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## Mormon Passage of George D. Watt

Ronald G. Watt

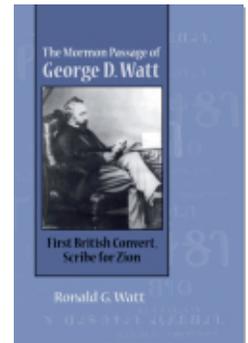
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## REPORTER FOR ZION

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

George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 29, 1852

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

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

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1. See [http://www.gemstonetherapy.com/gem\\_summaries/bloodstone](http://www.gemstonetherapy.com/gem_summaries/bloodstone); and also <http://www.crystal-cure.com/bloodstone-gem.html>, available online, for more information on bloodstones.

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

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

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

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

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2. “Notice,” *Deseret News*, November 29, 1851, 8. Belief in bloodstones’ curative powers was not part of the Mormon faith.

3. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., shorthand (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2006), holograph, George D. Watt Papers, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

4. George D. Watt to Daniel Wells, January 4, 1852, holograph, Daniel Wells Papers, LDS Church Archives.

5. “Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” December 26, 1851, LDS Church Archives.

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

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

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

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

6. See G. D. Watt, *Exercises in Phonography* (Salt Lake City: W. Richards, printer, 1851). The only extant copy the author knows about is in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

7. "Journal History," January 5, 1852.

8. The adobe Tabernacle sat where the Assembly Hall is located today.

9. Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 196.

10. *Ibid.*

11. See George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives. There are four archive boxes of untranscribed sermons in his papers in the church archives. Most of the sermons Watt recorded were never published or even summarized in written form.



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. Willard Richards to General Horace S. Eldredge and Major John Brady, September 17, 1852, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.

14. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, n.d., shorthand, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, August 2000). Within the letter, Watt wrote that the day before was September 22, so the letter was written on September 23, 1852.

15. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, September 26, 1852, holograph, Richards Papers. Richards kept a copy of it the letter; the original is in the Watt Papers.

16. *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

17. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 24, 1852, shorthand, holograph, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, August 2000).

18. Ibid. In Nauvoo Richards and Watt had gone through a ceremony where Richards had spiritually adopted Watt and his wife as his children, so when Watt refers to him as his father, he means that ceremony.

19. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 24, 1852, holograph, Richards Papers. The underlining is in the original. In his shorthand version, Watt said Molly was dying.

20. Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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21. Richards to George D. Watt, September 26, 1852.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

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

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

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

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

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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28. Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

30. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, May 3, 1853, shorthand draft, Watt Papers (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, September 2004). In his first volume, he published some of Young’s sermons and also several others from church authorities, including two entitled “Spiritual Communications” and “Heirship and Priesthood” by Parley P. Pratt, which are probably the talks he refers to in the letter on the spirit world and birthright.

31. Brigham Young, Office Journal, May 25–26, 1853, vol. 8, p. 23, holograph, Young Papers.

32. “Letter from the First Presidency to Elder Samuel W. Richards and the Saints Abroad,” June 1, 1853, in Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: R. James, printer, 1853), 1:5.

33. Thomas Ellerbeck, Journal, May 4, 1853, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

34. “Letter from the First Presidency to Elder Samuel W. Richards,” June 1, 1853, 1:5.

35. For an interesting account of the clerk’s work in the nineteenth century, see Thomas Augst, *The Clerk’s Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

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

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

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

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

36. Willard Richards to George D. Watt, August 16, 1853, holograph, Watt Papers.

37. "Thursday, November 24, 1853," *Deseret News*, November 24, 1853, 3: 2.

38. Historian's Office, Journal, September 15, 1853, holograph, Historian's Office records, LDS Church Archives.

39. "Journal History," March 12, 1854.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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47. "Journal History," March 25, 1852.

48. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1852.

49. Ellie S. Smith, shorthand notes, 1862, holograph, Watt Papers. Since she used a nickname, it is hard to know who she was.

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

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

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

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

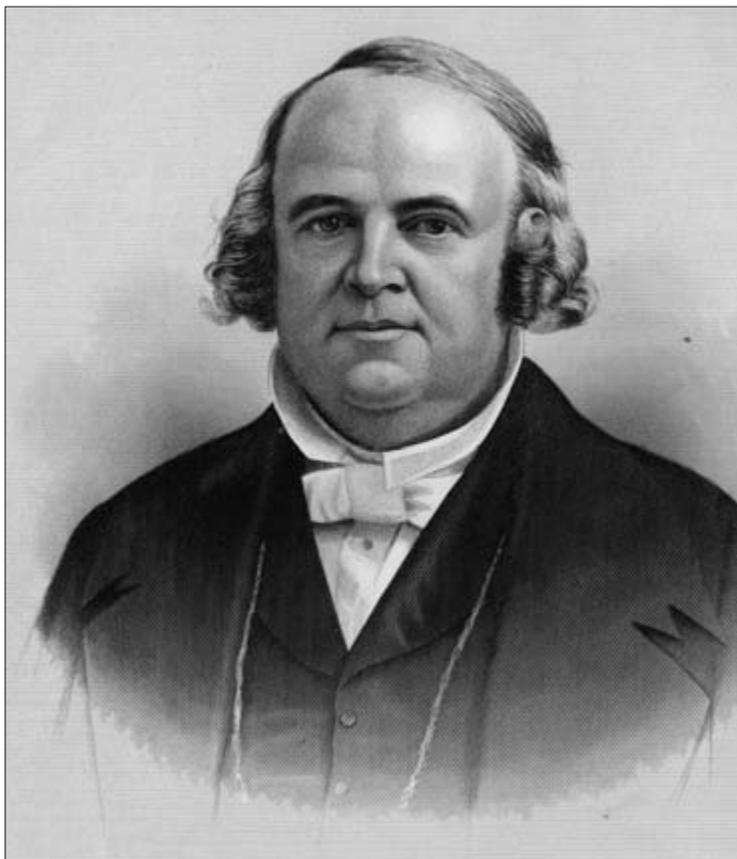
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50. George D. Watt account, ledger A, 1850–55. The charge for the cases, the forms, and the insurance was almost half of the £23, 1 shilling, shipping cost. The *Clara Wheeler* charged 15 shillings for the freight cost to New Orleans. Duties consumed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

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

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

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



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Willard Richards

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

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