

The L. Tom Perry Special Collections preserves unique primary and secondary sources and makes them available for research in original and digital forms. As caretakers of cultural, intellectual, and historical materials, representing over a dozen collection areas, the Special Collections curators and staff welcome guests to the reading room, reference library, exhibition areas, and lecture room. Please visit the website at <http://sc.lib.byu.edu>.

The Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History is a center for the scholarly study of Mormon history from the perspective of faith. Institute faculty edit collections of significant documents and write interpretive histories and biographies with an aim to publish works that meet the highest professional standards and inform both academic and general audiences. The institute also fosters connections among a broad range of scholars interested in Mormon history by sponsoring grants, fellowships, lectures, and scholarly seminars. For more information, visit the institute's website at <http://smithinstitute.byu.edu>.

The year 2004 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Eliza R. Snow. Renowned poet and leader of Latter-day Saint women, she was a central figure in nineteenth century Mormonism. The Women's History Initiative of the Smith Institute is commemorating the anniversary with a series of events focused on the history of Latter-day Saint women.

21 January 2004 – 2:00 PM

Jill Mulvay Derr

Director, Smith Institute

“Remembering Eliza R. Snow, 1804-1887”

Reception, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Lecture Room

19 February 2004 – 7:00 PM

Carol Cornwall Madsen

Senior Research Fellow, Smith Institute

“The Motives of our Hearts”:

The First Fifty Years of Relief Society”

18 March 2004 – 7:00 PM

Claudia L. Bushman

Adjunct Professor of History, Columbia University

“Writing Our History”

20 March 2004 – 7:30 PM

“Discoveries: Two Centuries of Poems
by Mormon Women”

A dramatic and musical performance

14 April 2004 – 7:00 PM

Sherilyn Cox Bennion

Emeritus Professor, Humboldt State University

“Public and Private: What Their Newspapers
Reveal about Utah's Early Women Editors”

Events will be held in the Lee Library Auditorium.



To tell the tale



PRESERVING THE LIVES OF MORMON WOMEN

AN EXHIBITION SPONSORED BY
JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH INSTITUTE
FOR LATTER-DAY SAINT HISTORY
AND
L. TOM PERRY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

21 January – 4 June 2004

HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

*“Memory would fail to write
a full account of my life's
history ... I marvel that I
am alive today to tell the tale.”*

– Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy (1816-1902)

ACROSS two centuries and around the world, women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have preserved their experiences in a variety of forms. Their legacies are recorded in diaries, reminiscences and biographies, letters, poetry, publications, oral histories, photographs, artifacts, and scraps of paper and fabric. The L. Tom Perry Special Collections of the Harold B. Lee Library and the Women's History Initiative of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History have combined resources to feature these records. This exhibition creates a patchwork of the Mormon female world as contained in BYU's Special Collections and as guided by Smith Institute research—connecting many threads of faith, thought, and experience.

“To Tell the Tale” highlights how women have preserved their experiences as sisters, mothers, Relief Society members, missionaries, artists, educators, politicians, and writers—at home, in the community, and abroad. The documents and artifacts provide insight into the faith, struggles, triumphs, and daily experiences of these women. The exhibition represents the vast resources available to better understand our past, our LDS community, and ourselves, and encourages all women to preserve their lives for future generations.

“Our Mormon manuscript collections are rich with the life writings of ordinary women from our recent past. Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library, among other local repositories, has such gems packed away in fiberdex boxes, often untouched from year to year. Not the written-for-publication works of famous women, these are either the daily jottings of mothers, wives, daughters, or the women's mature attempts to set their lives in order, to explain themselves, not to the world, ... but to their children and their children's children in the Puritan tradition of testimony bearing and lasting testament. In loose sheets or bound notebooks, they are as imperfect as the lives they represent, as incomplete as a peek through the keyhole, as unfinished as mortality.”

– Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, “‘Tryed and Purified as Gold’: Mormon Women's ‘Lives,’” 1994

Telling the Tale: Mormon Women's History

Early Efforts captured women's voices by preserving their personal writings. Newspapers and books memorialized and chronicled their experiences.

- Repositories: special collections at BYU and other universities, LDS Church Archives, Daughters of Utah Pioneers museums, and state and local historical societies.
- Publications: *Woman's Exponent* (1872-1914), *Young Woman's Journal* (1889-1929), and *Relief Society Magazine* (1914-1970); books by Daughters of Utah Pioneers (1939-present); and institutional histories.

Academic Approaches inaugurated in the 1950s and 1960s by historians of the American West presaged a surge of scholarly research about Latter-day Saint women. In the 1970s historians at the LDS Church Historical Department with others advanced this work from the perspective of faith.

- Social activism, a new social history, and the woman's movement sparked new interest in placing women's history in the mainstream of academic inquiry.
- Amateur and professional historians studied Mormon women's political and economic contributions and produced early biographical studies. Scholars drew upon primary sources to challenge stereotypes with more complex realities.

Expanded Scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s magnified interest in Mormon women among scholarly and popular audiences. New disciplinary frameworks like postmodernism raised new questions, and new technology prompted new formats.

- Scholarly work on gender generated cultural and sociological studies of Mormon women. Scholars explored the relationship of women to LDS theology and women's institutional roles and responsibilities.
- Recovery of women's texts created a genre of literary and historical women's studies. A growing number of published diaries and reminiscences made primary texts accessible, allowed scholars to interpret history, and enabled readers to understand women's experiences.

Carol Cornwall Madsen and Jill Mulvay Derr, “Historiography of Mormon Women 1960-1998,” unpublished paper, Smith Institute files.

To tell the tale: PRESERVING THE LIVES OF MORMON WOMEN

"History has told us very little about women; judging from its pages, one would suppose their lives were insignificant and their opinions worthless . . . But although the historians of the past have been neglectful of women, and it is the exception if she be mentioned at all, yet the future will deal more generously with womankind, and the historians of the present age will find it very embarrassing to ignore woman in the records of the nineteenth century."

— Emmeline B. Wells, "Self-Made Women," 1881

EQUAL SUFFRAGE

"Contemporary Mormon women have found in their history precedents, possibilities, and hope for the future. The study of women's life experiences and women's institutions apart from those of men, while preliminary to a truly integrated history, has affirmed the identity and importance of a female culture centered in women's relationships with each other."

— Jill Mulvey Derr, "Strength in Our Union": The Making of Mormon Sisterhood," 1987

"It is woman's destiny to have a voice in the affairs of government. She was designed for it. She has a right to it. This great social upheaval, this woman's movement that is making itself heard and felt, means something more than that certain women are ambitious to vote and hold office. I regard it as one of the great levelers by which the Almighty is lifting up this fallen world, lifting it nearer to the throne of its creator."

— Orson F. Whitney, "Speech in Support of Woman Suffrage," 1895

"Women have long been recognized as preservers, determined to find ways to hold on to the past and link it to the present and future. Maybe in their role as creators of life they feel more keenly the continuity of generations and seek to connect them through a shared memory, either through artifacts lovingly passed from generation to generation, or through oral and written means, whereby traditions and customs as well as thoughts and experiences are carefully transmitted."

— Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Women's Traces: The Words They Left Behind," 1991

"And now that I have written this long, disconnected rambling remembrances of the past, I scarcely know what to do with it. For who can be interested in the little things of [the] common, everyday life of another?"

— Margaret Judd Clawson (1831-1912)

"Anyone who spends a substantial amount of time going through the materials in church archives must gain a new appreciation of the important and indispensable role of women in the history of the LDS church—not to mention new insights into church history resulting from viewing it through the eyes of women."

— Leonard J. Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," 1992

"Someday, when the whole story of this and previous dispensations is told, it will be filled with courageous stories of our women, of their wisdom and their devotion, their courage."

— Spencer W. Kimball, "The True Way of Life and Salvation," 1978.

"There are few lives so uneventful that a true record of them would not be of some worth."

— Martha Cragun Cox (1852-1932)

