

Growing Up in Early Utah: The Wasatch Literary Association, 1874-1878

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A high-spirited gang of future Mormon leaders

ONE day in early February 1874 Jim Ferguson, admitting the forlorn hope of advancing his court with Minnie Horne, suggested to Ort Whitney and another of the boys that they organize a reading society. Ferguson "had heard, no doubt, of fond couples 'reading life's meaning in each others eyes,'" Whitney later mused, "and that was the kind of reading that most interested him." Since the seventeen-year-old Whitney found himself "in the same box with Ferguson on the girl question," the suggestion found a ready response. Whitney immediately invited those who "would make desirable members" to meet at the home of Sister Emmeline Wells, his motherly confidante. It was there on Salt Lake City's State Street that the Wasatch Literary Society was born.¹

From such modest roots flowered one of territorial Utah's most lively and far-reaching adventures with culture. Whitney confessed that he and his friends had a longstanding interest in the highbrow. "As for essays, declamations, and musical renditions, we had been doing that all our lives." Prior to the Wasatch, they had drawn up constitutions for several cultural societies. Indeed, Whitney and a dozen of the subsequent "Wasatchers" had previously affiliated with the intellectually stimulating and controversial Zeta Gamma, Dr. John R. Park's debating society at the University of Utah and reputedly the first Greek-lettered group in the Intermountain West. Some also had joined the short-lived Delta Phi, a literary society which had flourished in 1873.²

The 1870s were ripe for such things. From the beginning the Mormon settlers had fostered as much culture as their theocracy and pioneer economy would

permit. They had sponsored the "Polysophical," "Philomathian," and "Universal Scientific" societies; they listened to the literary and scientific "Seventies' Lectures"; and they built the Social Hall and the Salt Lake Theatre to stage drama. In turn, the 1870s brought new wealth and a cosmopolitan spirit. The Union Pacific Railroad, the anti-Mormon Salt Lake *Tribune*, the Tintic Mining District, the 1,000-seat Godbeite Liberal Institute—each in its own way symbolized Utah's increasing diversity and prosperity. The result was significant. Mormon cultural traditions mixing with the new pluralism, the stage was set for unprecedented creativity and ferment.³

The Wasatch Literary Association drew from both Mormon and non-Mormon legacies. With few exceptions, the sixty who eventually came to enroll in the society were first generation, native-born Utahns. Many were scions with the bluest of Mormon blood. (Nearly one-sixth were Brigham Young's children, grandchildren, nephews, or nieces, while seven were sons and daughters of Daniel H. Wells, Brigham's counselor.) However, an appreciation of culture, not wealth or position, was the common denominator in the background of its members. Their parents were long-time mainstays of the territory's Chautauqua programs and amateur theater.⁴

The "Wasatchers" proved very much the children of their heritage. According to its constitution and by-laws, the Wasatch desired "the social advancement and the improvement of its members in general literature, music and drama"—no small task for unsupervised youth in a semirural community of less than 25,000. To fulfill its mission, the usual complement of officers was provided.

A president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and chairman of the program committee were elected at first monthly and then later every six weeks. A marshal and janitor were subsequently added to provide much needed decorum—and probably a touch of humor given the ignominy of such positions. The original ceiling of twenty-five active members was once raised to thirty-two, but all efforts to increase it still higher were soundly defeated. Finally, the by-laws called for the society to meet every Wednesday evening in one of the members' homes.⁵

The society, while dedicated to culture, had too much youth and wit in the group to admit either pretension or gravity. Most members entered the Wasatch when in their late teens or early twenties. While occasional leeway was extended to venerability, as in the brief membership of thirty-three-year-old Will Woods, exceptions were usually on the side of precocity. Hebe Wells was fifteen when he joined, Bud Whitney sixteen, and Dick Young just over seventeen.

With a "disposition to sacrifice everything for a laugh," the Wednesday evening programs were unpredictable. "[John] B. Read, *Janitor*, assumed the chair," one meeting's minutes began. "By overwhelming majority vote of those present, Mr. Read was fined 50¢ for this assumption of authority." Normally after the president—and not the janitor—had called for a quorum and approved the minutes, a general reading of literature began. Each member was required to participate. They studied the Mormons' favorite Wordsworth ode, "Intimations of Immortality," several times, and read the life or works of Byron, Goldsmith, Gray, Longfellow, Pope, Scott, and Shakespeare, often drawing the selections from school readers.⁶

Group reading proved too staid, however, so this portion of the weekly program was soon abandoned in favor of spelling matches and an expansion of individual cultural exercises. (The first was apparently based upon genuine need, for the secretary misspelled two words in the sentence recording the motion.) Individual exercises, in turn, were assigned to each member a week or two prior to the scheduled performance. These might include declamations, lectures, debates, and impromptu speaking; original essays, parodies, and poetry; vocal or instrumental renditions; and dialogue, dramatic readings, and even small scale theatrical productions.⁷

The best exercises were remembered as "ambitious and meritorious," a judgment which seems fully warranted at least on the first account. Without the light touch and quick humor of his friends, H. J. Grant twice lectured on "Insurance" and backed up his remarks with the solid credentials of owning, despite his youthful nineteen years, one of the territory's leading insurance agencies. The half sisters Emily and Emmiline Wells, known as "Little and Big Em of the Wasatch," once debated "which has had the more ground for complaint, the Indian or the Negro." Ort Whitney, also versatile with flute and guitar, whistled an obbligato to the "Poet and Peasant" overture as Lena Fobes "brilliantly" performed the piece on the piano. And Stan Clawson's violin butchered the "Crystal Schottische" with great finesse that the performance became an unforgettable memory.⁸

Bud Whitney's extended parody of "The Deserted

Village" also became a Wastach legend. Though subsequently lost, the text was partially reconstructed from collective memory and passed in later years from member to member like a Homeric epic. Telling of the hearth of Billy Dunbar and the mein of Emily Wells, his belle, it captured the meter and idyl of Goldsmith's original:

Removed from Brigham Street a league or two,
The estate stands whereon our hero grew.
Not large the lands, nor spacious are the halls,
No costly chattels hang the simple walls.
No shimmering font the sportive eye delights,
No grassy lawn the travelers toil invites.
Far far from these, the vain display of wealth
Is here exchanged for free and rugged health.

Each Sunday morn to visit Mrs. Sears,
The lovely form of little Em appears.
Unconscious, half of all her blooming charms,
Yet well inured to love and loves alarms.
White gauzy skirts pinned backward hard and tight,
Still other charms afford the eager sight.⁹

The spell of the gaslights seemed to excite members most of all. Their cultural exercises, filled with scenes and staging, soon required a new Wastach officer called "dramatic manager." Popular dramas became common. So did original productions that at times were directed to the intrigues of the society's current social situation. "The whole [of next weeks' program is] to conclude with a scene from the 'fowl' tragedy, *Waiting for the Verdict*—the *Court Scene*," the minutes read with apparent reference to an impending matrimonial decision "by Messrs R. W. Wells, O. F. Whitney, Rud Clawson, Stan Clawson, H. M. Wells, H. G. Whitney, Jno Horne, Lorenzo Young and Miss Cornelia Horne." The Wasatch's devotion to Shakespeare was more decorous. Dialogues and sometimes whole acts were performed from *Hamlet*, *Henry IV*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, the *Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Richard III*.¹⁰

The quality of the cultural exercises varied widely, according to the society's candid minutes. "The regular exercises were . . . very poor," one entry declared. On another occasion they were "only tolerably well rendered." The members' busy schedules seemed to be the chief difficulty behind failures to prepare and sometimes to perform. However, the society's talent was sufficient to sponsor periodic public exhibitions at the Social Hall, which generally were well received. For example, assisted by the cultured school marm Ida Cook and the budding vocalist B. B. Young, an exhibition in February 1876 opened with the society's orchestra playing an overture. Wasatch President John Caine then



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spoke. Next, Harry Culmer, May Wells, and Bud Whitney read essays. The Wastach chorus sang "Joy! Joy!" after which Cornelia Clayton, Mattie Horne, Libbie Beatie, Bud Whitney, Harry Emery, and Mary Ferguson provided several musical numbers. The evening concluded with dialogue from the Second Act of Libbie's *Marble Heart*.¹¹

This performance was an embarrassment, however, at least in the dour judgment of President Caine. "Our leader, the Grand, Infallible, John T. Caine, is dissatisfied with our last," Heber Wells reported to Dick Young, then teaching school in Manti. He "has willed that we *must* do something to redeem ourselves Of course, the girls all melted at the sight of their 'beau ideal,' and of course they all voted in the manner which 'Johntee' prescribed." Caine in fact called a special meeting of the Wasatch, insisting that a redeeming exhibition be scheduled, and with the girls voting as a block, secured the authority to manage the new production personally.¹²

No Wasatch gathering was ever complete without good-natured wrangling and practical joking. When the forgetful H. J. Grant asked one Wednesday where the society was meeting, Jim Ferguson sent him to Kittie Heywood's home high on a Salt Lake City hill. "It was a good joke on me walking so far for nothing," Grant admitted after the wild-goose chase, "and I think I shall try & get even with James for playing me so."¹³

Immediate recourse was always available through the society's celebrated "budget box," the *piece de resistance* of each monthly meeting. This was literally a box in which members could anonymously place any composition,

serious or most often otherwise. Edited and selected by a reader appointed at the previous meeting, the box's contents were read following the general culture exercises. The idea was not original. Will Woods, President Wells's Gentile nephew from Iowa, had suggested the society appropriate the plan from a club to which he had once belonged.¹⁴

The budget box "used to fairly scintillate with the brilliance of its articles," the Salt Lake *Herald* judged a decade after the Wasatch Literary Association's demise, "many of them—but for their rather personal character—would adorn the pages of any of our brightest periodicals of current literature." After a Wastacher memorized but badly executed the role of Claude Melnotte in Bulwer's *The Lady of Lyons*, the budget box began with what at first seemed a compliment:

Now Claude was well committed, too,
And doubly done—ay, this is true;
You first commit the part, to prove it,
And then commit the murder of it.¹⁵

Spicy rumors of members' social lives were a budget box staple. Several squibs detailed an alleged hugging incident involving Rob Sloan and the popular and coquettish Emily Wells on her distinguished father's front porch. They graphically continued with the reactions of her distraught admirers, Ort Whitney and H. J. Grant threatening vengeance and Billy Dunbar suicide. "I would [have] given a dollar if you could have been there to hear them," Grant said when reporting the episode to a friend in the East. The budget box pieces "were too good for anything."¹⁶

On another occasion B. B. Young must have thought otherwise. Young apparently earned Wasatch displeasure by first affiliating with and then openly censuring the society. The budget box responded with a torrent of abuse. Bid Young, his half-brother, disclosed that B. B.'s "regular morning exercise was to run a chicken . . . until it sweat, so that he would extract an egg without much difficulty for his morning drink." Members refused to let the lampoon die. A week later they staged a mock trial, with B. B.'s chicken-running prosecuted as a crime with "malice prepense." Not understanding legal jargon, "the defendant denied chasing the chicken with 'a mallet prepense,' maintaining instead that 'it was a stick with a nail in the end of it.'" Rule Wells, the judge, swept the distinction aside and sentenced the criminal to death. Still later the society fired another fusillade. Responding to B. B.'s complaint that his calculus studies were "using him up," the budget box wondered if the problem did not lie more realistically in his "getting drunk."¹⁷

New members in particular were subject to attack. "Harry Culmer," Heber Wells reported to Dick Young, "is now a member and on the next evening he may prepare to be slandered, laughed at, abused, and culminated at the pleasure of the budget box writers." The eighteen-year-old Wells could hardly still his enthusiasm—nor keep his metaphors consistent:

He must go through the "kinks." I have, and you have, and why should he be exempt? Let us rally! and pour such hot words into his burning ears as will scorch his very inners, and make his blood run cold with fiery indignation. I will ransack the remotest corner of my cranium for wit, and coupling this with all the eloquence my soul possesses, I'll "let him have it," loud and long, egad I will!¹⁸

More and more, the budget box determined a meeting's success. The gathering at the Hornes' was "way up," one [of] the best (if not the best) we have ever had," reported one member. "There was nearly (if not quite) 50 budget box [pieces]." Contributions were vigorously solicited from out-of-town members ("Attack anybody, *me* if you like"). Other members hatched a budget box conspiracy. Using Emily Wells as amanuensis, signing themselves as Gax, Ginx, Iago, Pard, Uebec, and Yoric, and further disguising their trail by occasionally attacking themselves, they embroiled the society week after week not only with their calumnies but by the aura of mystery surrounding their true identities.¹⁹

While intended as "innocent merriment," the Wasatch



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barbs occasionally inflicted wounds upon the sensitive. For example, H. J. Grant, a widow's son without the opportunity for formal schooling, remembered shedding "many bitter tears when my gramatical errors & other mistakes were laughed at" and at times felt "the least beloved and respected of any of the members of the Club." Unfortunately, many were not as resilient as Grant. After running the verbal gauntlet, probably a tenth of the society's incoming members quickly dropped out. Realizing their excesses, the fun-loving Wasatch old-timers finally adopted a formal resolution declaring "personalities" a misdemeanor and banned them, subject to fines, from all proceedings.²⁰

However, the fines themselves became a source of amusement, a Wastach commonplace. Assessed each meeting after the budget box reading, the fines often touched most members' pockets, as the minutes of 21 October 1874 testify:

Fine of 5 cents were imposed of Kate Wells, R. S. Wells, and Kittie Heywood for not contributing to [the] B[udget] B[ox]. Fines of 20 cents were imposed on Kittie Heywood, H. G. Whitney, C. B. Swift, Jote Beatie, Emily Wells, Nellie Whitney, R. S. Wells[,] Emmie Wells & O. F. Whitney for disorder. It was moved and seconded that O. F. Whitney behave himself during the remainder of the evening. Mr. Swift was fined 25 cts for rudeness. Moved that Messr[s] Swift, H. G. and O. F. Whitney be fined for disrespect for president, 10¢. H. G. Whitney was fined 15¢ for disorder. Jote Beatie, Emily Wells & R. S. Wells were fined for whispering.

Moreover, the fines, added to the club's dues, proved an ample revenue source. During its four-year history, the society met expenses and maintained a burgeoning account at Zion's Savings Bank.²¹

The Wasatch's prosperity occasioned an alleged letter from John R. Winder, Salt Lake City's Collector of Taxes. Members had not realized that their money was apparently subject to levy. Concerned, the society appointed a committee of O. F. Whitney, J. B. Read, and D. C. Young to negotiate a settlement. Week after week passed with the committee temporizing or making partial reports. Finally Whitney admitted the truth. Realizing he could spin the matter out no further, he acknowledged his hoax.²²

The critic's report, the final Wasatch agenda item, attempted to conclude meetings on a decorous note. Appointed weekly at the outset of each meeting, the critic judged both the culture exercises and budget box reading. His animadversions could be delivered "very sarcastically" and at times were "very plain and to the point." Once the budget box was judged to contain a number of meritorious pieces "but its wit and interest were not equivalent to its length." After the Wastach's burlesque of B. B. Young, critic Emma Wells so railed at the abuse of "our friends" that participants felt "like a Mexican dollar with seventy cents deducted." John Caine was equally scathing when ill-timed laughter marred a dramatic dialogue between Iago and Othello. "You who have laughed at these gentlemen and their commendable efforts to entertain us this evening," Caine opened, "have applauded worse acting upon the boards of the Salt Lake Theatre." Such a high-tone demeanor, however, was not always maintained. When John Read's critique was called for, he sardonically

refused any response—and was fined 25¢ for neglecting duty.²³

Not surprisingly, given the society's impetus, socializing played an important role. Members might meet informally at the home of Emmeline Wells or at the popular Beaties, where the parlor bulged each Sunday evening with "the crowd." On weekdays, they pored apples or danced the slightly disreputable waltz. If the conversation lagged, Carl Young frequently played the William Tell Overture or Ort Whitney sang "Thoughts." With autograph albums the rage, swains vied to be sentimental and witty. Harry Emery, quoting Othello, wrote in Jote Beatie's album: "Excellent wench, but I do love thee/And when I love thee not, chaos has come again." But the charm was lost when he indelicately penned the same lines in rival albums.²⁴

A year after its organization, the society officially started sponsoring social activities. There were weekend outings to City Creek Canyon, Wells's Farm, and Black Rock House on the Great Salt Lake. On one occasion, big, bluff Harry Emery swam from the beach house to Black Rock and back despite a raging storm—to the ladies' admiration but to the dismay of several men who nearly drowned trying to duplicate his feat. At Calder's Park, now Salt Lake City's Nibley Park, the Wasatchers alternately ice-skated or boated as the seasons permitted. One time Mary Jones's skiff capsized and she was rushed to the shore to dry out. As her teeth chattered and body quivered from coldness, Bud Whitney asked with more nervous sympathy than forethought if she cared for ice cream. "Her reply," a member recalled, "was an Arctic glance that 'froze the genial current of his soul.'" ²⁵

Members approved the proposed socializing only after "a lively and lengthy discussion," and there were times when their caution appeared wise. In January 1876 the young women, supported by their auxiliaries John Caine and Harry Emery, hoped to stage a grand ball at the Wasatch Hotel. The proposition had been approved and a committee on arrangements appointed when the men began to question the plan's feasibility. "The boys all know that we girls *want* to have a party and *we think* it is mean in them to predict that it will be a failure," an impassioned Mary Jones declaimed. "We know that if the boys *want it* to be a *failure* and do all they can to make *it one* of course it *will be one* . . ." Despite her forensics, the project was voted down on basically straight male-female lines. The matter did not end there. While men and women usually shared leadership positions in the Wasatch, at the next election of officers the women vigorously exercised their franchise. An entire distaff slate was elected—with four of the men receiving fines for disorderly conduct during the election.²⁶

As the ladies' reaction indicated, socials were serious business—especially when directed toward courting. Victorian romance and sensibility exaggerated emotions and stylized behavior. Wasatch men openly pled their troths. In turn, the girls' flirtatious glances and carefully phrased letters dropped telltale hints of reciprocated affection. Final marital decisions brought extravagant misery. There was mock (and perhaps some real) fear that Bud Whitney was suicidal when Alice Young eloped with Charlie Hopkins. Luella Cobb plunged several Wasatch beaux into despair by becoming the fifth plural



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wife of middle-aged John W. Young. Some pains did not heal quickly. In after years when members recalled their Wasatch experience, memories of "heartaches" and "upsetting love affairs" remained to taint their otherwise happy nostalgia.²⁷

Church leaders and parents understandably had some misgivings about the association. Its activities were unsupervised, and its spirit seemed too secular, carefree, and at times bruising. Too few men within the society accepted Mormon mission calls. Others, like Ort Whitney, appeared to postpone "real life" for prose and drama. Many members rejected polygamy, the nineteenth century's badge of total LDS commitment, and when they did marry, some chose spouses who were Gentiles or lapsed Mormons. When prominent Wasatcher John Read joined the staff of the Salt Lake Tribune, the Mormons' strident journalistic foe, the worst fears of the older generation seemed confirmed.²⁸

"The Wasatch has already, through the gab and energy of certain mischief makers, attained in the eyes of our parents, the unenviable notoriety of an institution for the promotion of infidelity and sacriligiousness," Heber Wells noted. But he insisted parental concerns were overdrawn. Most of the Wasatch non-believers were "of that cast . . . before they were Wasatchers. It is simply absurd to think that an association where nothing of . . . [a religious nature] is discussed but where a few persons meet and go through exercises for literary culture, could be the means of turning out nothing but infidels . . ." ²⁹

In truth, in matters of behavior and religion the society left its members largely as it found them. Certainly there was little outward piety. When it was suggested that meetings be opened and closed with prayer, the motion evoked so little support it never came to a vote. Another suggestion that the society tithe its revenue met a similar fate. Yet there was no carping, anti-Mormonism among them either. For example, prior to Ort Whitney's planned departure for a New York dramatic career, the society staged a farewell benefit at the Social Hall. When a mission call intervened, they cheerfully gave Whitney another testimonial in the Fourteenth Ward Hall. For Rule Wells's mission, the group secured a private railroad car and traveled to Ogden to see him off on the Union Pacific.³⁰

Whatever its religious failings, the Wasatch excited "the admiration and envy of the literary, dramatic and musical portions of the town" and presumably the young social set as well. Its imitators were numerous. Some youth organized a "reading association." Others formed the Azalia Society, a cultural group which

divided its membership into the "Democrats" and "Republicans" more than a decade before national political parties entered Utah. Each group then competed against the other in presenting cultural exercises. Still more imaginative was the all-male Decennial Philadelphian Society. It planned to meet each decade, "renewing and perpetuating the friendship of early life." Finally, the LDS-sponsored Mutual Improvement Associations began in the middle 1870s. Sensing an obvious vacuum and wishing to avoid the Wasatch's excesses, Brigham Young called Junius Wells to revitalize the previously organized youth Retrenchment Societies and commence church-wide M.I.A. activity.³¹

The organization of the M.I.A. was a death knell. With young Salt Lakers being drawn into Church youth activities, the Wasatch no longer had a pool of potential new members. For a time the two rivals existed side by side, but by the winter of 1877-78 the Wasatch was losing momentum. Meetings were abbreviated to make "Lasser Candy" or cancelled in lieu of the St. Mark's Cantata or the "Kellogg Cary Combination" appearing at the Salt Lake Theatre. As members married they resigned, and those who remained seemed changed by time and new experiences. When Ort Whitney returned from his mission, there was a new, unfamiliar gravity about him. "Yes, I have been down East for the past year and seven months and have not felt very well," he

typically replied to all inquiries with un-Wasatch seriousness, "but I hope soon with the help of Heaven and the mountain air to . . . regain my native health." This was not the stuff from which the society had been built and was a sign both of the members' growing maturity and of the Wasatch's consequent decline.³²

For a time, the beleaguered association tried to regroup. Not having met for several months, members in the late spring of 1878 drafted a new constitution, pledged bi-weekly meetings, and elected new officers. Ort Whitney, who had been the first Wasatch president and, despite his several absences from Salt Lake City, its leading spirit, again assumed the chair. But old enthusiasms could not be relit. The final session of the Wasatch Literary Association met at the Wells's South Temple Street home on 29 May 1878.³³

Yet, it was *not* the last meeting. Twelve years later, in June 1890, members held a reunion. Amid rose bowers, Chinese lanterns, refreshment-filled tables, and the wafting melodies of the band, the Wasatch met at a familiar gathering place, Frank and Kittie Heywood Kimball's home on Heywood Hill. The intervening years had not extinguished the Wasatch spirit. "It is to be hoped," read the ludicrously printed formal invitation that "the same rigid decorum which formed so conspicuous a feature of the Wasatch in other days will be observed at this meeting."³⁴

Members were called to order by Ort Whitney. The





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roll was called and the minutes of the 29 May 1878 meeting were read. Then Whitney imposed wide-ranging fines and introduced the general exercises which included Stanley Clawson's celebrated "Crystal Schottische." The budget box contained "a host of humorous skits, poems and allusions to the status of the members and their adventures, loves, courtships, etc., of a dozen years ago." Reportedly it was "immensely enjoyed by all—even those who were hardest hit." Sometime before 2:00 a.m. the party concluded and the Wasatch adjourned, *sine die*.³⁵

The reunion must have occasioned moments of personal reverie and appraising. In the past lay their youthfulness exuberance, when their exaggerated words and consciousness of style had become the foundation for many members' subsequently able prose. Likewise, the Wasatchers must have realized that their amateur theatrics had borne fruit. Nine former Wasatch members had formed the core of the Home Dramatic Club, the stock company which contributed so largely to late nineteenth century Utah drama. Looking at the reunion's guest list, members must have also understood the importance of the association's socializing. Almost half of the society had married fellow Wasatchers.³⁶

More dramatically, the Wasatch's legacy lay in the future lives of its members. Setting aside their youthful penchant for initials and nicknames (and realizing that most women of the time found fulfillment in their husband's careers), the list is impressive. *Art and architecture*: J. Willard Clawson, portraitist; H. L. A. Culmer, civic booster, editor, and especially landscape painter of the grandiose; and Don Carlos Young, LDS architect. *Public Affairs*: Heber M. Wells, Utah's first state governor and treasurer of the U. S. Shipping Board; William W. Woods, Idaho legislator and magistrate; and Richard W. Young, attorney, U. S. Commissioner of the Philippines, and Utah's first general of the U. S. Regular Army. *Education*: John T. Caine, Jr., proponent of "scientific" agriculture and Utah State College professor of history and English; and Joseph Toronto, University of Utah professor of mathematics and history. *Journalism*: John B. Read, editor of the Butte [Montana] *Miner*; Robert W. Sloan, Democratic State Chairman, broker, editor of the *Logan Journal*; and Horace G. Whitney, managing editor and nationally recognized dramatic and lyric editor of the *Deseret News*. *Salt Lake businessmen*: Charles S. Burton; Laron A. Cummings; James X. Ferguson; John F. Horne; Frank D. Kimball; and Herbert M. Pembroke.

In spite of their earlier unruly and profane reputation, Wasatch members made their most distinguished contribution in the field of religion. Kitty Heywood Kimball at last found a satisfying faith in Christian Science, becoming Salt Lake City's first practitioner and most forceful organizer. Wasatch *bete noire* Bicknell (B. B.) Young worked in the same movement on a broader scale. Abandoning a promising career as a baritone vocalist, Young delivered Christian Science lectures in Australia, England, and the United States, taught the denomination's prestigious Normal Class, and later served as First Reader of the Mother Church in Boston.³⁷

Not surprisingly, "Mormon blood" ran thicker in the Wasatch veins than perhaps anyone, including themselves, foresaw. Cornelia Horne Clayton and Minnie Horne James served on the Primary and Relief Society General Boards. Martha Horne Tingey labored forty-nine years in the presidency of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, twenty-four years as President. Richard W. Young and Brigham S. Young led respectively the Ensign Stake and the Northwest Mission. Four Wasatchers became General Authorities: Rulon S. Wells, Senior President of the First Council of Seventy; poet, historian Orson F. (Ort) Whitney, member of the Council of Twelve; Rudger Clawson, President of the Council of Twelve; and Heber J. Grant, twenty-seven years President of the Mormon Church.³⁸

The Wasatch Literary Association obviously played a role, however modest, in the remarkable achievement of its members. Probably its members were ordained for "success" long before Jim Ferguson met Ort Whitney on a Salt Lake City street. But the society schooled them in culture and trained them in public speaking and writing. And during their careers, like the graduates of a British public school, Wasatchers often turned to each other for professional or financial help. In fact in later years the association became something of an Alma Mater, a halcyon time, "the happiest days of my life," wrote one Wasatch octogenarian. Heber Wells, who usually said things best albeit with his gift of hyperbole, admitted his Wasatch days touched his senses like "the almost forgotten fragrance of burning sagebrush." Or perhaps his memories were more like "the odor of the honeysuckles that used to grow in Uncle Brigham's upper garden."³⁹



Notes

1. Orson F. Whitney, "The Wasatch Literary Association," *Improvement Era* 28 (September 1925):1017-19, and Orson F. Whitney to Heber J. Grant, 27 January 1912, General Correspondence, Heber J. Grant Papers, Library-Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter respectively cited HJG, Gen Cor, and Library-Archives). I am indebted to Ronald O. Barney of the LDS Historical Department. Having a long-time interest in the Wasatch Literary Association of his own, he nevertheless graciously made many useful suggestions which improved my essay.

2. Orson F. Whitney to HJG, 27 January 1921, *ibid*. The names of the first Zeta Gamma members can be found in the *Deseret News*, 4 January 1902, p. 9. The minutes of the Delta Phi are deposited at Western Americana, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

3. The impulse was manifold: the evangelical and private school movement; the historical writing of Edward Tullidge and T.B.H. Stenhouse; the increasingly public and active role of LDS women; the commencement of the publication of the *Woman's Exponent* and its male

counterpart, the *Contributor*; the LDS auxiliary movement; and the itinerant ministry of the free-thought spiritualists at the Liberal Institute are examples of these new cultural currents.

4. The minutes of the association suggest a little more than sixty members, although a listing prepared for the 1890 reunion has only fifty-six names. See the Wasatch Literary Association Minute Book (hereafter Wasatch Minutes), Library-Archives.

5. *Ibid.*, 29 May 1878, pp. 174-75. See also pp. 6, 17, 24, 36, and 47.

6. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1019; Wasatch Minutes, 7 November 1877, p. 157, italics mine. For examples of the general reading exercises, 14 and 21 October, 11 November, 23 and 30 December 1874; 6, 20, and 27 January, 3 February, 7 and 21 April 1875; pp. 1, 2, 5, 11-12, 16-17, 19, 21, 32, and 35.

7. Marba C. Josephson, "President Grant and the Wasatch Literary Club," *Improvement Era* 44 (November 1941):659, 690 and Wasatch Minutes, 2 June 1875, p. 441.

8. H. J. Grant: Wasatch Minutes, 31 May 1876 and May 1877, pp. 44, 139. Wells's debate: *ibid.*, 21 March 1877, p. 134. Whitney: Orson F. Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls: The Life Story of Orson F. Whitney as Told By Himself* (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1930), p. 112. Stan Clawson: Wasatch Minutes, 31 May 1876, p. 99 and Emily Wells Grant to May Wells, 7 May 1890, Family Correspondence, HJG Papers. Clawson originally was accompanied by Bud Whitney on the flute and J. Willard Clawson on the guitar. Performed several times later, its inaugural "created an im[m]ense amount of laughter."

9. HJG to C. Bryon Whitney, 17 November 1920 and F. D. Kimball to HJG, 15 December 1937, Gen Cor, HJG Papers. Whitney's poem even became the object of literary criticism by Wasatch H. L. A. Culmer, Wasatch Minutes, 6 December 1876, p. 120.

10. Wasatch Minutes, 14 April 1875, p. 34 and Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1020.

11. Wasatch Minutes, 27 January and 10 March 1875; 2 February, 1 March, and 28 June 1876; pp. 19, 28, 78-79, 84, and 105.

12. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, typescript, 4 March 1876, Richard W. Young Papers, Western Americana; Wasatch Minutes, 8 March 1876, p. 86.

13. HJG to Feramorz Young, 26 March 1876, Gen Cor, HJG Papers.

14. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1019.

15. Orson F. Whitney was even more laudatory: "Some of the [budget box] sketches, by such writers as Horace G. Whitney, Heber M. Wells, and John B. Read—wits of the first water—rivaled Goldsmith, Dickens and Mark Twain. This is positively no exaggeration, and it constituted one of the main reasons for the society's popularity." Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1020-21; Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5.

16. HJG to Feramorz Young, letter fragment of about 1876, Box 113, fd. 1, HJG Papers.

17. Lorenzo D. Young to Richard W. Young, 9 April [1876?], typescript, Box 113, fd 15, HJG Papers and Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1021.

18. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, typescript, 18 December 1877, Richard W. Young Papers.

19. HJG to Feramorz Young, 25 September 1876, Box 33, fd. 17, HJG Papers; Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 18 December 1877, typescript, Richard W. Young Papers; and Orson F. Whitney, "Verbatim Report of Funeral Services in Honor of Emily Wells Grant," 27 May 1908, Frank W. Otterstrom reporter, Library-Archives.

20. HJG to Heber M. Wells, 29 January 1892 and HJG to J. Golden Kimball, 29 January 1892 and 23 April 1903, HJG Letterpress Copybooks 12:170 and 36:83, HJG Papers; and Wasatch Minutes, 10 March 1875, p. 28.

21. Wasatch Minutes, 21 October 1874 and 12 May 1875, pp. 3 and 40.

22. *Ibid.*, 24 and 31 March; 7, 14, and 21 April 1875; pp. 30-31, 33, and 35.

23. *Ibid.*, 21 April and 29 December 1875; 12 January and 4 October 1876; pp. 36, 71, 75, 108. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," pp. 1020-21.

24. Emmeline Wells Diary, 29 September and 8 November 1874, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and Heber M. Wells Reminiscence, n.d., Rulon S. Wells Papers, Library-Archives.

25. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1022.

26. HJG to Richard W. Young, 20 January 1876, Gen Cor, HJG Papers and Wasatch Minutes, 30 June 1875; 12 and 26 January 1876, pp. 50, 74-75, and 77.

27. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 10 February 1876, typescript, Box 33, fd 1, HJG Papers; and John T. Caine to HJG, 3 May 1939, Gen Cor, HJG Papers.

28. The marriages of Alice Young-Charles Hopkins and Melvina Whitney-William Woods were examples of children of prominent LDS families finding spouses outside the Mormon faith. For information on Ort Whitney and John Read, see Orson F. Whitney to Richard W. Young, 13 February 1876, typescript, Box 113, fd 3, HJG Papers; and Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 18 December 1877; Richard W. Young Papers. The Wasatch opposition to plural marriage is recorded in HJG Diary, 28 November 1881, HJG Papers.

29. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 18 December 1877, typescript, Richard W. Young Papers.

30. Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, pp. 67 and 72; HJG, Remarks read at the funeral of Rulon S. Wells, transcript, Box 113, fd 2, HJG Papers; HJG Typed Diary, 28 October 1935; and Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1021.

31. Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5. Reading Association: Horace G. Whitney to Richard W. Young, 15 July 1874, typescript, Box 113, fd 3, HJG Papers. Azalia: HJG to Feramorz Young, 26 March 1876, Gen Cor, HJG Papers. Decennial Philadelphian Society: M. M. Young to Richard W. Young, 7 February 1876, typescript, Box 113, fd 3, HJG Papers. Early participants had little doubt that the Wasatch Literary Association had occasioned the Mutual Improvement Association movement. See Orson F. Whitney, "Verbatim Report of Funeral Services in Honor of Emily Wells Grant."

32. Wasatch Minutes, 29 October; 7 and 26 November 1877; and 30 January 1878; pp. 155, 158, 161, 169. Heber M. Wells to HJG, 4 December 1920, Gen Cor, HJG Papers.

33. Wasatch Minutes, 29 May 1878, pp. 174-75 and Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, p. 112.

34. Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5. For a copy of the reunion program Wasatch Minutes, p. 179.

35. Wasatch Minutes, 18 June 1890, p. 175 and Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5.

36. Wasatch Members participating in the Home Dramatic Club included Orson F. Whitney, Heber M. Wells, Laron A. Cummings, H. L. A. Culmer, Horace G. Whitney, Birdie Clawson Cummings, Brigham S. Young, Mary Jones Clawson, and Kittie Heywood Kimball. See Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, pp. 117-18 and Horace G. Whitney, *The Drama in Utah: The Story of the Salt Lake Theatre* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1915), pp. 38-39. I obtained marriage data by examining the obituaries of club members printed in Salt Lake City newspapers.

37. *Deseret News*, 24 February 1920, p. 2 and Mark Cannon III's forthcoming article on B. Bicknell Young in the *Utah Historical Quarterly*.

38. Other members of the association not listed in the last several paragraphs include Ellen Richardson and Hampden S. Beatie, Josephine Beatie Burton, Agnes Sharp and Albion Caine, Birdie Clawson Cummings, James L. Clayton, Mary Jones Clawson, Stanley H. Clawson, Belle Clayton, C. Q. U. Irwin De Vere, Harry Emery, Francis Fox, Emily Wells Grant, Joseph L. Heywood, Alice Young Hopkins, Mattie Hughes, A. B. [?] Kimball, Mary Ferguson Keith, Joseph Pitt, Carl D. B. Swift, Edna Clawson Tibbitts, Ned Wallin, Catherine Wells, Emmeline Wells, Elizabeth Beatie Wells, Susan Annette Wells, Rose Sipple Weighman, May Wells Whitney, Neil Woods, Alibio [Alice?] Young, Luella Cobb Young, Lorenzo D. Young. Those often attending meetings but not actually enrolled were Annie Wells Cannon, Martha Paul Hughes Cannon, William Dunbar, Fergus Ferguson, William A. Morton, George D. Pyper, John D. Spencer, Feramorz Young, and Mahonri M. Young.

39. Frank D. Kimball to HJG, March 1940; and Heber M. Wells to HJG, 3 October 1925, Gen Cor, HJG Papers. Even the staid Ruder Clawson found the Wasatch "more than justified its existence." See "Autobiography," manuscript, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

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