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## Mormon Passage of George D. Watt

Ronald G. Watt

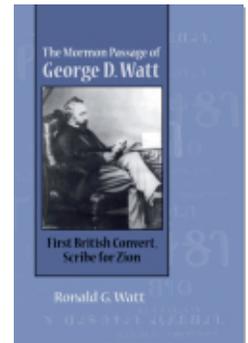
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SERMONS OF OBEDIENCE  
TRAVELING WITH BRIGHAM YOUNG  
AND TO BRITAIN

If I know myself I have the spirit of this labor upon me, not for the present so much as for the future, not for hire but to discharge a great duty which seems to be the purpose of my existence. . . . Already my mind has become almost stereotyped in this line of thought, so much so, that much of my time I am unfit for social society and conversation.

George D. Watt to Brigham Young, September 9, 1865

**P**erennially the Mormon leadership sent missionaries to the eastern United States and especially to Britain, converting many to their religion. Brigham Young had called the faithful to gather to Zion. The poor came with the aid of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, which was a revolving loan account. By the end of 1868, more than twenty thousand immigrants had arrived in Utah territory. By 1860 settlements had spread north from Bountiful to Cache Valley and then finally in 1863 to Bear Lake. Expansion south had begun with the settlement of Utah Valley, Provo in particular. By 1861 the Mormons had ranged as far south as Kanab and St. George.

Because these new pioneers were scattered throughout Utah, President Young no longer knew everybody in the church, and not all the members could travel to Salt Lake. Young decided that the only way to teach the people was to travel throughout the territory, and Watt went with him. Watt also became the correspondent for the *Deseret News* and later the *Semi-Weekly*

*Telegraph*. Besides providing synopses of Young's talks, he often reported on the condition of crops.

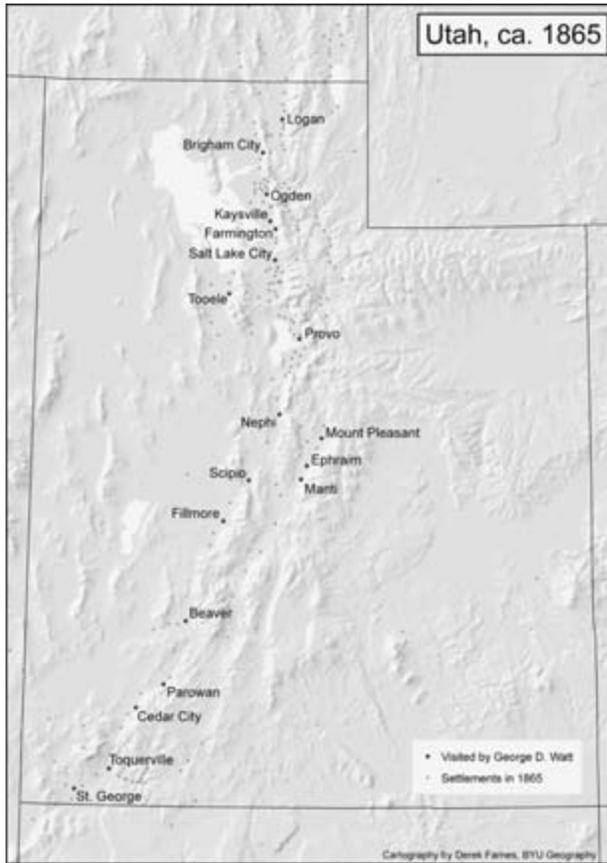
These excursions by Young were great processional outings because he generally traveled with a large entourage, often fifty or more people. The local communities met him with bands, militia, and the entire population lined along the streets. The wards held great feasts and balls and hosted all the members of the party. In return Young and the others, including Watt, preached and imparted wisdom to them. The people loved it. Many of them, unless they were ward and stake officers, had seen their president only a few times. Since Watt was with Young, the people also esteemed him. Undoubtedly he loved the status of his position. Watt's sermons and writings from this time tell us his beliefs and what he felt was important in his life.

During the 1850s, Young visited only a few of the new settlements. In September 1856, he went to Provo and took many of the church leaders with him, including Watt, who was to record the sermons for the newspaper. As one of the speakers, Watt told his audience that his religion meant everything to him and he should be willing to suffer for it. Every person was sent to Earth to be obedient to God.<sup>1</sup> Watt traveled with Young in 1858 when he went to Weber, Box Elder, and Cache Counties and again in June 1860, when he visited Cache Valley, faithfully recording the sermons. In October 1860, he went with the president's party to Manti—visiting each community, holding meetings, and staying overnight with friends.

On December 30, 1860, Watt spoke to his own Twentieth Ward congregation. He "complimented the Saints on their new school house"; he always emphasized the need for schools and education. "Spoke on the important part we must occupy, for we could not lay dormant on drinking, lying swearing, stealing & c." He admonished parents to lead a righteous life and set a good example to their children. He encouraged "young men and women to assist their parents." Mothers should teach their "daughters to keep house. Be frugal, careful &c. so that they will be good housewives. They should teach their children properly." He also exhorted the congregation to be kind to their animals.<sup>2</sup> In July 1861, in another sermon to the Twentieth Ward, Watt said that "faithfulness [was] necessary to receiving blessings" of the Latter-day Saints. Members needed to live righteously to receive the promises of eternal life. Sealings or marriages in the Endowment House "are given as a preparatory step."<sup>3</sup>

In the summer of 1861, Watt accompanied Young three times. On May 15, he journeyed through Fillmore south to Washington County and

1. Utah Stake, minutes, September 14, 1856, typescript, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).
2. Twentieth Ward, general minutes, December 30, 1860, holograph, LDS Church Archives.
3. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1861.



Travels throughout Utah

preached at Beaver. On their way south, the party stopped at the Mountain Meadows monument that had been erected to commemorate the people in the Baker-Fancher party who were killed in September 1857. After the group left the settlements in the Colorado Plateau area, they stopped at Fort Harmony to visit John D. Lee, a participant in the massacre. Always the gracious host, Lee seated the fifty people at his table and fed them. Their return journey was hot and dusty with swirling winds the entire time until they reached Spanish Fork, where they encountered a rainstorm that followed them all the way to Salt Lake City. They arrived back in Salt Lake City on June 8.<sup>4</sup> In August they traveled to Farmington, and in September Watt accompanied the party to Logan.<sup>5</sup>

4. "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," June 8, 1861, LDS Church Archives.

5. *Ibid.*, September 12, 1861.

In 1861 Watt spoke at October General Conference in Salt Lake City on “inseparability of our temporal and spiritual existence.” He “spoke in strong terms of the necessity of the Latter Day Saints observing the law of consecration, and said that all our means should be laid out and expended with a view to an increase.” Because of his background in economics, he also “alluded to the influence and power of wealth.”<sup>6</sup> In November he spoke at the Fourteenth Ward schoolhouse on cleanliness and the duties of wives to their husbands. Wilford Woodruff wrote in his diary that he was “followed by G. D. Watt. In his peculiar style he urged the people to wash their bodies, keep their houses clean and make clean bread.”<sup>7</sup>

In April 1863, Watt traveled again to Washington County with Young. He spoke at several places, including Toquerville, Washington, and St. George, but the subjects are not known. On the way back to Salt Lake City, the party visited Goshen and journeyed along the west side of Utah Lake. By the time they arrived back in Salt Lake, Watt and the group had traveled 850 miles, visited fifty settlements, and held forty-one meetings.<sup>8</sup> In September 1863, Watt went with some church authorities north to Kaysville to dedicate the new meetinghouse. Since he had land in Kays Ward, Watt had donated money to help construct this building. At the first meeting on Saturday, Watt addressed the congregation along with George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and John Taylor. After the dedicatory prayer, Taylor asked him to read chapter six of Second Chronicles. Watt also sang “The Poets Farewell” with a quartet composed of himself, John Thornley and his wife, and William Beezley. After closing remarks by Bishop Christopher Layton, Watt gave the benediction.<sup>9</sup>

Brigham Young tried out several men as the newspaper reporter for his excursions. The first one wrote wonderful descriptions of the communities but provided no summaries of the sermons. The next one, J. V. Long took shorthand and wrote excellent reports but stopped working for Young in 1863. Watt’s reports were similar to Long’s, so after that, he became the official travel journalist for the *Deseret News*.

Shortly after October General Conference in 1863, President Young left for Sanpete County, and Watt faithfully packed his bags and went along. They traveled as far south as Manti before returning, and Watt reported on the places they went. He finished with the words, “This trip to Sanpete was in every way pleasant and cheerful, and in every place the President and his friends were hailed with a most hearty welcome. The teachings given at the

6. Ibid., October 7, 1861.

7. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983-85), 5:602.

8. “Journal History,” May 19, 1863.

9. “Journal History,” September 26, 1863; John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith to President Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, September 26, 1863, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

various meetings held, were of a character to cheer the hearts of the faithful Saints, to stir up the slothful to greater diligence, to increased faith in God, and confidence in each other.”<sup>10</sup> In September 1864, the party journeyed to Fillmore. Watt spoke in Scipio, but no minutes were taken at that meeting. Watt exercised a little hyperbole about that area when he said in his published report, “The land, where water was naught and the soil barren, is now a land of flourishing cities; where frost desolation and sterility characterized regions now productive farms, thrifty orchards and fragrant flower borders flourish.”<sup>11</sup> The company then went on to St. George. Two months later in November, Watt went with President Young to Ogden.

In 1865 Watt traveled out of town with the president five times. Young journeyed from Logan to St. George and to Tooele in the west. In June the group went to Utah Valley, ending at Nephi, and less than a month later, they proceeded south again to Manti. Watt preached first at Santaquin and then at Mt. Pleasant, where he encouraged his listeners to build better houses and have more productive gardens.<sup>12</sup> In his newspaper reports, he began to describe his surroundings. In Moroni he commented, “As soon as we had, in a degree, washed the dust from off our faces and shaken it, in a measure, from our clothes, we met with the people of Moroni under a bowery situated on the south side of their log meeting-house.”<sup>13</sup>

On August 1, Young and his party went to Logan, where, for twenty-five minutes, Watt “exhorted the people to abide in the counsels of the servants of God.” He also discussed using products they made, rather than purchasing items from outside Utah, “inciting the Saints to continued progression therein.” He also preached in Brigham City on the return trip: “He instituted a comparison between the blessings enjoyed by the people of God in ancient times and those enjoyed by them now, showing how great are the blessings we have received.”<sup>14</sup> Later in the month, the group went to Tooele, where Watt admonished the people to plant various varieties of fruit trees.<sup>15</sup> Early in September Young again trekked south. The party proceeded to Scipio, Fillmore, Kanosh, Beaver, Parowan, and Cedar City. Throughout the entire trip, Watt commented about the poor crops. The company then visited Utah’s Dixie. In St. George, the entire party, including Watt, went to the fair. He especially enjoyed the fruit exhibits.<sup>16</sup>

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10. “Journal History,” November 25, 1863.

11. “Sketch of Pres. B. Young’s Trip South,” *Deseret News*, October 5, 1864, 4.

12. “Continuation of President Young’s Trip to Sanpete,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 19, 1865, 14: 329.

13. “Conclusion of President Young’s Trip to Sanpete,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 26, 1865, 14: 338.

14. “President Young’s Trip to Cache Valley,” *Deseret Evening News*, August 9, 1865, 14: 353.

15. “President Young’s Trip to Tooele,” *Deseret Evening News*, August 30, 1865, 14: 377.

16. “Continuation of President Young’s Trip South,” *Deseret Evening News*, October 12, 1865, 15: 2.

Watt's writing method caused Brigham Young some concern. Being fluent in shorthand, Watt took all his notes in Pitman and then later transcribed them. Young advised Watt to summarize articles in longhand. If he did this, he could quickly get his reports to the pony express, which took packages and correspondence to Salt Lake City, and enable the *Deseret Evening News* to publish them faster. Watt wrote Young a letter, addressing it to "Dear Brother-Father." In the letter, he said, "It is my greatest earthly happiness when I know that my labors are satisfactory to you and receive your hearty sanction." He said he had already written the sermons in longhand and maintained the subject of the speaker "as faithfully as possible. He, however, had been taking shorthand reports for such a long time that he had difficulty recording in longhand, for "short hand . . . requires little or no exercise of the mind being purely machanical." He promised to "continue this system of long hand reporting during this trip."<sup>17</sup>

Watt then described his own state of mind: "Already my mind has become almost stereotyped in this line of thought, so much so, that much of my time I am unfit for social society and conversation. Earthly wealth is but dust in the balance compared with this work which I think I am designed to perform in my lifetime, and the impression that I work for dollars and cents has yet to be made upon my mind, and, Sir, I consider that I have nothing in this world that I do not owe to your goodness." He closed his letter by stating, "Desiring your dictation, guidance and direction in all things, and desiring to be used in the way that will produce the greatest good to the cause of our God I have the honor to be your brother and fellow laborer."<sup>18</sup>

Sometime after his self-evaluation to Young, Watt decided to expand his writing to agricultural topics, which had always been a specialty of his. Thomas Stenhouse, his old friend and the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, urged him to write for his paper. He accepted, thus beginning another chapter in his life. These articles helped him expand his mind and share his thoughts with others. During 1866 President Young traveled only a little. At the end of July, the group went south to Springville, where they held a meeting in the rain.<sup>19</sup> In September they traveled north to Logan. On this trip, Watt began writing for the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, where he used the pen name of "D." He described the roads, mills, crops, towns, and militia groups that met them and the music, especially the singing groups. At Willard he commented that the crops were fine, although the wheat had more smut in it this year than usual. "The peach crop is heavy, and I can bear testimony to the fineness of the fruit, having eat[en] several peaches grown by the Bishop," he concluded.<sup>20</sup>

17. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, September 9, 1865, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

18. Ibid.

19. "Journal History," July 30, 1866.

20. "The President's Trip North," *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, September 10, 1866, 2.

Watt was well known all over the territory. He reported speeches, talked, and prayed at meetings throughout Utah. Always he was at the president's side: the faithful recorder who allowed all to know about Brigham Young's concerns and beliefs.

Economic pressures began to mount for Watt, however. After his marriage to Sarah Ann Harter in 1867, he became concerned about supporting his families. His younger wives had many child-bearing years ahead of them. He was no longer a young man, and he needed additional income to help support his growing family. He also had a mounting debt on the tithing-office books that worried him. The old specter of poverty from his boyhood continued to haunt him.

Watt determined to pursue his claim to his uncle's estate in Britain. In 1853 he had received a letter from his brother-in-law in Preston, England, telling him about a claim to land worth £40,000 that he had to an estate near Dublin, Ireland; the land had formerly belonged to his uncle, George Darling Wood, who had died in South America. Watt had asked Young if he could go to Britain in 1853, and Young had given him permission to leave with Franklin D. Richards. However, at that time, Watt had decided to stay in Utah and, as he said, "fulfil the duties of my calling, learn to accumulate property, and thereby properly know the value of it." From that time until early in the 1860s, all communication between him and his relatives in Britain ended. He reopened correspondence with them because he desired to find out about this Irish land. In 1863, when he wrote Margaret Brandreth, his sister, she refused to reply. Two months later, he sent a letter to his Uncle Morris Howard. He mentioned that he could not see "why the free exercise of a person's agency in the choice of his religion should estrange him from the common attachment and cordial good feelings existing between relatives and friends." He told his uncle about the death of his first wife and that he had married again.<sup>21</sup> Morris probably recommended that he try for the estate once again. It had been leased for twenty-one years, and the lease was about to expire. Watt wrote to Young, asking for advice: "I shall feel perfectly satisfied with whatever you advise concerning it, and shall gladly and with a free good will regulate my future course accordingly."<sup>22</sup>

Young told him that he could do whatever he pleased. This time Watt made a different decision. Young recommended that he travel with Brigham Young Jr. and be designated as a missionary; he could take care of his personal

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21. George D. Watt to Morris Howard, n.d., shorthand, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives (transcribed by LaJean Carruth, 2002). This letter was written either late in 1862 or early in 1863 because Watt mentions that George D. Watt Jr. is nearly twenty, and he was born on June 10, 1843.

22. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, January 15, 1864, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers; Watt to Brigham Young, November 10, 1866, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

business first.<sup>23</sup> There was even a rumor going around in Salt Lake City that he was going to inherit a £50,000 estate in Ireland and receive a lordship.<sup>24</sup>

On January 30, Watt went to the Endowment House and received a blessing from Heber C. Kimball for both his temporal and spiritual life. Because Watt wanted to preserve the words, he sat with a pen and paper recording the blessing while five men laid their hands upon his head. Kimball humbly appealed to the Lord, "Wilt Thou let Thine holy angels go with him, and thy servant brother Brigham Jr. to conduct them safely . . . ; that they may be preserved . . . over the sea to England, and from thence to any place wherever they may go." He promised Watt that his family and home would be blessed. He sealed all the blessings that had formerly been given to Watt by patriarchs, apostles, and prophets, "embracing the holy anointing and say that every one of them shall come to pass through thy faithfulness."<sup>25</sup> After this blessing, Watt was eager to return to his homeland to preach to the people of Britain and pursue his personal interest.

Before Watt and Brigham Young Jr. left, Brigham Young advised his son to have "Elder George D. Watt examine into the subject of type for our Deseret Alphabet, where it can be bought to the best advantage." He also requested that if they had "time to spare," they could travel to Washington, D.C., and visit William Hooper, Utah's territorial delegate. Young also thought that "in taking passage across the Ocean I wish you to secure one of the best steamers of the Cunard Line. Better wait a week than embark on a vessel whose staunchness may be questionable."<sup>26</sup>

On February 4, 1867, Watt and Brigham Jr. left Salt Lake City. They went by coach, but at the mouth of Emigration Canyon, they changed to a sleigh because of the deep snow and then alternated between a coach and sleigh.<sup>27</sup> They traveled night and day across the barrenness of Wyoming and ran into snowstorms most of the way to Denver. At the Elk Mountain stage station, Young maintained "the driver is frozen somewhat. We were 8 hours making about 25 miles. The storm is raging fearfully, and we could scarcely get from the stables to the house, we were so benumbed with cold, and the wind is blowing a hurricane." When it was not snowing, it was terribly cold, so much so that the occupants of the stage thought they would perish. The driver consumed too much liquor and even lost his way for a time until fortunately the stage made its way back to the road. Six days after leaving Salt Lake, they arrived in Denver, where they rested for a day. Since it was Sunday, the hotel proprietor invited them to attend his Episcopalian service, which the

23. Brigham Young to Brigham Young Jr., February 2, 1867, holograph, Letterpress Copybooks, Young Papers.

24. Thomas C. Griggs, Diary, January 27, 1867, LDS Church Archives.

25. Heber C. Kimball, blessing given to George D. Watt, January 30, 1867, photocopy in author's possession.

26. Young to Brigham Young Jr., February 2, 1867.

27. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 5, 1867, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

Utahns gladly accepted, but Watt said the preacher seemed more anxious to display the flowers of oratory than speak to the hearts and understanding of his hearers. Watt, always noticing trees and bushes even in the winter, wrote that “Denver is entirely destitute of fruit trees and fruit bearing shrubs.”<sup>28</sup>

The two travelers left Denver the next day, faced more storms, and arrived at the train station at North Platte, Nebraska, two days later. Young wrote, “The roads are rough and the drivers anything but gentlemen.” The weather continued exceedingly cold. Young said that the drivers did not become drunk along this route, but “they are constantly pouring down the liquor, and it is only their great powers of endurance that keeps them sober.”<sup>29</sup> They crossed the Platte River on ice. At North Platte, they waited in a freezing station for fifteen hours for the delayed train. “We find it very tedious waiting,” commented Young. “Slept in the waiting room.”<sup>30</sup>

Once they boarded the train, the rate they were traveling increased to twenty-five miles per hour. The snow “is now falling in torrents or rather in huge flakes which promise shortly to block up the road,” Young observed. The drifting snow, sometimes ten feet high, stopped the train several times before they reached Omaha. Near Grand Island, snow indeed clogged the railroad track, and the men shoveling could not free the train, so it remained stuck within a mile of the station while the passengers sat cold and without food until the next day. “We remained all night, and we saw the morning of the second day without food,” an upset Young said. “Several of the passengers walked into the station being very hungry and disgusted with the tardiness of the railway officials.”<sup>31</sup>

Watt wrote that they had been greatly preserved by the Lord: “When danger has been in our paths, we have felt a calm and unshaken trust in the promises made to us by the servants of God.”<sup>32</sup> They changed trains at Omaha for Chicago.<sup>33</sup> During this trip, they became acquainted with five other “traveling friends,” who were rather sad to see the two missionaries leave them in Chicago. Watt told the newspaper “they seemed to part from us with regret, and gave us their cards, inviting us to visit them in their homes in New York and Philadelphia, if either of us should ever come within their vicinity.”<sup>34</sup>

They rested a day in Chicago and took the train the next afternoon for Detroit and eventually Niagara Falls.<sup>35</sup> Watt was overwhelmed by the beauty and majesty of the ice-filled falls. He said, “I was struck with awe and wonder

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28. “Journal History,” February 17, 1867, 2.

29. Brigham Young Jr., *Journal*, February 12, 1867.

30. *Ibid.*, February 15, 1867.

31. *Ibid.*, February 15–16, 1867.

32. “Journal History,” February 25, 1867.

33. Brigham Young Jr., *Journal*, February 17, 1867; “Journal History,” February 17, 1867.

34. “Journal History,” February 25, 1867.

35. *Ibid.*

when I viewed, as it were a world of waters leaping with a clear bound into a fathomless abyss, and breaking into a spray in their rumbling, gurgling, roaring, dashing downward course, as if they dreaded to meet the mysterious depths of the boiling caldron into which their foaming, raging floods have emptied themselves from the days of gray antiquity.” He was impressed by the imposing majesty of the falls: “They kiss you at a distance with their misty spray, but let no mortal creature within the inevitable grasp of their rushing, angry, merciless cascades, for no power but that of Omnipotence could rescue.”<sup>36</sup> Young had no such romantic description of Niagara’s majesty, only briefly commenting, “Visited the falls on the Canada side, and was struck with the vast quantity of ice every where visible.”<sup>37</sup>

The two finally arrived in New York on February 22. They booked passage on the ship *Java* of the Cunard Lines for March 6. On their first two evenings in the city, they saw the Shakespearean play *The Merchant of Venice* and a musical group called Dan Brant’s Negro Minstrels. Two evenings later, they saw a five-and-a-half-hour musical play called *The Black Crook*, which Young said “may well be called magnificent.”<sup>38</sup> After a few days of rest, they traveled on to Washington, D.C., arriving at 10:00 p.m. After their evening meal, they journeyed to the Capitol, where they met William Hooper, Utah’s representative to Congress, “which was very providential as we had not his address.” As Young reported, “Visited him at his rooms enjoying a quiet chat until 1 a.m.”<sup>39</sup> Watt told the newspaper that since this was his first visit to the Capitol, he “felt much interested in walking through the rooms, and viewing the statues and historical paintings.”<sup>40</sup> Young commented, “I still think the Capitol one of the most beautiful buildings ever beheld.”<sup>41</sup>

During their visit, Hooper introduced them to many congressmen, and in the evening, he received permission for them to be admitted to the floor of the House. Watt considered Hooper an excellent representative for the territory of Utah: “His continued and diligent application to the duties of his office, his gentlemanly deportment and urbanity of manners and his earnestness in stating facts relating to Utah and its people have won for us numerous friends in both Houses of Congress.” They also met President Andrew Johnson and General Ulysses Grant. Of this meeting, Watt stated, “I do not remember ever being more favorably impressed with a man of the world than I was with that of President Johnson, although he looked much care worn. He was very busy, and we only remained long enough to greet

36. Ibid.

37. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 21, 1867.

38. Ibid., February 23–25, 1867. The *Black Crook* was the first “book” musical ever performed; actors performed its popular songs and dances in a unified play. I cannot find anything about Dan Brant’s Negro Minstrels.

39. Ibid., February 26, 1867.

40. Journal History, March 4, 1867.

41. Brigham Young Jr., Journal, February 27, 1867.

him and bid him farewell." Hooper advised them not to speak of polygamy, but Watt still had to answer questions on that subject.<sup>42</sup>

While Watt was in Washington, William Seward, the secretary of state, gave him a passport, a document he had never needed before. It permitted him to travel safely to foreign lands. The most interesting material in the document was the description of Watt. The passport stated that he was fifty-two, his height was 5 feet, 11 ½ inches, and he had a high forehead, grey blue eyes, a prominent nose, an oval chin, brown and grey hair, a healthy complexion, and a full face.<sup>43</sup>

Following this visit to Washington, the two men returned to New York to sail. The *Java*, a propeller-driven ship, was 332 feet long and 42 feet wide. During the passage, they met heavy winds and rough seas. Three days before docking, they encountered gales that damaged the ship and slowed it down, turning the usual ten-day trip into fourteen. They were seasick the first two days but then found many interesting people who were ready to discuss Mormonism. In a letter to the *Deseret Evening News*, Watt told about a man he met who admitted that the Mormons had done a vast amount of good. He did think that Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon using a novel by Solomon Spaulding, however. "I replied that he was behind the times, for that old foolish fabrication of the devil had long since been abandoned by his satanic majesty and his Christian followers, as too thoroughly ventilated to do them any further good in their raids against 'Mormonism.'" After a discussion about Joseph Smith, Watt bore a strong testimony that Smith "was called to be a prophet of God, and was directed by Him to take the ancient plates from their hiding place and translate them by the power of God."<sup>44</sup>

They arrived in Liverpool on March 20 and immediately went to 42 Islington Road, the British Mission headquarters.<sup>45</sup> Watt saw a few of the sights of the city, but he returned to the mission office and stayed there the rest of the day. On March 21, Watt and Brigham Young Jr. preached together at a meeting in Liverpool to a group of about twenty people.<sup>46</sup> Watt returned to a Britain that still had poverty but was more prosperous for the middle class than the country that he had left more than fifteen years earlier. The working class did not reflect the unrest that had characterized it before. Britain had become an imperialistic nation and made incursions into China. The industrialized part of the country was at work.

Watt must have already written to his sister, Margaret Brandreth, and his brother-in-law about his trip to Britain. After he arrived, he penned them another letter: "If the desire of my heart can be granted to me, I would be

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42. "Journal History," March 4, 1867.

43. George D. Watt, U.S. passport, copy in author's possession.

44. "Journal History," March 20, 1867.

45. *Ibid.*, March 20, 21, 1867.

46. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, March 22, 1867, typescript, LDS Church Archives.

near you the short time I expect to remain in this land: for although I have many dear acquaintances in England, I feel a stranger in a foreign land while absent from my family. Could I be permitted to make your house my home while I am here, to see and caress your children while I am absent from my own, It would indeed be to me a boon of comfort.”<sup>47</sup> Within a few days, he left for Preston.<sup>48</sup> His brother-in-law had originally notified him about the inheritance, and Watt felt it necessary to seek his help. His family welcomed him very hesitantly.

He also met with the Saints at the Preston branch, attended by fifteen people and led by Elder John Halsall, a longtime member of the church in the vicinity. Watt praised Halsall for his faithfulness: “It might be well here to say, that I found brother Halsall enjoying good faith in the Gospel. . . . He has been a watchman for the Preston Branch from the beginning, always at his post, and never flinching from the performance of his duties as a minister of the Gospel.”<sup>49</sup> Watt was amazed at the small number of members left in Britain. Those who remained were “the poorest of the poor Saints.” Several people approached Watt and told him that after they paid their rent, food, poor rates, and tithing and purchased the *Millennial Star*, they “have not one half-penny left.”<sup>50</sup> The *New York Times*, which subscribed to the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, published part of this article. The newspaper quoted Watt as saying, “In 1851 I attended a meeting of the Saints in Liverpool, which was held in one of the finest halls in the city and addressed a congregation of nearly one thousand people. . . . In the month of March, 1867, I again attended a meeting of the Saints in Liverpool, and spoke to a congregation of not more than twenty persons, in a room or garret situated in the back streets of the city, measuring about ten feet wide and twenty-five feet long, being lighted by skylights from the roof.”<sup>51</sup>

Because of his sister’s hesitancy to accept him when he had written her several years before, Watt told the Brandreth family very little about the restored church: “I cannot, however, say that I have felt prompted by the Spirit of the Lord to say anything to the people of Preston on the subject of the restoration. . . . I have rather felt a strong disposition to close my mouth, in silence.” He did discuss gospel principles with some of his sister’s friends and others he met. As he considered those conversations, he observed, “I have found a want of honesty and force of character. . . . In fact, they do not seem to know that they should read and understand for themselves; they pay ministers to do this for them.”<sup>52</sup>

47. George D. Watt to Margaret Brandreth n.d., shorthand holograph, Watt Papers.

48. British Mission Office, Journal, March 20–23, 1867, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

49. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 29 (May 4, 1867): 285.

50. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, July 15, 1867, 1.

51. “The Mormons in England,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1867, 1.

52. George D. Watt to Franklin D. Richards, April 26, 1867, *Millennial Star* 29 (May 11, 1867): 297–302.

He also talked to those who were interested in the journey of the Mormons to Great Salt Lake Valley and wanted to know if they had prospered. When questioned about the weather, Watt agreed that the climate was dry, "consequently a healthy climate. Diseases of the lungs are unknown among the natives of those far-off regions." Even in the southern part of the territory, though, the Mormons had made settlements, and, paraphrasing Isaiah, Watt said the desert had blossomed like a rose. The settlers were able to grow all types of fruits and vegetables there. "It is situated in the very bosom of the 'rocky Mountains,' far away from the wicked and corrupting influences of the thickly populated portions of the world," Watt observed. To make a stronger case, he repeated an often-stated observation, "The climate has visibly changed, rain is becoming more and more abundant, and heavy frost less severe."<sup>53</sup>

Even though he talked about religion to his sister's friends, Margaret reported to James Fielding, Watt's old minister, that he preferred vain amusements to anything of a serious nature. Fielding, who also met him on this trip, said that Watt seemed void of spiritual feeling.<sup>54</sup> Watt probably talked more to them about his agricultural achievements, and because of that, they thought he lacked spirituality. The Watt they remembered was an ardent believer and devoted himself to religious pursuits.

His sister told him about the death of his Aunt Jannet in Gatehouse of Fleet less than a month before. She may have also told him about her intention of having a marker placed on their grandfather's gravesite at the old Anworth Kirk cemetery, about two miles from Gatehouse. She did not tell him about where and when their father had died, however.

Presumably during his first month in Britain, Watt investigated his claim to the land in Ireland. He and his brother-in-law traveled to London and perhaps Dublin. Although he tried to obtain the inheritance, he failed. It is not known exactly why, but when he was writing on the transatlantic ship *Minnesota*, he provided a clue. He probably went to the land office in London and was told he needed to live in the British Isles. He must have been stunned and dismayed, for he could not return to Britain. His wives and families lived in Utah; he could not separate himself from them and his friends. In his letter in the *Millennial Star*, he wrote, "If you believe that I have the faintest shadow of wish to leave my people with whom I have been connected for thirty years then you are deceived, . . . for were you to make me England's King and lay at my feet England's wealth without her debts, to forsake my religion and my people, to dwell with you, by the grace of God

53. Ibid. From all appearances, Utah at this time was going through a wet cycle where there was more rain.

54. See the following articles in vol. 29 of the *Millennial Star*: "Correspondence, Preston, April 23, 1867," May 4, 1867, 284-85; "Preston, April 12, 1867," May 11, 1867, 297-302; and "Correspondence," May 18, 1867, 332-35; also see James Fielding to Mercy Fielding Thompson, October 11, 1867, holograph, photocopy in author's possession.

it would not amount to even a temptation. The wealth of the world cannot purchase the promise of eternal life which I possess through the Gospel." As he explained further, "By the grace of God I could not step down to accept of thrones and kingdoms of this in exchange for the exalted positions and associations which I now hold with the people of God in Zion."<sup>55</sup> He also was unable to find the fonts for the Deseret Alphabet. He did buy his wives some beautiful black cloth as a token of his love.

On April 21, Watt attended a conference in the Temperance Hall in Manchester and sat on the stand with Orson Pratt and Franklin D. Richards. During the second session, he was the sole speaker and talked about Utah: the climate, the productiveness of the crops, and the kind of life enjoyed by the people. He contrasted Utah's good conditions with the poverty and misery that prevailed in Britain. He also bore his testimony to the truthfulness of Mormonism.<sup>56</sup> Richards wrote that "G. D. Watt preached with much interest and life to the Saints."<sup>57</sup>

The *Millennial Star* reported that Watt left Liverpool on May 23, a little more than two months after arriving, on the *Minnesota*, bound for New York City. The *Star* commented that he had been on private business but had employed his "spare time in proclaiming the truth in public and private, both by word of mouth and through the medium of the *Star*."<sup>58</sup> On board the *Minnesota*, Watt, who had been writing to the *Millennial Star* for about a month, wrote his last letter. He proclaimed a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. He told the *Star's* readers that more than thirty years earlier, when the Mormon missionaries had come to Preston, he had been at that "first meeting that those American Elders attended, which was a Sunday morning prayer meeting. I then knew that they were the true servants of the Most High before they had opened their lips to say a single word in my hearing." He declared that he knew that the Mormon Church was true, "and the angels around the throne of God do not know it to be true any better than I know it to be true."<sup>59</sup>

He arrived in New York and devoted a little time to fulfilling President Young's request to bring back printing fonts of Pitman phonotype with him since he had found nothing in Britain. Watt, who was a little homesick, sent a letter to Young about new developments in the Pitman system. He must have visited a phonographic outlet in New York because he advised Young to write to Ben Pitman in Cincinnati. He ended his letter with the words, "I

55. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Millennial Star* 29 (June 1, 1867): 427-30.

56. "Journal History," April 21, 1867.

57. Richards, Journal, April 21, 1867.

58. "Departures," *Millennial Star* 29 (June 1, 1867): 346.

59. "'Correspondence' George D. Watt to F. D. Richards, May 29, 1867," *Millennial Star* 29 (July 6, 1867): 427-430. See also "Journal History," May 29, 1867.

long to be by your side, and pray, if it can be so ordered in the Providence of God, that I may never again leave it in time nor eternity.”<sup>60</sup> He preached in Williamsburg, which was near New York, on June 15. These members lived close to poverty. As Watt said, “They are a very poor people, but faithful and true Latter day Saints striving with their might to save sufficient money to pay their way up to the headquarters of the Church in the mountains.” He ended his article to the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph* with the comment, “I am really wearied with the rattle and noise and bustle of this great city and shall doubly prize the quiet, peace and safety of my Mountain Home.”<sup>61</sup>

Watt was still in New York on July 4, when he saw a magnificent fireworks display. He left sometime after that day and traveled by train to the railhead in Nebraska, where he met about four hundred new immigrants coming to Utah.<sup>62</sup> On July 24, anxious to be home, he wrote a letter from Julesburg, Colorado, which he sent off to the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, reviewing the history of the church. He closed with “such are my reflections, while you are doubtless engaged in festivities in honor of this day.”<sup>63</sup> He traveled with Orson Pratt, who had left England a few days after him, and William Godbe by stage to Salt Lake City, where they arrived on August 4, 1867. The *Deseret News* commented that they had had a safe journey, seen no Indians on the trip, and were glad to be home again.<sup>64</sup>

Shortly after Watt returned, he visited Thomas Stenhouse, the editor of the *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*. Stenhouse commented that Watt had been on a visit to England and “returns to his ‘Mountain Home’ with the warm enthusiasm that glows in the bosom of every true man who loves Zion and her interests.” He added that Watt’s letters from Britain had been read with great interest, “for George is blessed with the gift of plainness.”<sup>65</sup>

The past few years had been busy, productive ones for Watt. He had gained prestige throughout the territory because of his travels with President Young. He not only recorded the speeches of the church authorities but also had the opportunity to preach himself. He had traveled to Britain to alleviate his economic problems. After this trip to England, Watt’s life began to take a different course. Over the next few years, he faced several disappointments that drove him away from the course that he had set for himself thirty years earlier. He preached faithfulness to the leaders of the church, but when the final analysis came, he did not always follow his own advice.

60. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, June 25, 1867, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

61. George D. Watt, letter to the editor, *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, July 15, 1867, 1.

62. “Journal History,” July 25, 1867.

63. George D. Watt, “Correspondence, Julesburg, July 24th, 1867,” *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, August 8, 1867, 2.

64. “Home Items,” *Deseret News* (August 7, 1867) 16: 253. See also “Journal History,” August 4, 1867.

65. Thomas Stenhouse, “At Our Sanctum,” *Semi-Weekly Telegraph*, August 12, 1867, 2.