month, and a second hand if it can be don and still have the watch equally as good . . . in sted of haveing figars I want it letterd. begining with the figar 1 put B, for 2 put R and so on as I have jst 12 letters in my name. tell Father Corner we want as good time peaces as can be made.

Church emigration was the subject of a letter to George A. Smith in February 1841:<sup>14</sup>

We wish you to call the chu[r]ches to gether in your part and ascertain emeditly how meny of the Bretherin can be reddy to sale by the 10 of march next, as we shall fit of another company. then we wish you to wright to us and let [us] know by the 25 of this month. let us have the names of all, and the ages of all the children under 14 years. children from one to 14 will goe 2 for one; under one year they goe free. appoint your agent to be reddy to come here 72 Burlington Street with the passag and provision monney which will be 4£ 10 S per passenger: . . . bring no provision with you except Bacon ham and pickles, as we can buy much cheeper here then you can there. our advice is for all to goe that can in march, as they will goe by New orlenes and can goe to Nauvoo from Liverpool for a bout 6£ and it will cost 10 or 12 to goe by New York.

Brigham Young's wit was again evident in a letter to Willard Richards in March 1841 when he bid Richards to "give my love to [the] Br & Sisters of the household [at the church offices in Liverpool]," but, he cautioned, "I due not say greet them with a holy kis."<sup>15</sup>

An incident recorded in Young's diary gives a brief glimpse of social conditions in Victorian England. While walking along the road near "Gritts Greene" with Heber C. Kimball on November 28, 1840, the missionaries observed a poor man "who was morning and lying to gether and stagering lened up a ganst the fence. I asked him the reson of his feeling so. he replied he was fainting for the want of food. he said he had not eat ennything for 2 days. Br Kimball handed him 6 pence and we left him."<sup>16</sup>

On December 4 Young and Wilford Woodruff visited the sights of London: "We walked through St. James Park had a fare vue of all the Palses [palaces], saw whare Quene Victory rezide in Buckinham

<sup>14</sup> Young to George A. Smith, 13 February 1841.

<sup>15</sup> Young to Willard Richards, 5 March 1841.

<sup>16</sup> Diary of Brigham Young, 1840-44.

Pales, went from there to the abby, had a vue of the hol of it and returned to our lodgens whare Br Kimball had ben all day."

Brigham Young left England on April 21, 1841. He later dictated a summary of his year's labor there:<sup>17</sup>

We landed . . . as strangers in a strange land, and penniless, but through the mercy of God we have gained many friends, established churches in almost every noted town and city in the kingdom of Great Britain, baptized between seven and eight thousand, printed 5000 Books of Mormon, 3000 Hymn Books, 2500 volumes of the Millennial Star, and 50,000 tracts, and emigrated to Zion 1000 souls, established a permanent shipping agency, which will be a great blessing to the Saints, and have left sown in the hearts of many thousands the seeds of eternal truth, which will bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God, and yet we have lacked nothing to eat, drink or wear: in all these things I acknowledge the hand of God.

One of Brigham Young's diaries contains this graphic account of his voyage home:<sup>18</sup>

waed ancar [weighed anchor] a bout 10 a.m. saled out of the River a bout 12. had a fine brease till out of the chanel. we had 8 days contr[ar]y wind. 29[th] wind changed. had fare wind and a plesent sale for 4 days then the wind fel way. be calmed on the Banks of new found Land. I was verry sick & destred in my head & stomick. I felt as though I could not endure menny such voiges as I had indured for 2 years or sence I started on my mision. and ware it not for the power of God & his tendere mercy I should despare, but the Lord is my strength. this is the 5 day of May 1841. it is a fine plesent day. yesterday was the first day that looked like an american day for the pureness of the atmostfere. there has ben som sickness on bord sence we started; sister Erskan Child and sister Greene child has ben sick. the Bretherin and Sisters apere to feele well this morning though som have felt to grumble som sence we have ben on our jorney. when the winds ware contry the 12 a gread to humble them selves before the Lord and ask him to calm the sease & give us a fair wind. we did so & the wind emeditly changed and from that time to this it has blone in our favor. . . . Sunday the 9 the wind from the north. we sale a about 12 not a noure [knots an hour]. we are all pertty well. my head akes a little. my helth is verry feeble. . . . wensday 12 the wind is right a head of us. about 10 a.m. we came in sight of land the south point of novacoshia. the cap[tain] said it was cape sable. we have seene 3 vessels. . . . friday morning the 14 fare and plesent. a light wind from the north east. all feele pertty well. we are a

<sup>17</sup> "History of Brigham Young," *Deseret News*, March 10, 1858.

<sup>18</sup> *Diary*, 1840-44.

bout 500 m from N. York. calme all day. the ship lies still on the water. we see a grate menny small fish we thaught mackrel. there is a grate menney see weeds in the water for 2 days back. . . . tusday 18 fine and present. win[d] not faverable. 11 ½ saw a smoke arising from Jersey shore. had a fine night rest last night. we saled south from N. York about 30 'or 40 miles then tacked a bout from N. York a bout 5 P.M. we soon came in sight [of] Barneget light house 45 miles from sanday hook. wensday 19 we came in to the bay a bout 4 a.m. fine morning. my native Land looks good to me.

While en route from New York to Nauvoo, the train in which the missionaries were riding "had a fine caredge on it, which took fire & before the Ingener could be notified it burned up so as to spoile it." As they continued their journey from Pittsburg on June 12 traveling by boat, Brigham Young noted that "the water [was so] verry low the boat rubed on the Botom several times 12 miles below Pit we run a ground." Shortly after getting under way again, two days later, "when the steam was put to the whele the condenst steam in ascape pipe pord out . . . and scolt [a] woman and a daughter & child by the name of Thomas."<sup>19</sup> Brigham Young's account of his homeward journey ends abruptly at this point.

*Illinois Writings.* Young arrived home from England on July 1, 1841. His first diary notation after reaching Nauvoo is an entry made January 18, 1842: "This Evening I am with my wife a lone by my fire side for the first time for years. we injoi it and feele to prase the Lord."<sup>20</sup>

After the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, was urged by his associates to become a presidential candidate in the forthcoming national election of 1844, Brigham Young was among missionaries called to travel throughout the country to promote his candidacy. Young left Nauvoo on May 21 en route for New York. As he was leaving Warren, Ohio, on June 4 he met a large party going to an abolitionist convention in Akron: "the sperit manifested by som was to put down every body but them selves."<sup>21</sup> Two days later he arrived in the former church headquarters at Kirtland, where he preached in the temple: "I gave them a lector [lecture] in the evening on the Location of Nauvoo — the people are ded & cold in relegion here in Kirtland."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Diary, 1840-44.

<sup>20</sup> Diary, 1837-45.

<sup>21</sup> Diary, 1840-44.

<sup>22</sup> Diary, 1840-44.

A letter written to Willard Richards from Salem, Massachusetts, on July 8, 1844, summarizes Young's journey east and the success of his mission. It also indicates that he had not yet received word of the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, who had been killed at Carthage, Illinois, on June 27.

I set down a few minits to wright to you as Br Erastus Snow is a going to start for Nauvoo to morrow. he has ben to Vermont and aranged all things pertaining to the election.

We cannot get one word from our famelies by letter sence the fire of the exposer expired, or the brands ware put to gether and consumed. Sister Ruth Sairs has received a letter from hir husben I understand that gives som information which seams to be satisfactory. a cording to what we here in this contry a bout the Mormons in the west I should suppose that there is an election a bout to take place or the Prophet had offered himself for som office in the United States, for of all the howleings of Devils and Devils whelps this seson cannot be beat. Some times the mormons are all kild, some time there half kild, some time the blod is shoe deep in Nauvoo, some times old Jo as they col him is taken by the mob and cared [carried] to Mo., some times he is gone to Washington, some times he has runaway geven up to the autoritys &c &c &c. one mite suppose him to be a sectarian God — without Body parts or pasion his center everywhare and cacomfranc [circumference] no whare. Sence I left Nauvoo I have herd a grate meny expresions a bout the Prophet. it is the prevaling opinion that he is the smartest man in the Union, and the people are a frade of his smartness. som will vote for him for the novility of the thing, som to see what a Prophet will due at the hed of goverment. we had a fine paseg on the rivers Preached and lectored all the way round. I lectored at Pitsburge and in Kirtland. we held a political meeting in Shalorsville and Hiram. I preached in the first hous west of old Father Johnson[s] whare Bro Joseph and Sidney was mobd. I looked at the house a grate menny times. I left Br Snow and Brooks in Ohio duing well. the twelve have ben faithful in all things. Br William Smith is a grate man in his cauling in this contry. Br Lyman Wight has never ben with us before. he is a grate good noble harted man. I love my Bretherin more and more. I want to see you and the rest of the Bretherin in Nauvoo. give my best love to Brothers Joseph [and] Hiram. I cannot be there to see them but I Pray for them continually, and for you and all the Bretherin in our beloved Citty and I pray my Hevenly Father to preserve my Bretherin my famely and the hol citty. I pray that we may finish the Temple and get our indowments. I was glad when I herd the Nauvoo exsposer was got along with. it gives us a good chance to speak upon such subjects. we had a large congration in Boston at our

convencion, though in the evening there was som came in that made some desterbance. this proves that the voice of the people rule, that is the voice of the rabble, one of the watch got som hurt — but all this did us good in Boston. Br Haywood from Quincy is here with us and is duing much good. he is a faithful witness for Br Joseph, and the principles of righteousness. we have Baptised a good meny sence we left. the gospel is going a head. all the stories that are going the rounds makes no difference. the people will beleve the gospel. you mite aske what we think about Br Josephs geting the election this yeare, you know all about it. we shall due all we can and leve the event with god. the god of Heven will due jest as he pleses about it. . . .

May the Lord Bless you all Brigham Young

I have not time to look over this letter take it as it is. over look mistakes.

A week after writing these lines, Brigham Young “started for Boston having heard of Bro J & H Smiths deth”<sup>23</sup> and on Wednesday July 24 left for Illinois in company with Heber C. Kimball.

They arrived in Nauvoo on August 6, 1844: “we came with purfict safty arived home on tusday evening jest at dark. our famelies and the Bretherin ware over joyed to see us come home, for they ware like children with out a Father.”<sup>24</sup>

A significant entry in Brigham Young’s diary is his account of the August 8, 1844 conference in Nauvoo, in which Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith’s counselor in the presidency of the church, asserted his claim to lead the church. The statement is important because many who were present on that occasion later claimed that Brigham took on the appearance and voice of Joseph Smith as he addressed the congregation, which was interpreted by them as showing that the mantle of divine authority to lead the church had fallen upon the senior member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.<sup>25</sup>

this day is long to be rememberd by me. it is the first time I have met with the Church at Nauvoo sence Brs. Joseph and Hiram was kild — and the aucasion on which the church was cauld somewhat painful to me. Br Rigdon had com from Pitsburge to see the Brethrin and find out if they would sustain

<sup>23</sup> Diary, 1840–44.

<sup>24</sup> Brigham Young to Vilate Young, 11 August 1844, reproduced in Lindsay Curtis, *Mother’s Footsteps: Biography of Genevieve Raine Curtis* (Salt Lake City, 1962), 237–38; also, xerox copy of original (in possession of Lindsay Curtis, Ogden, Utah), Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

<sup>25</sup> Diary, 1837–45.

him as the Leader of the saints. I perseved a spirit to hurry buisness, to get a Trustee & Trust and a Presedecy over the church, Priesthood or no Priesthood right or rong & this greved my hart. Now Joseph is gon it seamd as though menny wanted to draw off a party and be leders, but this cannot be. the church must be one or they are not the Lords; the saints looked as though they had lost a frend that was able and willing to councel them in all thing[s]: in this time of sorrow my hart was fild with compositon [compassion]. after Br Rigdon had made a long spech to the saints (I should think 5 thousand) I arose and spokke to the people. my hart was swolen with compositon toards them and by the power of the Holy Gost even the spirit of the Prophets I was enabled to comfort the harts of the Saints. in the afternoon a corden to my request the people assembl'd by thousands. I lade before them the order of the Church and the Power of the Preasthood. after a long and laboras talk of a bout two ours in the open air with the wind blowing, the church was of one hart and one mind. they wanted the twelve to lead the church as Br Joseph had dun in his day. Br Rigdon was cauld upon to make som remarks but refused to due so. I cauld upon the church to expres their wishes by vote if they wanted Br Rigdon for their Presedent, on which moshen Br Rigdon objected and wanted the vote cauld to see if the Church wanted the twelve to Preside and it was don, and the Church with one hart and voice lifted up their hands for the Twelve to Preside.

Writing to his daughter in Salem, Massachusetts, a few days later, Brigham Young commented in retrospect:

. . . all things are now reviving up agan. the Brethrin prayed with all faith for us to return. . . . I have ben in Council all most all the time sence I arived here. but this much I can say the spirit of Joseph is here, though we can not injoy their persons. through the grate anxiety of the Church there was a confrence held last thursday. the power of the Preasthood was explained and the order there off, on which the hol church lifted up there voises and hands for the twelve to moove forward and organize the church and lead it as Joseph lead it, which is our indespenable duty to due.

He added, "it has ben a time of morning. the day that Joseph and Hyram ware braught from Cartheg to Nauvoo it was judged by menny boath in and out of the church that there was more then 5 barels of tears shead. I cannot bare to think enny thing a bout it."<sup>26</sup>

On September 1 President Young attended a meeting in which Sidney Rigdon spoke: "His descorce was compelecatad and some what

<sup>26</sup> Young to Vilate Young, 11 August 1844, in Curtis, *Mother's Footsteps*, 237-38.



scattered. he said he had all things shone to him from this time to the winding up sene or the Grate Battle of gog and may gog. there was grate things to take place but he did not tel what the saints should due to save themselves.”<sup>27</sup>

Two days after attending the meeting Young had an interview with Rigdon:

He said he had Power and authority above the twelve. did not concider him self bound to thir council. in the evening the twelve had a council with him again. he was far from being or feeling an intrist with the twelve. after a long conversation Br Rigdons licence was demanded. he would not give them up. said the Church had not ben led for a long time by the Lord, and he should come out [and] tell all a bout the secrits of the Church.

The following Sunday, September 8, President Young reported “a meeting on the stand a bout 6 or 7 thousand People Present. we tried Br Sidney Rigdon and cut him of from the Church.”<sup>28</sup>

Brigham Young’s diary entries for the first three months of 1845 note a variety of activities. On January 24 he met in his home with Heber C. Kimball and Newel K. Whitney: “We washed and anointed and Praied. had a good time. I inquired of the Lord whether we should stay here [in Nauvoo] and finish the templ. the ansure was we should.”<sup>29</sup>

On March 1 President Young “cauld the council of 50 together,” a group of men that had been organized by Joseph Smith in the spring of 1844 as the presiding council of an anticipated temporal Kingdom of God on earth, and “admitted of som others taking seats in the room of absent members. Brs J. D. Lee & J. Pack seated. we had a good meeting it lasted all day.”<sup>30</sup> And after several days of illness he wrote on March 8, “I had no docter in my sickness but the Lord and my wife and the laing [laying] on of the hands of the Elders.”<sup>31</sup>

A letter of Brigham Young to Lucy Smith, the mother of Joseph, concludes Young’s Illinois writings. The letter reveals an effort on the part of Brigham Young to provide some of the necessities of life for the

<sup>27</sup> Diary, 1837–45.

<sup>28</sup> Diary, 1837–45.

<sup>29</sup> Diary, 1837–45.

<sup>30</sup> A significant treatise on the subject of the Council of Fifty is Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing, 1967).

<sup>31</sup> Diary, 1837–45.

mother who had recently lost three of her sons. In addition to Brigham's esteem for the Smith family, the letter gives a glimpse of his philosophy regarding the material things of life:<sup>32</sup>

My Dear aged mother Smith, for so I feele to caul you, my mother in the gospel, and the mother of my Dear Brother Joseph, the prophet and seere.

I feele to wright to you as I cannot come to see you this morning. I lern that you have feelings, that is not plesent concerning the caredge that I have succeed[ed] in geting built on the tithing. the caredge is not yet done. when it is you shall relize all that you have had promised to you by me or the trustess. I beg of you not to have enny unplesent feelings on the subject. it is nothing but a comon caredge that is perishable and will soon be decayed, and so shall our earthly tabernacles, and I pray the all mighty God our Hevenly Father to help us, to so live and walk before him that we may be excepted of him. all that I have is at your command to make you happy the little time you have to live with us. I shall caul and see you as soon as I can conveniently.

may the Lord Bles you and comfort your hart. I am your son and frend as ever.

*Writings between Illinois and the Salt Lake Valley.* The autograph writings of Brigham Young during his travels as leader of the Mormon migration from Illinois to the Salt Lake Valley in the years 1846 to 1848 consist of seventeen items.

Three weeks after leaving Nauvoo, Brigham wrote to his brother Joseph, who had remained behind. "As you have staed in Nauvoo and I am gon from there, and cannot due for my frends as I could if I was there [I] will caul upon you to help my frends by council and manege-ment." He continued:

I feele as though Nauvoo will be fild with all maner of abomnations and it is no place for the saints and the spiret whispers to me that the Bretherin had better get away as fast as they can. We pray for you continually. I hope the Bretherin will not have trubble there but the dark clouds of sorrow are getherin fast over that place. it is a matter of doubt about enny of the Twelve returning to Nauvoo verry soon. it is not the place for me enny more till this Nation is schurged by the hand of the Almighty that rules in the Hevens. this nation shall feele the hevey hand of Jugment. they have shed the Blood of Prophets, and the saints and have be[en] the meanns of the Deth of meney. due not think Brother Joseph, I hate to leve my house

<sup>32</sup> Young to Lucy Smith, 2 August 1845.

and home. no far from that. I am so free from bondedge at this time that Nauvoo looks like a prison to me. it looks plesent ahead but dark to look back. we shall fit a company for the mountans which goe with there teams seed farming utensells & coforth. we shall leve all of our weman behind to come with the plunder. I should like to have you and the rest of our frends get up with us before we start. it is unserten whether we shall gover with the first compana. if we due not come back, Br. Orson Hyde your self and others had better goe in to the Tempel when the loer part is don if you are there and pray and offer up your suplacations to the most high and leave the house in the hands of the Lord. we shall send back as fue teams as we can on a count of our emence loding.

Rumors having been spread in Nauvoo that there was division and contention in the pioneer camp and that someone had made an attempt upon Brigham Young's life, the Mormon leader assured his brother, "this is all falce. we have the most perfect peace that ever a camp had. not a word of contencion through the hole camp and the Lord is with us, and praysed be his name. all is well. glory halelula and I think I shall feele more so when we get a fue hundred miles further west." He concluded his letter with an apology: "there is so much talking to me that I cannot wright and I due not know what I wright and you must read it wright though it may not be writen, only scratched."<sup>33</sup>

During the early stages of the Mormon migration across Iowa in 1846 some disorder was manifest due to the incomplete organization of the camp. To those who had gone ahead of the camp, Young wrote:<sup>34</sup>

Though we feele willing that all should goe ahead that wishes to with draw from us, you cannot goe with Br Brigham[s] Feloship. . . .

The Lord is not well plesed with his servents in as much as they wish to with draw from each other and there awatteth a schurge for them. how long shall this people be afflicted before they will learn wisdom and be of one hart and mind. now Bretherin harcon to councel before the anger of the Lord is kindled aganst this people. let us be one in the Lord and feele for each others cares and bare eaches burthens.

On March 27, 1846, a reorganization of the pioneer camp took place, with the selection of twenty-five captains, each of whom was authorized to lead one hundred families and organize them further. Shortly after this reorganization Brigham Young arose one morning and

<sup>33</sup> Young to Joseph Young, 9 March 1846.

<sup>34</sup> Young to Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, and George Miller, 23 March 1846.

penned these lines to the captains who comprised the council of the camp:<sup>35</sup>

it is wisdom to meet in council this morning at 10 — oclock A.M.

It [is] also wisdom to select men to goe and sel property from the Point.  
Also send men to labor.

Also select the men that can fit themselves for the mountians and they goe about it. the rest of the company goe emeditly to Grand River where they can lowcate themselves for the seson, and the teams that are going back to Nauvoo goe on to help the fameles to there location.

This is my councel and orders. thus is the whisperings of the Spiret of [the] Lord to me.

On April 21, after learning that Wilford Woodruff, one of the Twelve Apostles, who had been on a mission in the East, had returned to Nauvoo, Brigham Young wrote to his colleague:

Belovid Brother Woodruff. I am thankful that you have arived safe in the [midst] of the saints and hope I shall soon have the priveledge of conversing with you face to face. I want a longe talk with you yea menny. I wish you to prepare to come to us as soon as convenent. if you stay with Br Hyde till the dedication of the Temple come emeditly then we want your society to acompany over the mountians.

. . . I will say if you can fetch me a little money I wish you would to help us in our present wants. we want a bolting cloth for a mill for we have non with us. we are now in Iaway teretory near the Grand River and expect to goe north a peace and prepare for a crop this seson, and then goe to Councel Blufts and there leve some more of the Bretheren to make a crop, and then some goe to the mountians.

We are glad that Br Hyde is in Nauvoo. he has don grate good sence we left, and the spiret of the Lord has rested upon him powerfuley.

It is late and I am not well this evening so I will bid good night. may the Lord Bless you and yours for ever and ever amen. remember me to your famely.

As a result of sending five hundred of their ablest men to serve in a Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, the Mormon migration established Winter Quarters on the banks of the Missouri River in the fall and winter of 1846–47. Six of the holographs in the collection were written there. In one of these Young admonished a church member on a matter of doctrine: “When a man heres the gospel and obey[s] it and lives up to

<sup>35</sup> Young to the Council of the Camp, 18 April 1846.

all the law of the gospel his wife and children are his in time and eternity." He concluded the brief letter with the statement: "It is the duty of all Parints to prevall on there children to imbrace the gospel of salvation: brake of from all sin and cleve unto richesness."<sup>36</sup>

In February 1847 Brigham Young recorded a dream in which he saw Joseph Smith:

He set in a large winder in a south west direction leand back in his chair, with his feet on the door round. I took him by the right hand and kist him meney times. he looked perfcitly natural. I asked him why it was that we could not be together as we used to live. he had ben from us a long time and we wanted his society, and I due not like to be seprated from him. he rose up from his chair looked at me with an ernest and plesent countenece, spoak in his usual way. it is all right. I then said to him I due not like to be a way from you. it is wright he replied. we cannot be together yet. we shall by en by. but you will have to due with out me a while and then we shall be together a gain.

In his dream Brigham told Joseph that "the bretheren have grate anxiety to understand the law of adoption or seeling principls,"

Br. Joseph then stept toards me, looked verey ernest yet plesent and comenst his inst[r]uccion. tell the peopel to be humble and faithful and sure to keep the sperit of the Lord and it will lead them right. be careful and not turn away the smal still voice. it will teach how to due and where to goe. . . . it will whisper peace and joy to there soles and it will take males [malice] hatred enving strife and all evel from their harts, and their hole desire will be to due good, bring forth richesness and build up the Kingdom of God.

Shortly after Brigham Young's departure from Winter Quarters for the West leading the vanguard of Mormon pioneers in April 1847, he wrote to one of his wives, Mary Ann Angell, who had remained behind. This letter is one of the few extant holograph writings by the president to members of his family. It gives a brief glimpse of his domestic relationship.

My Dear companion partner in tribulation. I should have writen to you by Br. Rockwood but had not time. the camp was to be organized and a grate deal to be dun to prepare for mooving. On Sunday I should have writen but did not feele able to. I lade abed and thought of a grate deal I should like to say to you. the Camp is in good helth and first rate Sperits.

<sup>36</sup> Young to T. Alvord, 6 January 1847.

they have never felt better in there lives. I think my helth has verry much improved yesterday and to day. you menshend in your letter that you herd I lay on the ground the night I left home. I did but due not think it hurt me, but when I arived in camp I found my self complet[ly] tired out. I thank you a thousand times for your kind letters to me more especely for your kind acts and still more for your kind hart. I pray for you and the children continually and for all of our famely. I due think the Lord has blest me with one of [the] best famelyes that eney man ever had on the Earth. I due hope the children will be good and mind there mother when I am gon. My son Joseph you *must not goe away* from home and Brigham also must stay at home. how due [you] sapos I would feele when I come home and find one of my children dest[r]oyed by the Indians? I pray this may not be the case.

Due to his many responsibilities and the lack of postal service, Young did not complete this letter until May 4 at a location twenty miles above the head of Grand Island, Nebraska:

. . . I want to write a long letter but have not time. we are all perty well at present though my labour has bin verry hard for me on the journey. I pray for you continually. the pauness [Pawnee Indians] have watched us close and we have watched them but they have got 2 of our horses, brs Richards and Littles. our cattel standet well. . . . we stop every sabath and have a day of rest. the Lord has blest us in all things for which we are thankful. I am glad you are not a going to come on this sumer for I want to be with my famely when they come this journey. on saterday last we saw buffalow for the first time. they went on a chase after them. they got 4 old ons and 5 calfs which has made us plenty of meat. if this letter reches there before the next company starts they had better fetch the 3 canon that are there, keep up a thurer gard every night, tie there horses nights, keep the cattle close. we shall have to cross the platt River here on the account of feed. the prarie is all burnt over in the north side of the River. the Pauneas have gone a head of us and burnt. the next company had better keep up on the north side. I think it is a good rout for us here after. I want the bretheren to keep my famely whilst I am gon and not supress them. Joseph and Brigham be good Boys and mind your mother and Ales Caroline little Johne and finely all my children and famely be you Blest for ever and ever.

After arriving in the Salt Lake valley in July 1847, Brigham Young returned to Winter Quarters that fall to direct the emigration the next year. Twenty miles east of South Pass he wrote a few lines to another of his wives, Clara Decker, who had been one of the three women to accom-

pany the pioneers into Salt Lake Valley in July 1847 but did not accompany her husband back to Winter Quarters:<sup>37</sup>

My dear Clary, While stoping here with the last company, where my family is an expecting to start the male tomorrow for the valley I thought I would wright you a fue lines. my helth is good and has been sence I left the valley with the exception of one night. . . . I due feel to bless and pray for you. You have been a grate comfort to me this summer. I miss your society. I wish you to live at home of sister Eliza Snow. . . .

Thursday morning, the 9th, we have lost seven horses and mules last night. we expect the Indians have stolen them. I almost feele it my duty to return with the companies and see them safe through to the valle. O that I had my famely here.

A letter written by Brigham Young from Winter Quarters on May 8, 1848, shortly before he started his return trip to Salt Lake Valley, reveals a confrontation between the Mormon leader and the local Indian agent, John Miller, over the right of the Mormon migration to camp on Indian lands:<sup>38</sup>

Mager Miller you infur that we promised to pay the otoes for the use of there land. you also want us to pay the amahas for the use of there land. we due not owe them enny thing for there land. the government of the United Stats stopd us here and if there is enny thing due to them it is due from the general goverment not from us. the Indians have kild I supose 2 thousand dallars warth of cattle for us. the gaverment aught to pay us for the same and take out of there enuities. what more shal I say. let the Blesings of heven rest upon the encant [innocent], and it will, that to in eyes of all people soner or later, and the curse of All mighty God rest upon the gilty and no pauer can take it off. I am a frend to all mancind and wauld that they wauld seace there wickedness and return to the Lord, yet I am perswaded they will not.

*Utah Writings.* The major portion of the dictated papers of Brigham Young contained in the church archives represent the last thirty years of his life, the Utah years, during which he served as president of the church and governor of the territory; yet of some 400 pages of holograph writings in the collection, only 17 are from this period. The most extensive letter is dated October 21, 1849, to Orson Hyde, who was then directing church affairs in Iowa:

<sup>37</sup> Young to Clara Young, 8 September 1847.

<sup>38</sup> Young to Maj. John Miller, 8 May 1848.

I am not in the habet of wrihting letters to send abroad but very little. Still I feele as though I wanted to say a fue words to you. you will lern the knews from others with out my wrihting. in the first place I can say I pray for you and try [to] bare you to a throne of grace continualey, and I am your fellowlabor[er] in the Kingdom of patiance. I wish [you] to watch continualey and see that you due not becom proud through much influnce among the Jentiles.

You seeme to complane of me in concequence of your depts [debts] that is upon your sholders through the first Presednce [Presidency]. I am sure I left no depts for you to pay, and if I left none I due not ecnowledge that there was eney left on you. you Stated there was about 4 thousand dallars left for you to pay. it is trued I owed Mugg one thousand dallars; this is not 4 — and I made arangments for that dept. I understand he got the two drafts I left which was five hundred dallars and the other five hundred dallars I wish him to wait for till I get redy to pay it. he will see the time that he will lement his abuses to me. I have now sent the money by Br Wooley. Br Hyde could redeem Kirtland money and send it here and complane of Br Orson Spencer because he would not hand the tithing money over to Br Hyde.

I will say a gaine I will not acnowledge tithing moneys on the Books unless it is desposed of as I shall direct. I suport my self and famely why should not others. the tithing is wanted for the building up the Kingdom. I have had to contend continually to keep the tithing where it should be kept. I due not feele to complane of Br Hyde nether due I wish to be complained of. I can tel you and all the Elders of Isreal if we magnafy our offices and caulng we have to labor as a man would amoving; it is hard work, stil it is easy; it is fatigen, yet it is glorious. I labor with all my might mind and strength. . . .

The paternal concern of an interested father for the welfare of his son is manifest in letters written by Brigham to his son Joseph A. while the latter was proselyting for the church in England in 1854 to 1855. The following lines from the president's hand were appended to a previously dictated letter sent on December 1, 1854:<sup>39</sup>

It is now late at nigh[t]. the male has arived this evening and I have heard your letter red, and it rejoice my hart to here sush good knews frm you. may the Lord Bles you for ever and ever, is my Prayr for you. we are gest moving in to our new house [the Lion House]. I suepose Mary and the children will give all the famely knews. you can hardly emagen the goy it gives me to here such good knew[s] from you. my sole leaps for goye. be

<sup>39</sup> Young to Joseph A. Young, 1 December 1854, Letter Book 1: 772-73.



faithful my son and the Lord will Bles you and I Bles you. remember you are my oldest son, the arc of the famely. I want you to be faithful that you may [be] worthe of your stashon in my Kingdom. give my love to all the Brethern. God Bles you.

Joseph received another undictated communication from his father on February 7, 1855:<sup>40</sup>

We ware very happy to recive your letter. . . . I wish you to be very prudent and lern the worth of money. you are now in a situation to lern poverty and welth. improve your self so that you will be prepard for more important stations in life. all the gold in caleforna could not by [buy] my good feelings to you and thankfulness to the Lord. you[r] letter gave grate joy. . . . I wish you to [say] to the Brethern . . . I remember them all in my prayers daly and in our prayer cirkel every Sabath in the after noon. your mother wishes me to wright a fue words for hir. hir helth is a bout as usual not very well but so she works all day and then till midnight frequently. we feele proud before the Lord when we think what you are duing in the grate cause and Kingdom of our God. be faithful my son. you went out as a child; we trust you will return a flaming Elder of salvation. keep your self pure before the Lord. your Father before you has don it, and my constant prayer is that you may. with all my hart I beleve you will. may God Bles you for ever and ever, O how glad we will be to see you.

The final words in the church archives known to have been written by Brigham Young in his own hand appear as the postscript of a letter written from Saint George, Utah, to his son Brigham, Jr., who was in Logan, Utah. In this letter, dated January 30, 1875, Young reports the progress in building the Saint George temple and states his reason for leaving southern Utah to come north so early in the year. "I had rather goe home in Fubery then in march and I due not wish to agorn [adjourn] the confrence till may. So God Bless you."

Although a comparison of Brigham Young's earliest handwriting samples dated in 1832, with his latest, in 1875, reveals little improvement in style and orthography (*go* which he spelled *goe* in 1832 is still *goe* in 1875), this is not indicative of intellectual negligence or stagnation. His lack of improvement in detailed literary skills over the years more significantly provides a commentary on his methods of self-education during his tenure as church president—he often listened in company with others while an associate read aloud from current news sources. Furthermore, Brigham Young's office journals and letter books report a

<sup>40</sup> Young to Joseph A. Young, 7 February 1855, Letter Book 6: 15.

steady stream of interviews and conversations with knowledgeable people. So far as stylistic and spelling skills are concerned, these methods of self-instruction do not lend themselves to as much improvement as does first-hand observation of the printed page.

There emerges from the pages of Brigham Young's autograph writings a significant insight into his personality and character. In contrast to the popular image of Young as he is depicted in publications that have multiplied since the beginning years of his public ministry, a sensitivity is illustrated in his holograph papers. Popularly portrayed, even among some Latter-day Saints, as a domineering, ruthless, power-hungry, bigot — "a combination of Tamerlaine, Caesar Borgia, and Boss Tweed"<sup>41</sup> — Brigham Young is seldom seen in the terms in which he was described by his counselor and close friend, Heber C. Kimball, in 1857, who publicly commented on Young's extreme sensitivity, adding that the more of the spirit of God a person possessed the more sensitive he was.<sup>42</sup>

The literature dealing with Brigham Young illustrates that there are varying degrees of proximity to him, depending upon the reliability of the sources used. The view of Young portrayed by nineteenth-century correspondents and hack writers, whose fleeting glimpses of the president have been a major source for much that has been written about him, is, in most instances, vastly different from the image one discerns from his own personal writings.<sup>43</sup> Markedly devoid of the harsh and intemperate language often attributed to him, Brigham Young's holograph writings come closest to an unvarnished picture of the man. They also provide insight to his personality that is necessary to accurately assess the contradiction that exists between his claims as a spiritual leader and the less-than-saintly popular image that has characterized him.

Brigham Young's awareness of his literary failings did not prevent him from leaving a small collection of personal writings which provide an unequalled vantage point from which the careful reader may observe him.

<sup>41</sup> Hugh Nibley, "Educating the Saints — A Brigham Young Mosaic," *BYU Studies*, XI (Autumn 1970), 63.

<sup>42</sup> Diary of Mary Ellen Kimball, February 25, 1857, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

<sup>43</sup> Stanley Hirshson, in his biography of Brigham Young, neglected the Brigham Young papers as a source of information on the life of the Mormon leader; he asserted that "those who have previously studied Young have scoured the wrong places. The key to understanding him is not in the Rocky Mountains but in the Midwest and along the Atlantic Coast." *The Lion of the Lord: A Biography of Brigham Young* (New York, 1969), ix-x.