

A Thesis

entitled

“The Key to All Reform”: Mormon Women, Religious Identity, and Suffrage, 1887-1920

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in History

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An Abstract of

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When Mormon suffrage leaders of Utah, such as Emmeline B. Wells, called for a meeting of suffragists to be held in the Salt Lake Assembly Hall on January 10, 1889, they were soon overwhelmed by the number of women in attendance. The meeting resulted in the formation of the Utah Woman Suffrage Association, which sought to restore the franchise to the women of Utah who had lost the vote two years prior as a result of the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Not only would they inevitably achieve re-enfranchisement through Utah’s statehood campaign, Mormon women also participated in the reintegration of the national woman suffrage movement, which reunified in May 1890. Throughout this process, Mormon women continually reconciled and renegotiated their identities, which were complicated by ideas about religion, gender, sexuality, and civic duty in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America.

In ““The Key to All Reform’: Mormon Women, Religious Identity, and Suffrage, 1887-1920” I contend that the Mormon women’s suffrage movement was inextricably linked to developing gender ideologies within the Latter-day Saint Church. Using Mormon women’s publications, this study traces the evolution of female Mormon activism and intellectual thought as Mormon suffragists adapted to changes within the

national suffrage movement, ultimately reintegrating themselves into the nation-wide battle for the ballot. Complicated by nationwide debates about polygamy and driven by social reform, the Mormon suffrage movement became a catalyst for the debate about “woman’s sphere” – which was forever transformed by suffrage. With persecution seemingly in their past and developments towards statehood as early as 1894, Mormon women increasingly positioned themselves as civic beings in a newly adopted state.

This project is dedicated to Harold Geis Jr.

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I would also like thank the reference staff and curators at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Their assistance in navigating the manuscripts necessary for this research allowed me to efficiently use my limited time at the collections in July 2014.

To those I have neglected, thank you. Truly.

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Preface

Before her death in 1887, Eliza R. Snow, Zion's "poetess" and president of the Latter-day Saint Relief Society, warned her fellow Mormons that "The signs of the times [were] very significant the saints [would] be severely tested."¹ Snow's premonition would prove to be true in the years following her death – a period wrought with federal persecution, political transformation, and theological upheaval within the Mormon Church. This thesis analyzes that tumultuous period in Utah from 1887-1920, and examines the intersection of civic, domestic, and spiritual identities; facilitating an understanding of "woman's sphere" through the historical agency of Mormon women.

In "The Key to All Reform: Mormon Women, Religious Identity, and Suffrage, 1887-1920," I contend that the Mormon women's suffrage movement was inherently complicated by nationwide debates about polygamy and was inextricably linked to developing gender ideologies within the Latter-day Saint Church. Additionally, I explore how Mormon suffragists adapted to changes within the national suffrage movement, ultimately reintegrating themselves into the nation-wide battle for the ballot.

My first chapter, "'Promoter of Virtue': The Transformation of Mormon Women's Intellectual Thought, 1882-1896" documents the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887, an enduring piece of federal legislation that reinforced prior laws criminalizing polygamy. Most significantly, the Act revoked suffrage in Utah for all women, regardless of their religious affiliation or marital status. Utah had previously enfranchised women in the territory in 1870 after a male-driven woman suffrage campaign. Territory-wide

¹ Eliza R. Snow letters, (MSS 607), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

disenfranchisement in 1887 united the women of Utah, who formed the Utah Woman Suffrage Association in 1889. Mormon women, who had publicly defended polygamy in the wake of persecution, now applied similar appeals to morality within debates about woman suffrage. Mormon suffragists strategically disassociated from plural marriage as a means to gain support for their cause. I contend that these revelations are evidence of an increasingly complex historical understanding of Mormon polygamy, rather than a polarizing dichotomy between women's empowerment and oppression.

The two primary national suffrage organizations, the National Woman Suffrage Association (N.W.S.A.) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (A.W.S.A.) had formerly condoned disenfranchisement as a sanction against the Mormon practice of polygamy. However, they fundamentally disagreed with the totality of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which disproportionately affected women. In May of 1890, the N.W.S.A. and the A.W.S.A. unified, creating the National-American Woman Suffrage Association (N.A.W.S.A.) and demonstrating solidarity within the woman suffrage movement. In September of that year, the Latter-day Saints Church discontinued the practice of plural marriage with a public statement known as the 1890 Manifesto. I argue that these two cataclysmic events reinvigorated Mormon women's activism in a new capacity, and provided the necessary circumstances under which they could be reintegrated into the national woman suffrage movement.

The second chapter, "'To Vote or Not to Vote!': Woman Suffrage and the Struggle for Statehood in Utah, 1890-1896," details the passage of the Utah Enabling Act in 1894, which led to statewide debate about whether or not woman suffrage would be included in Utah's proposed constitution – which was set to be drafted the following spring, in March

1895. I maintain that the Utah Woman Suffrage Association adopted the policies of their executive group, N.A.W.S.A., including the practices of holding conventions, non-partisanship, and the development of test cases in an effort to set a legal precedent for women as political participants.

Although the Enabling Act was a necessary step towards statehood for Utah, the Act's ambiguity concerning who could vote on the newly drafted constitution presented an opportunity for Mormon women to test legal limitations. Even though the Utah W.S.A. passed woman suffrage through the constitutional convention in April 1895, a Utah Supreme Court ruling in *Anderson vs. Tyree* voted in favor of abiding by the Edmunds-Tucker Act for the November 1895 election, preventing female Utahans from voting on the state's proposed constitution. Regardless, Utah's constitution was ratified in November 1895, followed by the proclamation of Utah's statehood in January 1896.

Chapter three, “‘Appreciation of the Ballot’: New Concerns, Old Tactics, and Registering Woman Voters, 1896-1920,” explores the construction of Mormon women's civic identity in the wake of Utah's statehood. Following a low voter turnout at Utah's first state election, the Utah W.S.A. quickly addressed women's concerns over political participation. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate lines of continuity between pre- and post-statehood suffrage debates, as well as between suffrage in Utah and the nation at large. The U.S. experienced a similar drop in voter turnout after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, forcing women's activists across the nation to address similar questions facing female Utahans in 1896.

Overall, the period from 1887 to 1920 offers a unique moment in time when political forces at the national and local levels intersected – creating a wonderful cataclysm of

ideas about gender, religion, sexuality, and civic duty. Mormon women's resiliency and reintegration into national debates about suffrage and gender contributed to the eventual restoration of the franchise. Although this project traces the historical narrative of woman suffrage in Utah, the development of Mormon women's intellectual thought was not limited to the vote. This research demonstrates how suffragists at various levels challenged gendered notions about American citizenship. For Mormon women, femininity – like the land they inhabited – was a contested space, subject to the ebb and flow of the evolving society that surrounded them. They did not, however, simply adapt to those changes – they also created them, and continually reconciled and renegotiated their religious, gendered, and civic identities in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Utah.

Aileen S. Kraditor was one of the first historians to examine the intellectual discourse of the suffrage movement in her 1965 work, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement / 1890-1920*. Kraditor's book has been highly heralded since, inspiring many works including my own. Internal dissent is a fundamental element of Kraditor's work concerning the national suffrage movement. Kraditor asserts (and other historians have since agreed) that the woman suffrage movement was not necessarily a debate about whether or not women should vote. Often, differences between various suffragists developed over debates about *why* women should have the vote and how to achieve it, as well as the popularly dubbed "woman question" concerning woman's place in American society during the nineteenth century. I adopt this perspective in my own work, demonstrating the ways in which Mormon women participated in this discussion with views that were often similar to their non-Mormon counterparts, yet never untouched by

their spiritual faith.² Ideologically, the Mormon women's suffrage campaign, for example, reflected similar reform-driven calls for the franchise during that time. Methodologically, however, Mormon women used the doctrines of their faith to defend their position.

Ellen Carol DuBois has also made considerable contributions to the study of the women's suffrage movement. In her collection of essays, *Woman Suffrage & Women's Rights*, DuBois asserts that the women's suffrage movement embodied nineteenth century feminism because it circumvented the Victorian notion of a private, domestic sphere and women's dependence on the family. By critiquing the American family structure, DuBois expands the study of women's political participation to include all emancipatory endeavors undertaken by women in the antebellum period – which she simply titles “women's rights.” As a relatively egalitarian and millenarianist society, many Mormons, particularly plural wives, embraced advocacy of full political and social equality. My work demonstrates that this is evident in the rhetoric and political organization used by Mormon suffragists.³

Lola Van Wagenen's dissertation-turned-book, *Sister Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870-1896*, is one of the few scholarly sources that focuses exclusively on the Mormon suffrage movement. Van Wagenen's work is truly comprehensive, covering every aspect of enfranchisement and disenfranchisement in Utah over the course of a quarter century. Van Wagenen also

² Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement / 1890-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965).

³ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

examines the ever-evolving relationship between Mormon suffragists and national suffragists during this time and reflects on the ways in which that relationship changed as a result developments within each organization. Additionally, Van Wagenen maintains that religion, polygamy, and suffrage were intertwined – an assertion that is present, perhaps more explicitly, in my own work.⁴

In “‘The Liberty of Self-Degradation’: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America,” Sarah Barringer Gordon addresses polygamy more directly, examining how woman suffrage in territorial Utah combined with Mormon women’s political support of plural marriage incited anti-Mormon and anti-suffrage rhetoric amongst many non-Mormon women. While anti-suffragists claimed that women’s suffrage would intensify marital discord, anti-polygamists claimed that plural marriage was a licentious abuse of liberty and the American legal system. By connecting these various historiographic fields, Gordon demonstrates the complexity of nineteenth century American feminist thought which paradoxically posited that suffrage would only degrade women further, exemplified by the fact that Mormon female voters in Utah upheld the institution of plural marriage, a seemingly oppressive system. My work expands on Gordon’s conclusions with more emphasis on how polygamy affected the operations of Mormon women’s suffrage organizations.⁵

⁴ Lola Van Wagenen. *Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870 -1896* (Provo, UT: Lola Van Wagenen, 2003).

⁵ Sarah Barringer Gordon, “‘The Liberty of Self-Degradation’: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America,” *The Journal of American History*, no. 3 (December 1996).

Julie Dunfey's frequently-cited 1984 article, "'Living the Principle' of Plural Marriage: Mormon Women, Utopia, and Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," discusses the ways in which Mormon women implemented and defended the polygamous family structure. Dunfey contends that Mormon women *endured* plural marriage, viewing it as a religious sacrifice geared towards reform and protection from the corruption of Gentile society. Rooted in the utopian origins of the Mormon faith, Mormon women insisted that plural marriage aided women's ability to control the threat of uncontained male sexuality. My project utilizes Dunfey's work by drawing connections between the Mormon suffrage movement and social reform.⁶

"'The Key to All Reform: Mormon Women, Religious Identity, and Suffrage, 1887-1920" employs the use of nineteenth and twentieth-century Mormon women's publications for the purposes of 1) telling this narrative through their perspective and 2) tracing the development of Mormon women's intellectual discourse in the public sphere. The *Woman's Exponent* and suffrage pamphlets from the Beaver City (Utah) Woman Suffrage Association serve as the main primary sources for this research.⁷

The *Woman's Exponent* was a bimonthly women's periodical published in Salt Lake City from 1872 to 1914. Mormon female activist, Emmeline B. Wells, served as the *Exponent's* editor for thirty-seven years, from 1877 until it ceased publication. Although Mormon historians frequently reference the *Woman's Exponent*, few scholars have

⁶ Julie Dunfey, "'Living the Principle' of Plural Marriage: Mormon Women, Utopia, and Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," *Feminist Studies* 58, no. 3 (1984).

⁷ The *Woman's Exponent* is available in both print and digitized form. The Beaver City Woman Suffrage Association papers are available in manuscript form. Both collections are archived at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

attempted to critically examine this periodical, which served as the main voice for Mormon women activists for over forty years. Although the *Exponent* covered various women's issues, suffrage was a prominent topic featured in some capacity in nearly every issue during the Mormon suffrage movement, making it an invaluable source for this particular project.

The manuscripts of the Beaver City Woman Suffrage Association detail the inner-workings of a localized Mormon suffrage organization from 1892 to 1895. An early Utah settlement, Beaver City became a contested space with the 1872 introduction of Fort Cameron. The documents of the Beaver City W.S.A., 1892-1896 are equally indispensable to my research as they cover various topics within the scope of this research. Beaver City W.S.A.'s hand-written woman suffrage pamphlets, titled, *Equal Rights Banner: The Ballot, The Key to All Reform* provide not only a namesake, but also the brave voices of the Mormon women who propelled this project from beginning to end. Unlike the well-known *Woman's Exponent*, the *Equal Rights Banner* is rarely, if ever (to my knowledge), mentioned in current works on a similar topic. This work attempts to reclaim this neglected source, which is so rich with women's intellectual debate on matters of woman's "sphere."

Mormon women's autonomy and their construction of a public female space serve as the conceptual framework for my thesis. Using the aforementioned sources, as well as others, this project engages in theoretical discussions on the topic of "separate spheres," as discussed by Linda Kerber in "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History." Kerber explains how historians have constructed linguistic devices such as "separate spheres," the "Cult of True Womanhood," and the

"Cult of Domesticity" as methods for analyzing women's agency in nineteenth century America.⁸ In addition, this thesis utilizes scholarship by historians such as Ann Braude and Catherine Brekus regarding methods for integrating religious women's history into broader narratives. Braude insists, for example, that scholars must first recognize that religious women have historical agency,⁹ followed by Brekus, who suggests placing that agency on a continuum, to better understand its complexity.¹⁰ "The Key to All Reform" examines late nineteenth and early twentieth century Mormon women within the context of 1) their religious society in Utah and 2) the national suffrage movement. Throughout this work, it becomes evident that those two worlds, and Mormon women's identification within them, intersected – creating a unique and ultimately successful Mormon suffrage movement.

⁸ Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39.

⁹ Ann Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History" in *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Catherine A. Brekus, "Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency," *Journal of Mormon History*, no. 2 (2011): 58-87.

Chapter One

“Promoter of Virtue”: The Transformation of Mormon Women’s Intellectual Thought, 1882-1896

As Aileen Kraditor first argued in 1965, and others scholars have since maintained, the “public polemics” concerning woman suffrage were not always centered on obtaining the ballot.¹¹ More often, suffragists, and their opponents, sought to codify their interpretations of “woman and the home.” Two events, in 1887 and 1890, dramatically altered the way Mormon women defined their femininity, as well as their intellectual discussions concerning suffrage, woman, and the home. Passed in 1887, the Edmunds-Tucker Act revoked woman suffrage in the territory of Utah – a right that the territory had initially bestowed upon them seventeen years prior. Wrought with anti-Mormon undertones, the anti-polygamy legislation sought to “punish” the Saints for their practice of plural marriage. As they transitioned into the 1890s, Mormons were in the process of “reorganiz[ing] their families [and their homes] while trying to figure out whether polygamy could still fit into their system.”¹² In the fall of that year, the 1890 Manifesto, an official revelation of Mormon President Wilford Woodruff, resulted in the official abandonment of polygamy as a doctrine practiced or performed by the Mormon Church. This chapter examines how each of these two events – the Edmunds Tucker Act and the 1890 Manifesto -- incited the Mormon

¹¹ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement / 1890-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), 41.

¹² Lisa Olsen Tait, “The Young Woman’s Journal: Gender and Generations in a Mormon Women’s Magazine,” *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 22, no. 1 (2012): 51.

suffrage movement, particularly as the rhetoric concerning women's virtue shifted from defending polygamy to advocating more broadly for women's rights.

“Punish and Prevent”: Rethinking Periodization with the Edmunds-Tucker Act, 1882-1887

Although many historians, such as Beverly Beeton and Lisa Olsen Tait, indicate that 1890 marked the beginning of a new period for Mormon women's activism, the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887 proved to be more decisive. The Act's predecessor, the Edmunds Anti-Polygamy Act of 1882, made polygamy a federal crime punishable by a fine of up to five hundred dollars and imprisonment for up to five years. Additionally the legislation declared cohabitation between one male and two or more females a misdemeanor punishable “by a fine of not more than three hundred dollars, or by imprisonment for not more than six months.”¹³ The Act also disenfranchised both male and female polygamists from voting and prohibited them from holding a public office.

Initially, the American Woman Suffrage Association (A.W.S.A.) and the National Woman Suffrage Association (N.W.S.A) agreed that disenfranchisement was an appropriate punishment for men *and* women involved in the criminal practice after 1882.¹⁴ In 1887, however, the newly proposed Edmunds-Tucker Act not only reinforced

¹³ *Edmunds Act*, Ch. 47, 47th Cong., 1st sess. (March 22, 1882).

¹⁴ Lola Van Wagenen. *Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870 -1896* (Provo, UT: Lola Van Wagenen, 2003), 6057.

the prior legislation, but also added new stipulations to prevent Mormon polygamy and punish its offenders.

The 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act, which passed Congress without the approval of President Grover Cleveland, required anti-polygamy oaths for public officials, disinherited “illegitimate” children, disincorporated the LDS Church, required the use of civil marriage licenses in Utah, rescinded spousal privilege for polygamists, and allowed the federal government to seize church properties and assets. Most importantly, the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887 made it unlawful “for any female to vote at any election [t]hereafter held in the Territory of Utah for any public purpose whatever” and “any and every act of the legislative assembly of the Territory of Utah providing for or allowing the legislation or voting by females [was] [t]hereby annulled.”¹⁵

Prior to its passage, both the N.W.S.A. and the A.W.S.A. opposed this final clause in the bill because it went beyond being a punitive measure for polygamists to also disenfranchise *all* women, Mormon and non-Mormon alike.¹⁶ The Edmunds-Tucker Act, however, and the eventual unification of these two associations in 1890 unleashed a fury of Mormon activism and provided an opportunity for Mormon women to be “reintegrated into the national woman suffrage movement.”¹⁷ This was due, in part, to the way the Edmunds-Tucker Act disproportionately affected women. Although approximately only thirty percent of the Mormon population in Utah practiced polygamy, by its very nature more women were involved than men. Combined with the specific punitive measures

¹⁵ *Edmunds-Tucker Act*, Ch. 397, 49th Cong., 2d sess. (March 3, 1887).

¹⁶ Lola Van Wagenen. *Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870 -1896* (Provo, UT: Lola Van Wagenen, 2003), 6057.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6072, 6086.

outlined by the Act, it is accurate to conclude that “the legal ramifications for women were not only more permanent, they were more pervasive.”¹⁸

Defining Degradation: Rhetorical Resistance to Anti-Polygamy and Disenfranchisement, 1883-1889

In 1883, Mormon convert and famed photographer Charles Roscoe Savage rhetorically questioned, “What is the position of woman under the influence of the ‘Mormon’ faith? Is there any part of the principles given to us through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, that assigns to our ladies a degraded position?”¹⁹ “I say no!,” Savage exclaimed. “Our ladies are showing the effects of the true enlightenment springing from faith in the great latter-day work and are to-day making their mark.”²⁰ Although this project emphasizes the voices of Mormon women, Savage’s indignant response embodies the defensive tone embraced by most Mormons during this period, from 1887-1889. Many suffragists, such as Mary Ann Price Hyde questioned the constitutionality of the new law, declaring it an attempt to “overthrow the work [of] the Lord.”²¹

By institutionalizing women’s oppression through disenfranchisement, the 1887 act elicited more potent demands for equality of the sexes, particularly because critics could no longer fault polygamy as the source of Mormon women’s degradation. More so than ever before, Mormon women’s inequality could be directly attributed to the actions of the

¹⁸ Carol Cornwall Madsen, “‘At Their Peril’: Utah Law and the Case of Plural Wives, 1850-1900,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 442-443.

¹⁹ C.R. Savage, “The Sphere of Woman,” *Woman’s Exponent* 11, no. 17 (Feb 1, 1883).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Referring to Smith’s 1843 revelation concerning plural marriage.

M.A.P. Hyde, “A Woman’s Testimony,” *Woman’s Exponent* 12, no. 22 (April 14, 1884).

federal government. Only nineteen days after the legislation passed, Emily Teasdale, wife of Apostle George Teasdale, instructed fellow Mormon women to ‘have the courage to stand by their convictions.’²² The following year, Emmeline B. Wells addressed the bill more directly in an editorial for her bi-monthly journal, and perhaps the most notable Mormon women’s publication, the *Woman’s Exponent*.

In eighteen eighty six the dreadful Edmunds-Tucker Bill became a law, and from that time all t[r]ue women have been disenfranchised. It has been questioned some by the women of Utah, *not plural wives*, do not make a stand and plead for their former rights; and ‘twould seem if they were at all interested in suffrage that they would certainly do so; their silence speaks against them. If they would only to regain the ballot, they might do good to others as well as themselves. We scarcely need call it their right, *it is their duty*; your brothers and sisters are bound; they have no freedom. Obtain your rights. Free women of Utah, and do your duty to your country [emphasis mine].²³

Contrary to some scholars’ conclusions, however, it was not merely the presumed absence of polygamy post-1890 that allowed Mormon women to merge with national suffragists.²⁴ As early as January of 1889, a number of influential women in the territory published an official call “for a meeting of suffragists, to be held in the Salt Lake Assembly Hall.”²⁵ The meeting resulted in the formation of the Woman Suffrage Association of Utah. And, only five days later, on January 15, 1889, the association

²² M.E. Teasdale, “Equality of the Sex,” *Woman’s Exponent* 15, no. 24 (May 15, 1887).

²³ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “The Women of Utah, Part II: Women in Politics,” *Woman’s Exponent* 17, no. 2 (June 15, 1888).

²⁴ Lola Van Wagenen. *Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870 -1896* (Provo, UT: Lola Van Wagenen, 2003), 6086.

²⁵ Margaret Caine, et al. “Woman Suffrage Meeting: An Association for Utah,” *Woman’s Exponent* 17, no. 16 (Jan 15, 1889).

published a list of officers and the organization's constitution, as well as by-laws and regulations.²⁶

Although the exact nature of their political infrastructure is unknown, Emmeline B. Wells' diary provides compelling insight. On January 8, 1889, for example, Wells wrote, "I am besieged on all hands to assist in organizing a woman suffrage association and yet none who have been in polygamy can have any position in it. We have had one meeting last evening and one today and it seems almost impossible to get at it in the right shape."²⁷ Historian Lola Van Wagenen agrees that, when combined with the fact that the Chief Executive Committee contained no polygamous wives, this diary entry and the language of Well's prior condemnation of the Edmunds-Tucker Act are indicative of the organization's stance on the matter.²⁸ Even prior to the church's official abandonment of polygamy in 1890, Mormon suffrage leaders, such as Wells, recognized the potential political dangers of associating too closely with plural marriage. That is not to say, however, that the 1890s did not bring about significant changes in the Mormon community. The egalitarian and millenarian language Mormons used to defend polygamy transformed after 1890 into a call for full equality between men and women – beginning with national woman suffrage.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Emmeline B. Wells Diary transcripts, (MSS 1407), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

²⁸ Lola Van Wagenen. *Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870 -1896* (Provo, UT: Lola Van Wagenen, 2003), 6632.

“True Civilization”: Polygamy, Suffrage, and Social Purity, 1890-1891

In 1890, under pressure from the U.S. government, the President of the LDS Church, Wilford Woodruff, denied that plural marriages were still promoted and performed by the church. In his statement, known as the 1890 Manifesto, Woodruff assured Congress that he would “use [his] influence with the members of the Church over which [he] preside[d]” to obey the new anti-polygamy laws.²⁹ Woodruff *officially* and publicly advocated the “law of the land” over Joseph Smith’s divine revelation nearly fifty years prior. Although many Mormons recognized that the Manifesto was an act of compliance with the federal government, the fundamental ideologies behind the former doctrine transcended the new church policy. Even as the *practice* of polygamy phased out, the fact that Mormons had challenged monogamous marriage, the “paradigmatic legal structure of gender relations,” remained paramount to the salvation narrative – and the Utah suffrage movement.³⁰

The relationship between Mormon polygamy and Utah’s suffrage movement becomes increasingly apparent when placed within the context of the social purity movement. Social purity feminists targeted what they considered to be the results of male sexual transgressions – prostitution, adultery, illegitimacy, and the double standard.³¹ Although nineteenth-century Protestant and Mormon women both sought to eradicate sexual vice,

²⁹ Copies of revelations, (MSS SC 1857), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

³⁰ Sarah Barringer Gordon, “‘The Liberty of Self-Degradation’: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America,” *The Journal of American History*, no. 3 (December 1996): 822.

³¹ DuBois, Ellen Carol and Linda Gordon, “Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield: Danger and Pleasure in Nineteenth-Century Feminist Sexual Thought,” in *Woman Suffrage and Women’s Rights* (New York: NYU Press, 1998).

their approach to this task underlined the marked difference between them. As Peggy Pascoe explains, Protestant women insisted that men adhere to the sexual mores expected of women, particularly chastity. Mormons, however, attempted to ‘institutionalize the double standard’ through polygamy by holding men accountable for their sexual affairs.³² This is because, as Julie Dunfey contends, plural marriage reflected the utopian origins of the Mormon Church, which sought to reform society and restore social order.³³ Beginning with their settlement in Utah, the Latter-day Saints became committed to “cleansing the society of the scourge of prostitution, and elevating all of humanity.”³⁴ This reform was all part of a millenarian process to create a Kingdom of God on Earth in Utah.

Although they shared Protestant reformers’ criticisms of uncontrolled male sexuality and its effect on women, Mormon activists sought to expose and exploit what they considered to be the fundamental flaws of monogamous marriage. Monogamous marriage, Mormons insisted, often resulted in adultery, and possibly illegitimacy and presented a double bind for women, who were forced to choose between marrying an unworthy man or remaining single. Single women, they continued, were more likely to resort to prostitution as a means to support themselves. Brigham Young, who served as President of the church from 1847-1877 and the first Governor of Utah Territory from

³² Peggy Pascoe. *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 67.

³³ Julie Dunfey, “‘Living the Principle’ of Plural Marriage: Mormon Women, Utopia, and Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century,” *Feminist Studies* 58, no. 3 (1984): 525.

³⁴ Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 4.

1851-1858, had maintained, “Let the monogenic law, restricting a man to one wife, wish all its attendant train of whoredoms, intrigues, seductions, wretched and lonely single life, hatred, envy, jealousy, infanticide, illegitimacy, disease and death, like the mill-stone cast into the sea, sink with Great Babylon to rise no more.”³⁵ Helen M. Whitney, a Mormon woman, agreed in 1890 that, “Mormon fathers [could not] shift their responsibility as [was] customary in more highly advanced civilization, but [were] required to acknowledge and provide for their offspring as honorable heirs to their name, and every mother who is worthy of the title is honored as *wife*.”³⁶ However, as author Paula Kelly Harline explains, the word “‘wife’ was loaded with cultural [and gendered] messages,” particularly in a monogamous society.³⁷ Regardless, Helen M. Whitney further maintained that “[Mormons had] proven the principle, and know it to be a promoter of virtue, and a higher type of purity and true civilization.”³⁸

Polygamy, Mormons maintained, was also a practical means to care for women – particularly considering that, historically, the male to female ratio in the U.S. favored

³⁵ *Brigham Young’s Defence of Polygamy or Marriage and Morals, In the Great Salt Lake City, with Six Reasons for the Plurality of Wives, as Delivered Before the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ, of the Latter-day Saints, at Utah* (London: C. Elliot, 9 & 3, Shoe Lane. E.C., 1861), 15.

³⁶ Helen M. Whitney, “The Opinion of an American Woman Whose Forefathers Fought for the Liberty That We Are Denied Today,” *Woman’s Exponent* 19, no. 11 (Nov 1890).

³⁷ Paula Kelly Harline, *The Polygamous Wives Writing Club: From the Diaries of Mormon Pioneer Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 88.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

women.³⁹ In a defensive, pro-polygamy speech in 1861, for instance, Brigham Young related that

even at our older States of this Union—see the hundreds of thousands of females more than males. All this surplus of immortal beings are doomed by the Romish law, prohibiting polygamy, to live single, and to never form those ties which would enable them lawfully and honourably to answer the "end" of their creation as wives and mothers. Nor is this all; under the present institutions men are trained to feel a little or no obligation to marry, many of them choose to live single. This increases the number of females doomed to single life.⁴⁰

Although other nineteenth-century reformers shared these concerns over women's virtue, Young radically suggested that the government, "Make death the penalty for fornication and adultery – thus throwing a shield around [their] families."⁴¹ By strengthening the family, containing male lust, and offering single women the ability to "fulfill their proper sphere as wives and mothers," plural marriage served as a solution to larger social problems, which author Julie Dunfey characterizes as "the corruption of Gentile society."⁴² These assertions are evident in two articles from the *Women's Exponent* in 1891, which both address the suffrage movement.

In "A Man's Advice About Woman Suffrage," David P. Felt, who identified as pro-suffrage, insisted that women must "educate [their] daughters in various channels of public life," indicating his belief that the suffrage movement would not be successful

³⁹ Although this was not generally true in the Western United States at this time, Utah's demographics favored women.

⁴⁰ *Brigham Young's Defence of Polygamy or Marriage and Morals, In the Great Salt Lake City, with Six Reasons for the Plurality of Wives, as Delivered Before the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ, of the Latter-day Saints, at Utah* (London: C. Elliot, 9 & 3, Shoe Lane. E.C., 1861), 14.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴² Julie Dunfey, "'Living the Principle' of Plural Marriage: Mormon Women, Utopia, and Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," *Feminist Studies* 58, no. 3 (1984): 527-530.

without laying a proper foundation of multigenerational interest in women's equality.⁴³ However, as an additional piece of advice, Felt proclaimed, "do not try to teach [your daughters] that they should be burly policemen or sit on a jury, that includes men with the fair prospects of remaining together for days perhaps."⁴⁴ Felt insinuated that, under these circumstances, men might succumb to their lust – making the civil world an inappropriate sphere for women.

Social ills such as male lust were what many Christian suffragists and social purists sought to remedy. Frances Willard and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), for instance, converted to woman suffrage under the assertion that because of their *natural* tendency toward piety, women had a "God-given duty. . . to use their moral influence for good in the larger society -- not just in the home as tradition required."⁴⁵ One member of Utah's Beaver City Women's Suffrage Association heralded the WCTU as "one of the grandest organizations on earth."⁴⁶ Mormon suffragists shared the WCTU's concerns over the moral health of the nation.

In the subsequent edition of the *Exponent*, for example, Sarah M. Kimball, founder of the Relief Society in 1842, offered a response to D.P. Felt titled, "Reply to 'A Man's

⁴³ D.P. Felt, "A Man's Advice About Woman Suffrage," *Woman's Exponent* 20, no. 10 (Nov 1891).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 117.

⁴⁶ Women's Suffrage Association papers, (MSS SC 48), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Advice About Woman Suffrage.” Reflecting on the dangers of unravelling sexual mores, Kimball sarcastically refuted,

You say do not teach [our daughters] to be burly policemen. My dear Sir, if the members of the police force are burly, there is a crying wrong to be righted, my daughter or yours may be placed in circumstances where they are liable to arrest, are we willing that a coarse ungentlemanly man should have this daughter or sister in charge? This is one of the conditions in which the policeman should not be without the policewoman.⁴⁷

This response embodies the Mormon reformist strategy to contain male sexuality, which Mormons believed, contributed to women’s degradation, more so than polygamy ever had. Such rhetoric reinforced the role of wife and mother, while simultaneously advocating equality by “women’s elevation to the social control of procreative sex.”⁴⁸

By asserting themselves within this debate about sexuality, Mormon women did not focus “on women’s weaknesses and vulnerability,” as Ellen Carol DuBois previously generalized about the woman suffrage movement as a whole.⁴⁹ In fact, some Mormon social purists emphasized woman suffrage as a solution to *men’s* moral weaknesses. In a piece poignantly signed, “Amateur,” one woman noted, “Does not woman have to [assume] all the risk of their conditions changing? If the husband, father or son should die decent or fall away into sin, is she not helpless before the law? If husband gives way to drink, can he not if he chooses drink the home, the income, the all and she powerless to

⁴⁷ Sarah M. Kimball, “Reply to ‘A Man’s Advice About Woman Suffrage,’” *Woman’s Exponent* 20, no. 11 (Dec 1891).

⁴⁸ Julie Dunfey, “‘Living the Principle’ of Plural Marriage: Mormon Women, Utopia, and Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century,” *Feminist Studies* 58, no. 3 (1984): 532.

⁴⁹ Ellen Carol DuBois, “The Limitations of Sisterhood: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Division in the American Suffrage Movement, 1875-1902,” in *Woman Suffrage and Women’s Rights* (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 171.

interfere statutorily?”⁵⁰ This social purity logic became increasingly significant as Christian suffragists abandoned any criticism of monogamous marriage and family relations after 1870 and as antisuffragists capitalized on Mormon polygamy – citing the dissolution of marriage as a direct result of woman suffrage in territorial Utah.⁵¹

“Created Equal”: Redeeming Eve in the Mormon Theodemocracy

Mormons faced the peculiar challenge of contemplating how external institutions could function within church authority and their salvation narrative. Shaped by ongoing revelation, this process, which Merina Smith coins “the Mormon theological narrative,” was often based on trial-and-error, reflecting “changing circumstances and conditions.”⁵² The result was a structure that was both patriarchal and authoritarian, yet also democratic in nature. Referred to by historians as the “Mormon theodemocracy,” Latter-day men *and* women, could either “consent to God’s will or refuse, as they saw fit” through the franchise.⁵³ Although unanimous approval tended to occur *after* the implementation of

⁵⁰ Women’s Suffrage Association papers, “The Ballot: The Key to All Reform,” 1, no. 2 (MSS SC 48), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁵¹ Beverly Beeton, “How the West Was Won for Woman Suffrage” in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Women’s Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 107.

Sarah Barringer Gordon, “‘The Liberty of Self-Degradation’: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America,” *The Journal of American History*. no. 3 (December 1996): 846.

⁵² Merina Smith, *Revelation, Resistance, and Mormon Polygamy: The Introduction and Implementation of the Principle, 1830-1853* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2013), 22.

⁵³ Through revelations.

Sarah Barringer Gordon, “‘The Liberty of Self-Degradation’: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America,” *The Journal of American History*. no. 3 (December 1996): 827.

church policy, experimentation with democratic principles and the emphasis on consent were reoccurring themes in the language of Mormon suffragists.

In this respect, nineteenth-century Mormon suffragists revisited a debate that had remained unresolved since the American Revolution. What is American democracy, and to whom exactly did the founders refer when they declared that “all men are created equal”? Like other Christian suffragists, Mormon women saw their movement as an attempt to “realize and further the ideals of the Founding Fathers.”⁵⁴ In a collection of “Letters to the Editor” in *The Young Woman’s Journal*, for example, one woman bemoaned the fact that women received less income for their services, yet paid property taxes “to the fullest extent without representation.”⁵⁵ Drawing on the rhetoric of the American Revolution, Mormon women characterized themselves as active participants of American democracy, and asserted that women deserved all those accompanying rights and privileges, such as suffrage.

To Mormon suffragists, Joseph Smith’s teaching, that women were responsible for their own individual salvation,⁵⁶ proved that God had created men and women as different but equal beings. As one 1893 suffrage pamphlet proclaimed, “God is the father of both man and woman, and the endeavors of each will be rewarded according to their

⁵⁴ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement / 1890-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), 252.

⁵⁵ Lillie T. Freeze, “Equal Suffrage Department,” *The Young Woman’s Journal* 6, no. 5 (1895).

⁵⁶ Marybeth Raynes, “Mormon Marriages in an American Context,” in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 229.

merits.”⁵⁷ Another member of the same organization related, “This is one of the fallacies which seems the hardest to overcome, for the mind of the average man is slow to accept a state of affairs which places woman on a place fully equal to him, and by which he is forced to admit that he is no longer her superior.”⁵⁸ Another fellow suffragist agreed that “Careful observation and earnest thought [would] reveal the fact that [purifying influences] are preserved to a great degree extent, and can be wielded by Woman. When God had created Man, and placed himself upon the earth, He saw that there were certain qualities necessary for the completion of that great plan.”⁵⁹

Although many women’s rights activists, dating back to Abigail Adams, used similar logic concerning equality and God-given liberty, Mormonism’s interpretation of original sin – that individuals were affected by but not held responsible for the sins of Adam *or* Eve – radicalized their rhetorical redemption of Eve. Following the same prudence and millenarian thinking implemented by earlier polygamists and Mormon social purists, Mormon suffragists believed that they could attain equality and “overcome Eve’s curse” through obedience, humility, and social reform, particularly through suffrage.⁶⁰ A poem featured in the *Equal Rights Banner* directly confronted the notion of original sin, stating,

⁵⁷ Women’s Suffrage Association papers, “The Ballot: The Key to All Reform Vol. I, No. V” (MSS SC 48), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁵⁸ Women’s Suffrage Association papers, “The Ballot: The Key to All Reform Vol. IV” (MSS SC 48), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Jolene Edmunds-Rockwood, “The Redemption of Eve,” in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 11.

Rosa Brown Hale, “Women and Reform,” *The Young Woman’s Journal* 5, no. 2 (1894).

“And the Utah County Ladies to the proper position cling, / That Eve was just as much a queen as Adam was a king.”⁶¹ In this regard, “Mother Eve” served as a metaphor for contemporary Woman. The author asserted that, as a rule, Mormon women minded their proper sphere, yet “Mother Eve’s” role in Eden, (as well as theirs in the mortal life), was equal and complimentary to Adam, who symbolizes all men. The author continued her critique, boldly concluding,

[Eve’s] daughters saw their mother was allowed her agency –
That all her right were guaranteed, that she was truly free.
She taught them to be honest; to lead lives and true;
And her soul was sorely pained if right they failed to do.
But women lost their vested right as wickedness increased.
The privilege to vote their thoughts entirely had ceased.
Perhaps they often did protest, but it was all in vain.
Men would not brook that women should their vicious way restrain.⁶²

This conclusion reflects the author’s nineteenth-century sentiments concerning gender binaries – that vice was a product of men’s sexual transgressions, and that woman, with her piety and purity, was to “restrain” that “wickedness” through suffrage. The poem also utilizes the concept of the Heavenly Mother, a Mormon doctrine which serves as “the female counterpart to the male father-god.”⁶³ Early Mormon writings reveal the existence of one Heavenly Father (capitalized), and several “Queens,” symbolized by the “heavenly mother” (lowercase).⁶⁴ Although some early Mormon historians, such as Claudia

⁶¹ Women’s Suffrage Association papers, (MSS SC 48), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Linda P. Wilcox, “The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven,” in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 64.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 72.

Bushman, maintain that “Today’s Mormon leaders stress mothering far more than those in the nineteenth century,”⁶⁵ examples such as this suggest that the theologically and socially vital role of the Mormon mother was established early on. The mother served as a biological and a figurative extension of the Church’s power – in the home and, once enfranchised, at the ballot box.

“Gendered Authority”: Mormon Motherhood and Equal Rights, 1890-1894

As the Mormon community became self-replicating during the late nineteenth-century, with most new members added by birth rather than by conversion, the role of the Mormon mother became ever more significant. Many leaders feared that young Mormons, who had not endured the hardships of the previous generation, would veer from the principles of the community.⁶⁶ In her study of generational conflict and *The Young Woman’s Journal*, historian Lisa Olsen Tait maintains that Mormon women’s publications “helped to construe a certain sense of gendered authority” and carry on “a tradition of religious, political, and social involvement [which] had been established among Mormon women.”⁶⁷ During this period, maternalism, more than ever before, literally and figuratively served as an extension of Mormon women’s activism.

In “Another Woman’s Thoughts” via the nineteenth-century journal, the *Woman’s Exponent*, Emily Teasdale questioned, “How can a woman bring forth obedient children

⁶⁵ Bushman, Claudia L., ed. *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997. (Originally printed in 1976), xxxi.

⁶⁶ Lisa Olsen Tait, “The Young Woman’s Journal: Gender and Generations in a Mormon Women’s Magazine,” *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 22, no. 1 (2012): 54.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

when her heart is seething with bitterness at her own condition?” She concluded, “If mankind is to enjoy true freedom the *mothers must be free*.”⁶⁸ Lucinda Dalton agreed, “Who dares to say women are not capable of self-government, should never dare place a child of his own in the care of a woman, because it is a self-evident truth that he or she who cannot control self is not fit to have control of another; particularly an uninformed, undeveloped soul.”⁶⁹ Dalton also called upon female Mormon elders, “who walked side by side with [their] pioneer husbands,” insisting that they “never be persuaded that [they] or [their] daughters [were] not equally concerned in all that pertain[ed] to this hard-won home, equal heirs to the grand estate.”⁷⁰ Such publications socialized young women into the gender ideologies of their activist elders, who began emphasizing the elevation of motherhood as the key to all reform.

The Young Woman’s Journal, served as the “official organ” for the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA), an organization designed to encourage “young girls in the Church to ‘retrench’ from foolish habits” by surrounding them with their female elders who, in turn, would also “retrench” from their own faults – such as idle time.⁷¹ From its conception in 1889, *The Young Woman’s Journal* fashioned a more direct link between motherhood and suffrage. In a powerful editorial concerning the mother’s influence, Lillie Stewart Horsley wrote,

⁶⁸ Emily Teasdale, “Another Woman’s Thoughts,” *Woman’s Exponent* 19, no 7 (Sep 15, 1890).

⁶⁹ L.L. Dalton, “Woman Suffrage Column,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22, no. 15 (Apr 1894).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from November 1869 to June 1910* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1911), 30.

Every day we see instances of the power of woman's influence, and now when the ballot of our nation has become so corrupted that King Cash rules with his golden hand and the noise of silvery trumpets; now, in the enlightened nineteenth century it is time for woman with her cultivated mind, pure heart and clear head to step forth and with deft fingers, showing unselfish aims to their very tips, brush away the filth that has collected by long standing in such heaps that fair, straightforward election lies almost smothered beneath its depth!⁷²

Horsley touched on a common contention amongst Christian suffragists – that, if enfranchised, women's inherent purity and virtue would purify the unscrupulous political world. Images of the “unselfish” mother swept up in the “corrupted” world of “King Cash” politics would have been undoubtedly controversial in light of criticisms that the franchise would inherently destroy the family unit. As Aileen Kraditor explains, the Antis feared that suffrage “would dissolve society into a heterogeneous mass of separate persons, whose individual rather than family interests would thenceforth receive political representation.”⁷³

Within the Mormon community, these expressions of motherhood were not necessarily limited to the family unit. Suffrage organizations, for example, also provided homosocial spaces in which Mormon activists could assert their voice amongst their Mormon peers. It is within these gendered social activities that Mormon women's gendered authority was established and reinforced – all while they participated in ever-evolving constructions of Mormon women's femininity. The Beaver City Woman Suffrage Association, in particular, noted that their “movement seem[ed] to be but little

⁷² Lillie Stewart Horsley, “Woman's Influence,” *The Young Woman's Journal* 3, no 2, (1891).

⁷³ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement / 1890-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1965), 25.

understood by the masses.”⁷⁴ “[T]he aim of these associations,” they claimed, “is to give woman that will brighten and ennoble her life, that will enlighten her mind and elevate her character.”⁷⁵ Additionally, Mormon suffrage organizations often practicing the singing of hymnals, which they routinely modified, combining religious experience with the suffrage campaign.⁷⁶

As Utah approached the realization of statehood, Mormon women continue to emphasize the ways by which maternal influence profited the nation at large. A poem featured in the *Exponent*, for instance, noted that

To be a Mother. Oh that name!
How hath it filled the world with fame,
For men of fame had not been here
Had it not been for mother dear.⁷⁷

Although some women viewed the franchise as a liberating way to bypass family loyalties,⁷⁸ Mormon women positioned suffrage as an amalgamation of civil and motherly duties. Mormon women insisted that intelligent, respected, pious mothers would produce the “grandest statesmen, purest patriots, and worthiest representatives of honesty, virtue and truth.”⁷⁹ The only way to achieve this, they insisted, was to elevate womankind, bestowing her with honor and “perfect liberty.”

⁷⁴ Women’s Suffrage Association papers, (MSS SC 48), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Phebe C. Young, “Woman’s Work,” *Woman’s Exponent* 21, no. 2 (July 15, 1892).

⁷⁸ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women’s Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 22.

⁷⁹ Julia A. Farnsworth, “Woman as Wife, Mother and Friend,” *Woman’s Exponent* Vol 19, no 24, (June 15, 1891).

Conclusion

From a historical perspective, the study of American feminine identity is fundamentally tied to evolving ideas about American citizenship.⁸⁰ For Mormon women, civil responsibilities and religious doctrine were often in conflict with each other, particularly concerning polygamy. However, after the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887 and Woodruff's revelation, and subsequent 1890 Manifesto abandoning plural marriage, Mormon women almost seamlessly re-entered the national campaign for suffrage. Up to this point, Mormon understandings of maternalism served as a framework for suffrage debates in Utah. Moving forward, however, Utah's campaign for statehood both complicated, fortified, and transformed the Mormon woman suffrage movement.

⁸⁰ Catherine A. Brekus, "Introduction: Searching for Women in Narratives of American Religious History" in *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 16.

Chapter Two

“To Vote or Not to Vote!?”: Woman Suffrage and the Struggle for Statehood in Utah, 1890-1896

Throughout the mid nineteenth-century, Presbyterian Elizabeth W. Kane accompanied her husband, Army Colonel and abolitionist, Thomas Kane as he facilitated the Mormon migration and settlement of Utah. Between 1872 and 1873, E.W. Kane wrote a series of letters to Pennsylvania Senator (and friend of her husband), Simon Cameron encouraging him to use his influence to motivate the U.S. federal government to admit Utah as a state. “Let Utah in,” Kane proclaimed, “— drop the question of Polygamy out of sight and I assure you the United States will have no more admirable citizens than these Mormons.”⁸¹

Over twenty years later, the U.S. still had not changed its position concerning either polygamy or statehood. Federal policies still opposed polygamy, and statehood, as many Americans still feared that Mormons were too “peculiar” – unassimilable into American society. Those sentiments, however, were soon to change. After the 1890 Manifesto, when the Mormon Church officially declared that its members would no longer practice or promote plural marriage, the Saints began taking up initiatives to make Utah more appealing as a potential state. In 1891, for example, the Mormon Church dissolved the People’s Party (Utah), which had formerly served as the official party of LDS

⁸¹ Elizabeth Wood Kane letter to Simon Cameron; Vault MSS 792; Kane family papers; L. Tom Perry Special Collections; 19th Century Western & Mormon Manuscripts; 1130 Harold B. Lee Library; Brigham Young University; Provo, Utah.

candidates.⁸² Mormons also disbanded some of their various economic cooperatives, and began the process of organizing their own Utah State chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The U.S. government responded by granting amnesty for Utah's polygamists in 1893 and 1894, with the latter restoring the franchise to polygamist men.⁸³

Both the abandonment of polygamy and the mitigation of the Church's political power smoothed Utah's admissions process to statehood. This chapter will examine the implications of pending statehood in regards to the Mormon suffrage movement. Using gendered state-building as a tool for analyzing Utah's admission into the Union reveals how the woman suffrage movement impacted constructions of citizenship in post-bellum America. Even after federal legislation enabled Utah to begin drafting a state constitution, the process of defining their electorate required Utahans to immediately address the question of woman suffrage.

The Suffrage Question: Pending Statehood and the Utah Enabling Act, 1894

Although the statehood campaign had, in general, made Mormon Utahans increasingly more cooperative with the federal government – more willing to assimilate into “Gentile” society – for Mormon suffragists, pending statehood presented both new challenges and

⁸² Eric Biber, “The Price of Admission: Causes, Effects, and Patterns of Conditions Imposed on States Entering the Union,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 46, no. 2 (April 2004): 157.

⁸³ Lisa Madsen Pearson and Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Innovation and Accommodation: The Legal Status of Women in Territorial Utah: 1850-1896,” in *Women in Utah: Paradigm or Paradox?* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), 1819. Grover Cleveland, Proclamation 369, “Granting Amnesty and Pardon for the Offense of Polygamy, Bigamy, Adultery, or Unlawful Cohabitation to Members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints,” Sept 25, 1894.

opportunities. Although the fact that the woman suffrage question had become almost unavoidable for Utah was promising, Mormon suffragists worked diligently to ensure that women's enfranchisement would be a stipulation for statehood. Their inevitable success was the result of a continual effort to seek out non-Mormon alliances, particularly within the developing secular society of Utah. But, as varying responses to the "suffrage question" indicates, Mormon suffragists maintained hopeful optimism that statehood would be the ultimate opportunity to secure woman suffrage for Utah.

The statehood campaign generated considerable debate about how women might benefit from statehood, not only by obtaining the ballot but also additional civil liberties – such as the right to hold a public office. On February 7, 1894, the Chairman of the Entertainment of the Young Woman's Aid asked Emmeline B. Wells "whether Woman Suffrage [would] be given to the Women of Utah after it became a state?"⁸⁴ Wells declined to answer, but "proposed the question be put upon its merits."⁸⁵ Less than two months later, Wells' friend and fellow suffragist Lucinda Dalton tackled that question in an *Exponent* article titled, "Woman Suffrage Column: Shall Utah Become a State without Woman Suffrage?" Emulating Shakespeare's famous existential crisis, Dalton began, "To vote or not to vote! That is the Question."⁸⁶ She continued by pondering, "Shall we drift with the sluggish tide of Custom, and in our Organic Act rivet the fetters of perpetual minority upon the mothers of so hardly a race of men as Utah can boast?"⁸⁷ Dalton's

⁸⁴ Emmeline B. Wells Diary transcripts, (MSS 1407), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ L.L. Dalton, "Woman Suffrage Column: Shall Utah Become a State without Woman Suffrage?" *Woman's Exponent* 22, no. 15 (April 1, 1894).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

impressions recapitulated the fears of most suffragists within the context of the statehood debate – that if women did not secure political equality in tandem with statehood it would significantly inhibit their ability to achieve it thereafter.

On July 16, 1894 the federal government passed the Utah Enabling Act, which “enable[d] the people of Utah to form a constitution and State government, and to be admitted into the Union on an equal footing with the original States.”⁸⁸ The act specified that on March 4, 1895 elected delegates of Utah would be authorized to form a state constitution so long as it was not “repugnant to the Constitution of the United States and the principles of the Declaration of Independence.”⁸⁹ Mormon suffragists, and their allies, quickly recognized that the convention and the drafting of the state constitution was key for re-enfranchisement. In a congratulatory letter to the ladies of Utah, published on August 1, 1894, Susan B. Anthony cautioned, “Now in the formative period of your constitution is the time to establish justice and equality to all the people. That adjective ‘male’ once admitted into your organic law will remain there. Don’t be cajoled into believing otherwise! Look how the women of New York have toiled and toiled over forty years to get ‘male’ out of our constitution.”⁹⁰

Susan B. Anthony’s advice reflected a bitter defeat for national suffragists in 1868, with the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. Woman suffragists, such as Anthony and Elizabeth Cady-Stanton, had proposed a woman suffrage amendment at the federal level. Male abolitionists, who had once supported the suffrage cause, now deemed this time

⁸⁸ *Utah Enabling Act*, Ch. 138, 38th Cong., 1st sess. (July 16, 1894).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Wells, Emmeline B., ed. “Susan B. Anthony’s Letter,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 3-4 (Aug 1-15, 1894).

period “the Negro’s hour,” fearing that combining woman suffrage with the efforts of African Americans would hinder the latter’s opportunity of gaining enfranchisement at the federal level.⁹¹ The result was a Constitutional Amendment that guaranteed the vote for any “*male* citizens twenty-one years of age.”⁹² The Fourteenth Amendment marked the first instance in which gender specificity occurred in the U.S. Constitution. Thus, Anthony and Mormon suffragists recognized the significance of setting a precedent and defining women’s citizenship in Utah’s state constitution. As Anthony noted, Utah’s constitution could (and would) be the defining moment for Mormon suffragists – either the apex of their endeavors or a crushing defeat for womankind.

Equal Rights, Equal Opportunity: Party Politics and the Constitutional Convention, 1894-1895

With the Enabling Act in place, Mormon suffragists strategically appealed to the framers of Utah’s Constitution by expanding their political power via the National American Woman Suffrage Association and avoiding party alignment. Because the Church no longer formally condoned plural marriage, and all women of Utah suffered the punitive disenfranchisement of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, Utah’s Woman Suffrage Association was more readily accepted by national suffragists. By solidifying its membership as an auxiliary of N.A.W.S.A., Utah’s W.S.A. increased their visibility both at the state and national level.

⁹¹ Robert E. Riegel, “The Split of the Feminist Movement in 1869,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (Dec 1962): 487.

⁹² U.S. Constitution, amend. 14, sec. 2.

At the Utah territory political party conventions in September 1894, the territorial branches of both of the national political parties – the Republicans and the Democrats – endorsed woman suffrage for Utah. The Democrats, however, displayed significantly more promise, advocating that women also be eligible to hold public office.⁹³ Regardless, Utah’s Woman Suffrage Association did not align themselves politically, but rather maintained their “allegiance to the woman suffrage question.”⁹⁴ Nonpartisanship had been a policy of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, not only because of their disillusionment with the Republican Party in the 1860s, but also because, as Aileen Kraditor posits, most suffragists thought of non-partisan politics as being more democratic in nature and more favorable towards women’s advancement.⁹⁵ Following a Republican victory at the polls in November, the Utah W.S.A. noted, “The election is over, but we ought to interview the members elected to see if they intend to place women side by side with men in the constitution.”⁹⁶ Such contentions demonstrate that, during this period of state-building, Mormon women’s suffrage rhetoric shifted away from notions of maternalism, relying instead on the implications of civic duty.

Like their non-Mormon counterparts across the nation, Mormon suffragists continued to use the rhetoric of equal rights. Referencing the slogan, “no taxation without representation,” members of Utah’s W.S.A. “prepared and adopted resolutions protesting

⁹³ Jean Bickmore White, “Woman’s Place Is in the Constitution: The Struggle for Equal Rights in Utah in 1895,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 42, (Fall 1974), 347.

⁹⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, “Woman Suffrage Column: Utah W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 15-16 (Feb 1 and 15, 1895).

⁹⁵ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement / 1890-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), 224.

⁹⁶ Mary E. Irvine, “S.L. Co. Convention,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 11 (Dec 1, 1894).

against excessive taxation.”⁹⁷ In one county, they noted that upwards of forty-five percent of taxes were “paid by women who own[ed] their own homes or [were] property holders, yet [had] no vote.”⁹⁸ In fact, they argued that female Utahans were especially entitled to enfranchisement because Utah was home to more female property owners than “any other state with the same number of inhabitants.”⁹⁹

By February 1895 the Utah W.S.A. had established organizations in nineteen counties and were “determined to keep up [their] membership to the National-American Woman Suffrage Association,” believing that “in unity there [was] strength,” and “that the women of all states and territories in the United States should unite on this great question which [meant] so much for womenkind.”¹⁰⁰ Although it is difficult to discern how many of these members were Mormon women, mathematical calculations suggest that Utah’s suffrage associations had higher membership than any other state during that decade.¹⁰¹ On March 18, 1895, the Utah Woman Suffrage Association held a suffrage convention in which the Chief Executive Committee and delegates from several county auxiliaries “draft[ed] a suitable document to present to the Constitutional Convention then in

⁹⁷ Emmeline B. Wells, “Utah: Report to Convention February 1894,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 12 (Dec 1, 1894).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, “Woman Suffrage Column: Utah W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 15-16 (Feb 1 and 15, 1895).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ I arrived at this conclusion using Table 1 in Holly J. McCammon and Karen E. Campbell, “Winning the Vote in the West: The Political Successes of the Women’s Suffrage Movements, 1866-1919,” *Gender and Society* 15, no. 1 (Feb 2001): 60. McCammon and Campbell contend that Utah’s Woman Suffrage Association had 40.70 members per 10,000 people between 1892 and 1919.

session.”¹⁰² That afternoon, seventy-five women presented the document to the Constitutional Convention. Announcing themselves as the “official representatives of the great women organizations of Utah,” the committee proclaimed,

The men of Utah, in their respected political parties, have with equal unanimity, said that the women shall be accorded equal rights and privileges of citizenship, that sex distinction shall no longer be a ban and a bar to equal opportunity with men to exercise the God-given powers and capabilities with which women are endowed for purposes of equal self-government and equal enjoyment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.¹⁰³

By using language that reflected the Declaration of Independence, the W.S.A. clearly indicated that woman suffrage was not simply an issue of party politics, but rather a fundamental human right and an extension of patriotic claims. Utah’s W.S.A. concluded by asking the convention, who were drafting the new state’s constitution, “to provide in the Constitution that the rights of citizens of the State of Utah to vote and hold office shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex, and that male and female citizens of the State shall equally enjoy all civil, political and religious rights and privileges.”¹⁰⁴

Utah’s Woman Suffrage Association felt righteously confident in their ability to sway the committee to its cause – and it did so successfully. Fred Kiesel (non-Mormon), Richard Mackintosh (non-Mormon), and Robert McFarland (Mormon) were among the few dissenters who presented the minority report against suffrage in early March.¹⁰⁵ In the coming weeks, all seven members of the Committee on Elections and Right of

¹⁰² Emmeline B. Wells, “Convention and Woman Suffrage, *Woman’s Exponent* 23, no. 17 (April 1, 1895).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Jean Bickmore White, “Woman’s Place Is in the Constitution: The Struggle for Equal Rights in Utah in 1895,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 42, (Fall 1974), 350.

Suffrage, except for Kiesel, were won over by the Utah W.S.A., and agreed on adopting the language of Wyoming's State Constitution. Kiesel, along with other critics, allegedly feared that a controversial issue such as suffrage might result in votes against adoption of the proposed constitution.¹⁰⁶

On April 18, 1895 the Constitutional Convention voted in favor of woman suffrage in Utah. "Hurrah for Utah," N.A.W.S.A. President Susan B. Anthony wrote as she congratulated Utah on establishing a "genuine" republican government.¹⁰⁷ Anthony, along with Rev. Anna Shaw, was in the process of planning a trip to Utah to oversee the Intermountain West Woman Suffrage Convention in Salt Lake City on May 13 and 14, 1895.¹⁰⁸ The previous day, on May 12, Anthony stood before Mormon suffragists in the Salt Lake Tabernacle and commended Utah on restoring the franchise that had been revoked by the Edmunds-Tucker Act only eight years prior.¹⁰⁹

Dissenters remained vocal at the convention, however, and Mormon suffragists continued to actively defend their position during this particularly delicate time. Suffragist Ruby Lamont, for example, referred to their adversaries as "digging [their] political grave in defense of wrong and oppression."¹¹⁰ Mocking one Anti's presumably benevolent façade, Lamont stated, "Mr. [Brigham] Roberts does not deny our right to education, our moral superiority, or our influence for purity and goodness. *Well, that was*

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 350-351.

¹⁰⁷ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., "Equal Suffrage in the Constitution," *Woman's Exponent* 23, no. 19 (May 1, 1895).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, "Sermon by Rev. Anna H. Shaw in the Large Tabernacle in Salt Lake City," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 1 (June 1, 1895).

¹¹⁰ Ruby Lamont, "Woman Suffrage," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no 1 (June 1, 1895).

kind. But, really, education makes us feel, more and more, the falling bonds of political bondage; moral superiority, it seems can never compensate our first unfortunate mistake in the Garden of Eden [emphasis mine].”¹¹¹ Suffragists such as Lamont used the context of pending statehood (rather than maternalism) to deny critics’ persistent claims that women’s “moral superiority” would somehow be tainted by political participation.

“Responsibilities of Citizenship”: Suffrage, Statehood, and the November Election, 1895-1896

Although female Utahans had preliminarily secured the vote at the state level, the battle was not yet won. Utah had still not *officially* become a state and Mormon suffragists continued to express concern over whether or not women would be welcome at the November polls, where citizens of Utah would vote on the State constitution that had been drafted at the convention (which thus far included woman suffrage).¹¹² As law professor Lisa Madsen Pearson and historian Carol Cornwall Madsen explain, the language of Utah’s Enabling Act had been extremely vague,¹¹³ requiring that the Constitution be approved by “the people” or “inhabitants” of “said State,” never specifying gender.¹¹⁴ In a resolution, which he proposed be submitted to the Attorney General, Utah Commissioner Erasmus Tatlock inquired if “women possessing the

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Shall Women Vote in November?,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 4 (July 15, 1895).

¹¹³ Lisa Madsen Pearson and Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Innovation and Accommodation: The Legal Status of Women in Territorial Utah: 1850-1896,” in *Women in Utah: Paradigm or Paradox?* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), 1836.

¹¹⁴ *Utah Enabling Act*, Ch. 138, 38th Cong., 1st sess. (July 16, 1894).

qualifications set forth in the foregoing [would] be legally entitled to vote upon the question of the adoption, or rejection of the proposed constitution at the November election, A.D. 1895?”¹¹⁵ Although the resolution was put on hold, it is clear that Mormon suffragists recognized that women’s inability to participate in the November election could be detrimental to their overall cause, particularly because it might set an adverse precedent concerning woman suffrage.

The Utah W.S.A. responded by developing a test case to put before the courts, resulting in *Anderson vs. Tyree*. Sarah E. Anderson of Ogden, Utah attempted to register to vote on August 6, 1895 but was denied. Anderson sued Charles Tyree, a deputy registrar for Ogden, and was initially issued a writ of mandate against the defendant.¹¹⁶ In such a case, this writ of mandate would have required the defendant to reverse his previous actions and comply with the law. However, Tyree appealed the decision to Utah’s Supreme Court and, later that month, Chief Justice Merritt and Judge Barch reversed the judgment of the lower court with only one dissenter, Judge King. Merritt contended that “the Edmund-Tucker law had not been repealed and would remain effective till statehood was achieved,” and that “[t]here had been no intention on the part of the Constitutional Convention to allow women to vote at the first election, in

¹¹⁵ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Shall Women Vote in November?,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 4 (July 15, 1895).

¹¹⁶ Lisa Madsen Pearson and Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Innovation and Accommodation: The Legal Status of Women in Territorial Utah: 1850-1896,” in *Women in Utah: Paradigm or Paradox?* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), 1836. Department of Interior, “Anderson vs. Tyree,” *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior on the Operations of the Department* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1896), 449.

November next, but to allow them to vote thereafter.”¹¹⁷ As a result, female Utahans would not be eligible to vote in the upcoming constitutional election. Judge King, the dissenting voter, referred to the decision as “an outrage,” and felt that “[i]t was the province of the Constitution-makers to define the electorate, and they had done so, classifying men and women as citizens.”¹¹⁸

Regardless, Mormon women still recognized the importance of actively working towards statehood, which they now equated with enfranchisement (since the proposed state constitution guaranteed woman suffrage). The *Exponent* reported that women were “soon to enter the new State full-fledged citizens politically equal in all respects to men, and in view of this condition they have been, and are, preparing themselves for the actual duties and responsibilities of citizenship.”¹¹⁹ Presuming victory at the ballot box, Mormon suffragists advocated the creation of a new civic identity for women by encouraging them to continue attending meetings, primaries, and conventions in order to support statehood, but more importantly, to also educate themselves in civic government.¹²⁰ They maintained that “[e]very woman who loves Utah and desires its prosperity should do her utmost to urge men (who have the ballot) to vote for Statehood,” which would in turn, grant suffrage to women.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Women May Not Vote,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 7 (Sep 1, 1895).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Women Should Work for Statehood,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 10 (Oct 15, 1895).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Following the November 5 election, the *Woman's Exponent* published a bold article titled, "The New State," in which, before the votes were even counted, they declared "it [was] already well known that there [was] a large majority for *equal suffrage*."¹²² Although already celebrating their presumed triumph, Mormon suffragists lamented that the Eastern states "[hung] back and [clung] more closely to all old forms and traditions."¹²³ They continued to express their dissatisfaction that women had "not had the privilege of voting and being voted for in this campaign," yet they persisted that women should still "watch the proceedings and take notes, and if they [had] learned some wholesome lessons by standing and waiting, they may do better service when they [were] allowed active participation."¹²⁴ Utah's state constitution was ratified on November 5, 1895 with a popular vote of 31,305 to 7,607.¹²⁵ Finally, on January 4, 1896 President Grover Cleveland signed the Proclamation for statehood in Utah which, in the words of the *Woman's Exponent*, "brought freedom to women as well as men, the full rights and privileges of citizenship."¹²⁶

¹²² Emmeline B. Wells, ed., "The New State," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 11-12 (Nov 1 and 5, 1895).

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., "Celebrating Statehood," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 14 (Dec 15, 1895).

¹²⁵ "Utah's Road to Statehood," Utah Department of Administrative Services: Division of Archives and Records Service, <http://archives.utah.gov/research/exhibits/Statehood/conintro.htm> (accessed February, 28, 2015).

¹²⁶ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., "The Inauguration," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 15-16 (Jan 1 and 15, 1896).

Conclusion

The latter half of the 1890s brought about social and political changes for Utah's Mormons. Severing ties with polygamy, dissolving some of their political power, and seeking admission to the Union all made Mormons seem more integratable into the United States. This Americanization of Utah's Mormons trickled down to Utah's Woman Suffrage Association, allowing them greater access and recognition amongst national suffrage leaders. Additionally, they began the process of defining their new electorate – emphasizing the failures of federal policy rather than inherent virtuousness of women. Continuing to expand the definitions of women's civic identity, Mormon suffragists also relinquished former religious arguments in favor of enfranchisement and focused more exclusively on notions of American liberty and democracy. Admission to the Union had been conditional between the U.S. and Utah, with regards to polygamy, as defined by Utah's Enabling Act. However, by demanding that women's political equality be added to the state constitution prior to it being ratified, Mormon suffragists made woman suffrage a condition of Utah's statehood, and set a precedent for Mormon women's citizenship in said state.

Chapter Three

“Appreciation of the Ballot”: New Concerns, Old Tactics, and Registering Woman Voters, 1896-1920

Although Utah’s statehood had restored suffrage to its female citizens, if and how they used their franchise reveals that women underwent a process of renegotiating their civic identities. Not only were women themselves changed by their newfound inclusion in the electorate but, as historian Kristi Andersen contends, women’s involvement in politics fostered a “transformation of the relationship between gender and citizenship” by shaping “sex-differentiated roles in the political sphere.”¹²⁷ At the January 1, 1896 meeting of the Salt Lake County Woman’s Equal Suffrage Association, for example, some women expressed reluctance to vote “because [now] their brothers and beaux objected to women in politics.”¹²⁸ Concerned over emerging fears about women at the ballot box, the *Woman’s Exponent* soon featured an article titled, “Appreciation of the Ballot,” which addressed female Utahans’ apparent apathy regarding upcoming elections: “Because women were not eligible to vote or to be voted for previous to the Proclamation for Statehood, women should not show any lack of enthusiasm in subjects so essential to the community as some that are being brought before this body of law-makers, nor should they be unmindful of the responsibility resting upon them because of the privileges of equal citizenship.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2.

¹²⁸ Cassie C. Newman, “S.L. Co. W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 18 (Feb 15, 1896).

¹²⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Appreciation of the Ballot,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, 19 (Mar 1, 1896).

Local suffragists reoriented their campaign by insisting that the women of Utah serve as the exemplar for responsible female citizenship via participation in political elections. At the following W.S.A. meeting, on February 18, Emily S. Richards, the founder of Utah's Woman Suffrage Association, suggested that women consider all of the political questions "near and dear" to them and "learn to vote intelligently."¹³⁰ Richards' contention that certain political issues might be particularly "near and dear" to women suggests that suffragists believed women would "do politics" differently – developing their own political culture, rather than adopting or penetrating the male political sphere.¹³¹ Revisiting maternalist sentiments, the National American Woman Suffrage Association agreed, as their secretary Rachel Foster Avery wrote, "In a republican form of government, the vote means the power to control the conditions of living; ought not the mothers of the land be interested in this?"¹³² Avery further maintained that women who were not "chary of expressing their opinions" seemed to "think it unworthy to express an opinion by casting a ballot which would crystallize it into law!"¹³³ Furthermore, Emily Richards advocated cooperation between women of both political parties (non-partisanship); "that they should work together for the benefit of woman-kind."¹³⁴ Mormon suffragists encouraged women to remain "right and honest" in politics and to "set a good example to the women of the other states," reiterating hope that

¹³⁰ Cassie C. Newman, "S.L. Co. W.S.A.," *Woman's Exponent* 24, no. 19 (Mar 1, 1896).

¹³¹ Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 12.

¹³² Rachel Foster Avery, "Ought Women to Want To Vote?," *Woman's Exponent* 25, no. 8 (Sept 15, 1896).

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

“women [would] make a study of government at home and wherever and whenever there is an opportunity.”¹³⁵ Such suggestions blurred the previously well-defined differences between the public and the private sphere – between male and female citizenship.

In addition to reconciling their own civic identity, Mormon suffragists also attempted to clarify voter eligibility, thereby increasing the female electorate. Referencing the Congressional Act of 1855, which had naturalized any foreign-born women who married a U.S. citizen, suffragists insisted these women make their way to the polls.¹³⁶

Additionally, they encouraged fellow suffragists to “see to it that all those [women] who are not citizens, but who can become so by being naturalized, take the correct steps necessary that they may have the privilege accorded them under the law of the grand new State.”¹³⁷ Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly how this would have impacted the Mormon community, scholarship of the early-to-mid nineteenth-century Mormon Church reveals that thousands of female Mormon converts immigrated from Europe to Utah during the pioneering and settlement period. By highlighting the advantageous aspects of U.S. citizenship and extending them to foreign-born inhabitants, Utah’s suffragists hoped to increase the number of women voters in the new state.

Suffragists also continued earlier rhetorical claims, extending them into the post-suffrage era. At the N.A.W.S.A. Conference in Salt Lake City on May 14, 1895, for example, non-Mormon Republican and prominent educator Emma J. McVicker¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Women Voters,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 22 (April 15, 1896).

¹³⁷ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Vote Wisely,” *Woman’s Exponent* 25, no. 2 (July 1, 1896).

¹³⁸ McVicker would later become the first female Superintendent of Public Instruction in Utah in 1900.

directly linked suffrage and reform. McVicker claimed that she was a pro-suffrage convert as a result of her charity work and, even post-statehood, McVicker recalled the rhetoric of social purity feminists, noting, “Men are so debased in their ideas from their associations in many respects, they cannot look at things from the same standpoint as the women do when it comes to questions of reform.”¹³⁹ Similarly, another suffragist expressed faith that a successful future for Utah did not depend “on partyism entirely,” but on other qualities of women, including “industry, thrift, morality, honesty, integrity, constancy, and virtue.”¹⁴⁰ Such claims demonstrate continuity within the Mormon mindset as women persistently sought to “overcome Eve’s curse” while renegotiating gendered politics.

The lack of sources concerning Utah’s suffrage movement between 1897 and 1910 indicate that their efforts fizzled near the turn of the century. Post-suffrage, most local suffrage groups, such as Beaver City’s W.S.A. became increasingly inactive. Additionally, the *Woman’s Exponent*, which faced financial difficulties, ceased publication in 1914, silencing the unofficial organ of Utah’s Woman Suffrage Association, which had seemingly become more centralized than ever before. This is unsurprising, however, given that the N.A.W.S.A. tended to favor patriotism in light of World War I – a move that would eventually result in the formation of the National Woman’s Party by Alice Paul.

¹³⁹ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Conference of the N.A.W.S.A.,” *Woman’s Exponent* 24, no. 20-21 (Mar 15, April 1, 1896).

¹⁴⁰ Emmeline B. Wells, ed., “Vote Wisely,” *Woman’s Exponent* 25, no. 2 (July 1, 1896).

As historian Kathryn MacKay explains, woman suffrage briefly “stalled” in the West as “supporters were not able to translate” prior suffrage rhetoric “into a widespread political movement.”¹⁴¹ As woman suffrage was achieved on a state-by-state basis, some suffragists might have lost interest in this cause, having successfully secured the franchise for themselves. Regardless, between 1910 and 1914, Washington (1910), California (1911), Oregon (1912), Arizona (1912), Kansas (1912), Nevada (1914), and Montana (1914) all implemented woman suffrage.¹⁴² Such victories reflected the success of the Progressive movement, which national suffragists increasingly linked with their cause.¹⁴³

For women in Utah, broad-reaching efforts of the Progressive movement seem to have overshadowed suffrage, a reform with growing public visibility, which Utahans had already achieved. The Progressive Movement was arguably more fluid than the polarizing suffrage platform. As MacKay contends, for example, the “general commitment to ‘reform’” during the Progressive Era allowed national woman suffragists to gain more “broad-based support.”¹⁴⁴ This, perhaps, caused state suffrage associations to feel less instrumental in the passage of national legislation. Historian Victoria Bissell Brown agrees, “public support for woman suffrage grew as a result of widespread belief that women – if enfranchised – would support Progressive reforms because they were

¹⁴¹ Kathryn L. MacKay, “Women in Politics: Power in the Public Sphere,” *Women in Utah: Paradigm or Paradox?* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2005), 9291.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 9301.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9308.

more moral, compassionate, and nurturing than men.”¹⁴⁵ In addition to supporting national suffrage, Mormon women also increasingly campaigned for prohibition of both alcohol and tobacco, and supported the Sheppard-Towner Act, which eventually passed in 1921.¹⁴⁶ As historian Jill Mulvay Derr explains, “Such efforts connected Mormon women to their American sisters and obscured differences [between them].”¹⁴⁷ Such ventures, however, may have also detracted from Mormon women’s participation in the national suffrage movement during this period.

Conclusion

Finally, on August 18, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, guaranteeing that suffrage could no longer “be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”¹⁴⁸ It is nearly impossible to deny that the passage of federal legislation for woman suffrage was one of the single greatest watershed moments in American women’s history. It was the result of nearly eighty years of suffrage work, including “480 campaigns to persuade state legislatures to adopt suffrage amendments to state constitutions, and 47 campaigns to convince state constitutional conventions to adopt women’s suffrage provisions” – one of which, was Utah.¹⁴⁹ After 1920, national

¹⁴⁵ Victoria Bissell Brown, “An Introduction to ‘Why Women Should Vote’” in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 180.

¹⁴⁶ Jill Mulvay Derr, “Strength in Our Union: The Making of Mormon Sisterhood” in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 186.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ U.S. Constitution, amend. 19.

¹⁴⁹ Steven Mintz, “The Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment,” *OAH Magazine of History* (July 2007): 47.

suffragists, however, faced post-suffrage woes similar to those that confronted their Mormon counterparts in the late 1890s. As Nancy Cott explains, some suffragists were disappointed by lack of voter turnout during the 1920s, a downward trend that had begun the decade prior.¹⁵⁰ Although the first post-suffrage election in Utah garnered a large turnout of men and women, suffragists concerns in 1896 regarding women's participation continued at the national level during the 1920s. Although historians are not sure what caused this decline in voter participation, contemporary analysts blamed the nation's women for failing to "flock to the polls."¹⁵¹ As Kristi Andersen explains, that grand achievement of woman suffrage obscured "other changes in the political universe," such party realignment, which "depress[ed] voter participation."¹⁵²

Though it symbolized the culmination of their work, the Nineteenth Amendment must not eclipse the women of this particular study. The ladies of Utah had realized *their* primary objective by 1896 – statehood and suffrage. However, embracing their role as members of the electorate in a new state was a process that was neither easy nor clear. Differentiation between male and female political realms was not dissolved by the mere presence of women in the electorate. Post-suffrage, Utah's women began the process of redefining and renegotiating American political culture – an undertaking that would continue well into the 1920s, cultivated by women's increased participation in political

¹⁵⁰ Nancy F. Cott, "Across the Great Divide: Women in the Politics Before and After 1920" in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 358.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 358-359.

¹⁵² Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 11.

partisanship and the development of women's interest groups to familiarize them with their newly defined civic identity.

The nineteenth-century Mormon suffrage movement and the eventual relationship between suffrage and the statehood campaign demonstrate a unique historical intersection of religion, sexuality, and gender ideologies. From the 1840s through the 1880s, plural marriage had been the single greatest factor distinguishing Mormons from the rest of American society. Mormon women used moral suasion and the language of the social purity movement to defend polygamy as a principle of their faith. The passage of the most successful piece of anti-polygamy legislation, the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, further ostracized Mormons, as well as all female Utahans, who were now disenfranchised as a result of the Act. Although the N.W.S.A. and the A.W.S.A. had previously accepted disenfranchisement (for both men and women) as a punitive measure against polygamy, national suffragists now objected to this new legislative revocation of suffrage for all women – Mormon and non-Mormon, polygamists and monogamists alike.

Three years later, major changes in both the national suffrage movement and the Mormon Church set the framework for Mormon suffragists to consolidate alliances within the national campaign for woman suffrage. In May 1890, N.W.S.A. and A.W.S.A. merged to form one unified organization – the National-American Woman Suffrage Association. As national suffragists sought to reconcile the differences between them, they accepted the newly formed Utah Woman Suffrage Association as an auxiliary. Additionally, the Utah W.S.A.'s apparent disassociation from polygamy – solidified by the Church's desertion of the practice in 1890 – strengthened alliances between Mormon and non-Mormon national suffragists.

Utah's pending statehood, facilitated by the Utah Enabling Act in 1894, provided a framework for a state-wide suffrage debate. Utah's constitutional convention furnished the necessary circumstances for Mormon suffragists and their non-Mormon allies to set a precedent for exercising women's political power in the new state. The Utah W.S.A. adopted the strategies of the N.A.W.S.A. including holding conventions, practicing non-partisanship, and developing test cases as methods for not only re-enfranchising the women of Utah, but to establish a model for women citizens in the nation at-large.

Even after the Utah W.S.A. succeeded in adding woman suffrage to the state's proposed constitution, Mormon suffragists expressed disappointment in the ultimate exclusion of women from the November 1895 election. Ultimately, the election resulted in ratification of the new constitution and, in turn, suffrage was restored. However, the saga of woman suffrage did not conclude with enfranchisement at either the state or the federal level. Following statehood in 1896, Utah experienced considerably low voter turnout – a trend which continued at the national level after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. As critics blamed women for failing to show up at the polls, suffragists became increasingly concerned over registering woman voters through education and awareness of political issues that were particularly relevant to women.

Concluding this research, it is important to revisit those overarching questions that drive nineteenth-century women's history. What motivated these women to spend early eighty years campaigning for suffrage? What was it about the franchise that was so inherently liberating? As this research demonstrates, the ballot was not merely "the key to all reform." Rather, women sought the political implications of suffrage, particularly the recognition that they were full citizens of the United States. As Ellen Carol DuBois

explains, suffrage signified “a single demand for the right to shape the social order by the way of the public sphere.”¹⁵³ Women also maintained that suffrage would elevate womankind – out of the private sphere and into public consciousness – with the ballot epitomizing women’s individuality.

It is important to note of course, that for Mormon women, self-consciousness was not a direct result of the enfranchisement – particularly considering that, unlike other suffragists, Mormon women experienced enfranchisement early on, followed by a period of disenfranchisement, and then regained suffrage nine years later. As this work indicates, this process was inherently entwined with Utah’s campaign for statehood – an event that would eventually solidify Mormon women’s civic identity, as citizens of a new state who could exercise their citizenship to its full capacity. Yet, it was exactly that – *a process*. No singular event or political gain characterizes the development of Mormon women’s intellectual thought within the public sphere. This work has been my attempt to analyze that process through the lens of Mormon women’s agency and social reform.

¹⁵³ Ellen Carol DuBois, “The Radicalism of the Woman Suffrage Movement: Notes toward the Reconstruction of Nineteenth-Century Feminism” in *Woman Suffrage and Women’s Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 35.

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