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Mormon Passage of George D. Watt

Ronald G. Watt

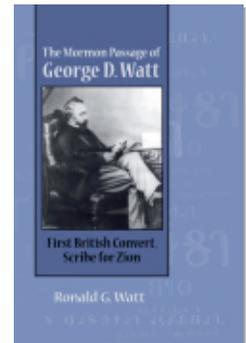
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FAMILY AND FARM LIFE IN DAVIS COUNTY

We have been busy in the harvest field but we shall be more so as soon as the bulk of our wheat ripens. I hope you enjoy your visit to the full measure of your expectations, and that you and the children enjoy good health. I guess Willy, as usual is very busy every day trying to do something. I should think that his Grandmother will get tired of answering his constant question of 'what's that.' Little Grace will be grown since I last saw her. Kiss the children for Papa. May you and the children be constantly blessed.

George D. Watt to Martha Watt, April 16, 1871

When Watt moved his family in 1869 to his farm about three miles north-east of Kaysville, he was fifty-eight years old and had four wives.¹ By then Elizabeth had given birth to four children, and Sarah and Martha each had one child.² Watt found himself with a very young family and three wives who were still of child-bearing age. He rejoiced whenever a new baby arrived. In August 1869, a few months after the birth of Martha's oldest child, he wrote, "I bless you, my dear, and our boy, and pray that

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1. When the Watt family moved to the farm, it was in the Kaysville Ward. In 1885 this area was incorporated into Layton.
 2. Elizabeth's children born in Salt Lake City were Richard, November 26, 1860; Isabell, March 6, 1862; Alice, May 21, 1865; and Georgeina, February 28, 1868. George William, Martha's baby, was born on March 26, 1869. Sarah's Ermina Elizabeth was born on May 27, 1868, in Kaysville.

from you may spring a race of men, who shall be mighty for God and the right.” That same month he and Sarah had to care for a terribly ill, fifteen-month-old Ermina Elizabeth, whom he called Minny: “Our little Minny has given up entirely and is a down sick child. Her mother and myself have done nothing but wait on her for three days. I thank God that to day she is much better, and we have hope that she will survive this sickness,” he wrote to Martha. It was more important to him to have his family than all the riches of the world: “For it does appear to me that I would rather lose all that I own of this worlds goods than lose one of my wives, or one of my children.”³

Watt’s ties to the area around Kaysville were strong. He had owned land in the southwest quarter of section 10 since at least 1860. The farm site, composed of 160 acres, was situated high above the valley floor. Sarah had lived there about a year before he moved there himself. His son George Jr. had also moved there by the spring of 1869.⁴ John Thornley, his nearest neighbor, lived roughly a third of a mile south. Watt had known Thornley’s father in Preston, England, and may have been instrumental in his conversion and baptism.⁵

He moved all of his wives and children to Kaysville, where he had two houses built near each other with lumber from Millcreek Canyon. The larger house consisted of three apartments. Each apartment had a downstairs with a sitting room, a kitchen, a dining area, and a bedroom; a front and back bedroom comprised the upstairs. The stairs were very narrow and steep. Elizabeth took care of Watt’s mother, Mary Ann.⁶ The smaller house, which was about a hundred yards away, he built for Alice, who had no children.

The large house sat in the midst of an alfalfa field. It was whitewashed twice yearly and had dark green trim. Around the foundation of the house grew pink wild roses. The interior was plastered and had lace curtains and blinds at the windows and homemade rag rugs on the floor. The furniture was characterized by simple chairs and good carved beds; Elizabeth’s bed was a gift from Brigham Young. The wives kept the house clean by almost daily washings. The outbuildings consisted of a root cellar, a toilet house, a granary, a barn housing a team, wagon, and milk cows; and at least one chicken coop. On the east side, between the house and the granary, was a well that the family used for culinary purposes. The house and outbuildings were connected with boardwalks, a necessity in wet weather when the soil became extremely muddy. Alice’s house had two bedrooms, a sitting room,

3. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 20, 1869, photocopy of holograph in author’s possession.

4. On July 28, 1869, George Jr.’s wife had twin daughters in Kaysville who died the same day.

5. “Burial of John Thornley,” *Salt Lake Herald*, December 6, 1907, 2.

6. Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutson Flack, *England’s First “Mormon” Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt* (n.p.: privately printed, [1958]), 94.

and a kitchen. She also had, in close proximity, a toilet house, root cellar, and summer cook house.⁷

In the large house, Watt placed his three youngest wives: Elizabeth in the east apartment, Sarah in the center, and Martha in the west apartment. He had sixteen children by his three wives after he left Salt Lake City, five of them by Elizabeth. The last one, Rachael, was born on January 11, 1879. He had six more children by Sarah. The last, Cora, was born on March 4, 1881. And he had five more children by Martha. Her last child, Ida, was born on February 20, 1880.⁸ By having this number of children in his sixties, Watt seemed to be denying his own mortality. He probably felt that he would remain to provide for his family and not die until he was ready.

Some men with plural wives provided separate houses for each one, sometimes in different communities. In Salt Lake City, Watt had usually had a house for each wife. When he moved to Davis County, he brought them together in separate facilities. To avoid conflict, the wives needed to feel that he was treating them all fairly. Essentially that was impossible with four women vying for one man's time and affection. A polygamous household, where the wives were near each other, was a complicated organization.⁹

Watt coordinated the activities of his household and expected the wives to follow his counsel. The wives tried to live in harmony with one another and put aside their petty differences. As Martha explained to a granddaughter late in her life, if there were problems or something did not go as expected, Watt called all the wives together and discussed the matter with them. He never accused a specific wife of causing the problem but merely said that if one of them was the cause, she should correct her actions. After these meetings, Martha always felt sure that Sarah was the cause.¹⁰

7. Jane Layton Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," pp. 1–19, typescript, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

8. Elizabeth's children born on the farm—John Golightly, Andrew Kennen, Jane, Julia Ann, and Rachael—were born from December 1870 to January 1879. Sarah's children—Mary Ann, Jennet Darling, John Harter, Eliza Elizabeth, Minerva, and Cora—were born from April 1870 to March 1881. Martha's children—Grace Darling, James Arthur, Annie, Mary, and Ida—were born from February 1871 to March 1881. John Harter, Sarah's son, and John Golightly, Elizabeth's son, were born about six months apart. The two boys were always differentiated by their respective nicknames of Black Jack and Red Jack because of the color of their hair.

9. For some studies on polygamy, see B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); and Dean L. May, "People on the Mormon Frontier: Kanab's Families of 1874," *Journal of Family History* 1, no. 2 (1976): 169–89.

10. Hazel Anderson Bigler, interview by the author, April 22, 1979, transcript, LDS Church Archives.



From Ida Watt Stringham and Dora Dutton Flack, England's First Mormon Convert: The Biography of George Darling Watt

Watt large house in Kaysville

The four wives appear to have been completely devoted to Watt. Alice commented that she wanted to be sealed to him for eternity.¹¹ Elizabeth remembered his tenderness toward her. She spoke lovingly of her dear George—deWatt, as she called him.¹² Sarah must have also cared deeply for him, but she never voiced her feelings. Martha, later in life, when her children and grandchildren did something she liked, always said they were just like George D. Watt.¹³ They made these comments many years after his death.

Watt lived with Alice because the other house was full of young children. She fed him most of the time and laundered his clothes. Alice became an older sister to the younger wives.¹⁴ She often supplied much-needed food out of her private funds. She also frugally saved money from the eggs she sold, which helped support the family. Martha's daughter Annie remembered Alice's generosity many years later. She said, "Saturday seemed a holiday to us children, for on that day the rations for the next week was carefully weighed and measured out [to] each woman according to her no. [number] by my father." Sometimes the quantities were too small for hungry children. "Aunt Alice, bless her heart, when she saw the piles were too little, would take her own money and buy more."¹⁵

11. Ibid.

12. Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," p. 5.

13. Hazel Bigler interview. Emotions of the women in a polygamous household are difficult to assess. The Watt women never discussed their feelings openly. The few sources we have tell us only that these four women loved and respected their husband.

14. Ibid.

15. Annie Watt Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939, photocopy

Elizabeth became a firm foundation for the family primarily because of her attitude toward the church and plural marriage. She did the baking for the family since she had learned it from her father, who ran the Globe Bakery in Salt Lake. Zipporah Stewart, a granddaughter, remembered her often “standing in the pantry, where she held a big pan in one arm and stirred in flour with the other—always coming out with something delicious.”¹⁶ Besides caring for Watt’s mother, who lived with her, Elizabeth nursed the other women during their times of confinement, when their babies were being born. It was also in her home where daily family prayers were held and often a type of family home evening with singing, visiting, and storytelling. If Elizabeth was upset with someone, she had a tendency not to talk to that person. When this happened to Watt, he went to Alice to find out how he had offended “Lizzy.”¹⁷

It is difficult to assess Sarah’s feelings. She was a very private person, and when she left to live with her children after Watt’s death, she often retreated to her bedroom when people came to visit the family.¹⁸ Apparently she followed Elizabeth’s lead.¹⁹

Since Martha was the last wife, there was some feeling among the other wives that Watt was partial to her. Martha was an outgoing person and sometimes became emotional. At least once when Martha was feeling despondent about the poverty of her family and the age of her husband, she cried. Watt took her into his arms and comforted her.²⁰

At times the other wives saw him comforting Martha and believed that she was his favorite. Before Martha had entered the family, Elizabeth felt that she was the favored wife among the younger women. She was always proper and dignified. She worked hard to overcome her feelings and not show her emotions to others. Martha could not be dignified and suppress her emotions, and that sometimes caused a problem. Later in life, Martha felt that there were no great problems between her and Elizabeth but that the problems among the wives usually originated with Sarah. In the last few years on the farm, Martha became convinced that Sarah was the favored wife, which may account for her feelings of anxiety about her. If the birth of children is any indicator of favorites, Martha may have been right because Sarah gave birth to the last two children in the family: Minerva in 1880 and Cora in 1881, the year when Watt died.

of holograph, LDS Church Archives. The family income after the business failure was indeed small.

16. As quoted in Stromquist, “She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone,” p. 4.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 5; Bigler interview.

18. “Davinie Watt Lythgoe Life History,” p. 9, copy in author’s possession.

19. *Ibid.*, Stringham and Flack, *England’s First “Mormon” Convert*, 106.

20. Stringham and Flack, *England’s First “Mormon” Convert*, 106.

The Watt family had some conflicts, but this was a natural consequence of the many different personalities in the home.²¹ The story that came down to the grandchildren was that the family lived together peacefully. As Alean Ellison Layton, one of the granddaughters wrote, the wives “lived in perfect harmony together, everything being divided equally among them.”²² It is more likely that they had their differences, but the children never picked up on them because most of them were very young when their father died. To them it seemed like one large, happy family. They played together as brothers and sisters of an extended family. Annie, Martha’s daughter, remembered what a painful experience it was to be separated from the other children when Martha remarried and moved.²³

Mary Ann Brown, Watt’s mother, originally had gone with Jane, her daughter, to Nebraska. Within a few years, however, she returned and began living with Elizabeth. The children loved to visit their Grandmother Brown. They would find her in a rocking chair in her room, dressed in a black dress with a white lace-trimmed apron and cap. Sometimes they snuck up behind her and threw her apron over her face to hear her say, “Oh gee over.” She loved to tell them stories about her home in the British Isles.²⁴

Grandma also assisted Watt in his cobbler shop, a room attached to Martha’s home. Every fall Watt made shoes for his family, a craft he had learned as a boy, and she waxed the thread for the shoes. One time the children took the wax to use as gum. When Watt discovered it, he told them that wax was expensive, and it had to be returned.²⁵ Grandma brought her half-filled chamber pot from her room, and the children placed the wax in the pot, where they would not think of taking it again.²⁶ In 1873 Grandma Brown made a request through Watt for Brigham Young to return a bloodstone that Watt had left in Young’s safekeeping more than twenty years before. Young, who had used it as a piece of jewelry for one of his wives, graciously gave it back.²⁷

Watt died when most of the children were very young, and they remembered him little or not at all. Elizabeth Watt Nalder, Sarah’s daughter, remembered walking up the lane with her hand in his when she was about four.²⁸

Death came to the Watt household in 1879 and 1880 when three children died on the Davis County farm. Early in 1879, several of the children came down with what the family thought were severe colds. Grace, Martha’s

21. Bigler interview.

22. Alean Ellison Layton, “Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt,” typescript, in author’s possession.

23. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.

24. Ibid.; Layton, “Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt.”

25. Stringham and Flack, *England’s First “Mormon” Convert*, 98.

26. Ibid., 96; Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.

27. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, July 24, 1873, holograph, incoming correspondence, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

28. Minnie Bybee, ed., “The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder,” 1957, typescript, in author’s possession.

oldest daughter, succumbed first on February 15 of diphtheria, and one day later, Elizabeth's youngest, Julia Anne, died officially of croup, although both deaths could have been from diphtheria. The family buried the children in the small cemetery in Kaysville. One year later, on February 18, 1880, Sarah's youngest daughter, Minerva, who was only three months old, died, but there was no cause specified in the Kaysville Cemetery records.²⁹

The children were often frightened by strange noises emanating from the attic. One day Martha climbed up and found a rat colony. She discovered spoons, forks, and even some jewelry, which she presumed had been lost by the children. The house also was infested by bedbugs, which inhabited the children's beds. The mothers used to destroy them with whatever was handy, often scorching them with lighted candles as they crawled down the wall. The bugs probably were brought into the house by the swallows that made their nests in the eaves.³⁰

Annie Watt Anderson, Martha's daughter, who was only seven when she left Kaysville, remembered the great number of mice, especially the long-eared ones, and the rats that stole their pewter spoons. She also visualized the wide open spaces and the glistening snow across the hills and fields. The numerous stars looked as if they could be plucked out of the sky, and the farm had "myriad of rabbits that took the tender grain, and caused yearly crop failures."³¹

When they arrived in Kaysville, the older children went to school in a one-room log cabin about three miles from their house. In 1874 School District 13 built an adobe one-room schoolhouse not far from their home; it had about thirty students, all taught by one teacher. Elizabeth Watt Nalder wrote that when they went to school in the winter, they had to "wallow" through deep snow drifts.³² The school had a large potbellied stove in the center of the room, which the older boys supplied with sagebrush in cold weather since it was the most plentiful fuel.³³

In 1913 Mary Edwina Whitesides, who lived in Layton and taught school, wrote that the school was four miles from her home. Her experience, even though almost forty years after the Watt children, was probably not much different from theirs. She arrived at nine, and the children started coming shortly after. She described the school as isolated, and yet there were thirty-four students who came from somewhere. "You would naturally

29. Kaysville Cemetery records, February 1879, February 1880, holograph, Kaysville City Recorder's Office. Arrangement in the cemetery records is chronological. See also Utah State History, Utah Burial Results, <http://history.utah.gov/apps/burials/execute/burialresults>. This database does not give reasons of death.

30. Stringham and Flack, *England's First "Mormon" Convert*, 95.

31. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.

32. Bybee, "The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder."

33. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939. Harris Adams told the author where the two schoolhouses were located.

suppose they were bobbing out of gopher and badger holes," she observed. Whitesides explained that her students listened with awe to stories about distant places: "My but they are surprised to find out the world is so big when I tell them about Salt Lake City and they listened about the Panama Canal like it was a fairy story."³⁴

In Kaysville the notorious east winds that swooped down the western face of the Wasatch Mountains could reach hurricane speeds. One day the children decided to make a game of the wind. They found a long board from the granary, put it behind their backs, and let the wind push them west toward the house, but they ran into the well. The impact threw Andrew, who was probably five years old, into the cold water. The mothers let Richard, the oldest son, down in the old wooden bucket. He saved Andrew, and everyone pulled the two boys to safety.³⁵

On another spring day in another year, the wind was so fierce that Watt decided that the family should avoid possible danger by seeking shelter in the root cellar at the west side of the house. They heard the house groan while they were there. The next morning they found most of the shingles scattered across the plains. All the family helped clean up the debris, and then Watt, George D. Jr., and Richard had to take time from farm work to reroof the house.³⁶

The farm was unusual because it was a dry farm with no water for irrigation. The well supplied the family with water, and the wives probably also watered the roses from it.³⁷ John Thornley and Christopher Layton had tried dry farming with wheat and corn the year before Watt arrived. Watt was the first to try it in his area on the sand ridge. The land was excellent. Thomas Harris, who had moved to the sand ridge in 1862, said with irrigation water, the soil was very fertile and produced the best of hay, grain, cane, corn, and squash.³⁸ Watt's land was composed of loam about twelve inches thick. On the northeast side of his 160 acres was a wet area, and after his death, the family piped the water to the houses. On the southeast side of his property ran the north fork of Kay's Creek, which Watt used as a watering spot for his animals.³⁹

There was a seasonal order about life on the farm. Every October the family planted wheat and barley. Spring wheat could not be planted because

34. Mary Edwina Whitesides to Ethel Hales, December 1913, photocopy in author's possession.

35. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.

36. Annie Watt Anderson, "History of Martha Bench Watt Kilfoyle," p. 3, typescript, in author's possession.

37. The countryside was dominated by sagebrush, which everybody in the Watt family helped to clear at one time or another. A large stack of the thickest wood stood in a pile north of the big house. It was abundant, but it generated poor heat in the long winter months.

38. "Life of Thomas Eagles Harris," typescript, LDS Church Archives.

39. Harris Adams provided the information about the soil and wet area.

the seeds needed the winter's moisture. In November and December, Watt made all of the family shoes. In March and April, the family planted potatoes and corn. After that they needed to keep the weeds out of the crops. In August and September, they harvested the fall and spring crops. Then Watt, George D. Jr., and Richard began to cut the barley and wheat, starting with the barley, which ripened first.

Watt and George Jr. rode to Kaysville one day in 1871 to collect the mail at the post office but mostly to look at the crops. Watt took a wagon and drove down Canyon Road, now Church Street, which cut through his property. The horses turned south on Fort Lane and continued to a place called Five Points, where Fort Lane intersected with Territorial Highway 1. This highway was the main road from Salt Lake City to Ogden. Then the two men drove to the town of Kaysville. They saw farms readying the soil for planting all along the six-mile stretch. Watt wrote Martha, who was in Manti, that he thought their farm probably would average more like thirty bushels of wheat per acre that year.⁴⁰

Watt also had other responsibilities in Davis County. In 1871 the county court appointed him the road supervisor for District 17, which included his farm. However, he gave the job up in 1873, probably because the small pay was not worth the time he spent.⁴¹

Watt used the Kaysville Cooperative as a convenience store, purchasing only necessities. The store ledgers record that from September 1869 to January 1870 he purchased building materials for his new house, including shingles, nails, and lath, and a pair of shoes for one of his children. He also had to buy sugar, matches, and coffee.⁴² He did not do any more business there than absolutely necessary, preferring, because of the quantity and variety, to go to ZCMI in Salt Lake City.

By 1871 Watt had eight cows, two horses, two mules, one pig, two wagons, and one clock, which the family had brought from Salt Lake City. He also had chickens for eggs and meat. Watt divided the chickens among the wives, and they sold some of their eggs for their personal income.⁴³ In an 1871 letter, Watt mentioned that there had been a great mortality among the chickens for unknown reasons. Sarah and Martha had very few chickens left, and Alice had lost thirteen in one day.⁴⁴

40. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, April 16, 1871, holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).

41. Davis County Court, minutes, June 5, 1871, vol. 2, p. 51, 1871-73, Davis County Courthouse, Farmington, Utah.

42. George D. Watt account, Kaysville Cooperative Mercantile Institute, ledger, 1869, vol. 1, p. 150, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

43. Davis County Assessments, 1871, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-810, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City.

44. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, July 17, 1871, holograph, Perry Special Collections.

Watt raised some excellent hogs also. In 1874 an Ohio Chester White pig of his dressed out at 810 pounds.⁴⁵ In 1875 Watt had a total of thirty cattle, which he probably grazed on the unplowed ground. By 1877 the number of cattle had dropped to ten.⁴⁶ In 1871 he started with two horses. In 1874 he had a horse die that he was not able to replace. Now he had only one horse to pull the plow and the wagon. In 1880 one more horse died, but in 1881 he added two more horses. Perhaps in the year without horses he either had a neighbor take care of his land, or he used oxen.⁴⁷

The value of his land declined according to the tax assessor. Its value in 1871 was \$2,285, and by 1880 it had dropped to \$1,669. He paid a territorial tax of \$5.10, a school tax of \$5.10, and a county tax of \$8.50. He must have been assessed other taxes, or else taxes were higher in other years because in 1875 Watt mentioned to Martha that he had to borrow \$85 to pay his taxes.⁴⁸

According to the 1880 agricultural census, Watt was farming only fifty acres. He had fifteen acres in barley, and in 1879, according to the tax-assessments rolls, he harvested 175 bushels, only 11 bushels to the acre. He had twenty-five acres in wheat and obtained 160 bushels, a little more than 6 bushels per acre. He also had ten acres in alfalfa, a relatively new crop to Utah.⁴⁹ Watt was one of the earliest farmers to raise alfalfa.⁵⁰ He planted one acre in apple trees and cleared twenty more for pasture. Of those twenty acres, he mowed seventeen for grass to help feed his cattle through the winter. He must have had a garden someplace on the farm, perhaps in the wet area north of the large house.⁵¹

When Watt arrived on the farm in 1870, he began to diversify a little. He increased the number of cows to twelve, and in 1879 they produced 450 pounds of butter. He also began raising honeybees, and in 1879 he sold 290 pounds of honey and 3 pounds of wax.⁵² By 1880 he was planting fall crops of wheat and barley. He probably perceived these as more commercially productive and better for a dry farm.

45. "Butchering," *Deseret Evening News*, April 8, 1874, 7: 156. The newspaper reported that it was the largest pig ever raised in Utah.

46. Davis County Court, minutes, June 5, 1871; Davis County Assessments, 1877, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-810, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records.

47. Davis County Assessments, 1881, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-811, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records.

48. Davis County Assessments, 1871, 1877; Davis County Assessments, 1880, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-811, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records; George D. Watt to Martha Watt, December 6, 1875, holograph, Perry Special Collections.

49. U.S. Agricultural Census for Utah, 1880, Kaysville, district 16, p. 9, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives; Davis County Assessments, 1879, ser. 6030, accession 2040, microfilm of holograph, roll 2-811, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records.

50. Andrew Jenson, "Layton Ward Manuscript History," typescript, LDS Church Archives.

51. U.S. Agricultural Census for Utah, 1880.

52. Davis County Assessments, 1879.

The family barely survived on the farm. The first year Watt did not produce enough to sustain him through the next summer. In March 1875, he asked the Davis County Court, a body equivalent to a county commission, for a remittance of taxes for two years, but it was not granted. Later on that year the county court remitted \$3.75 county tax and \$1.25 territorial tax.⁵³ In 1879 Watt paid seventeen dollars for farm labor and made only three hundred dollars.⁵⁴ Farming was difficult. Watt's farm was vulnerable to the natural elements. Grasshoppers and rabbits were an ever-present problem. The lack of water and sufficient fertilizer took their toll on the land. As early as 1872, he had to sell his viola to Brigham Young to have enough cash for the farm.⁵⁵

Watt's age was also against him, and the work was hard. He was fifty-eight when he went to Davis County. However, he had his son, George Jr., to rely upon. For a time, George Jr. probably did all the heavy work. By 1873, however, Watt had become tired of his oldest son taking up space in the house. "I told George that he must move out of my house this fall, and he is laying his plans to do so, how he will succeed I do not know," he complained. He was anxious to have George Jr. and his family leave, "for I cannot longer bear to have my wives and children cramped up, as it were, in a nut shell."⁵⁶ It is not clear how much longer George Jr. remained in Kaysville, nor how much he helped his father on the farm. In 1879 he moved to the mines in Butte, Montana. In that same year, Richard, Watt's next son, was eighteen years old, but even though he was a great help, he may not have been able to do as much as George Jr. had. The elder Watt grew weary under this strain. When he wrote in 1875 to Martha, who was in Manti helping her sick father, he said to tell the children about "poor old papa." His last words in the letter were "I remain Dear Mattie your affectionate blundering old husband."⁵⁷

The old specter of poverty was always there, but Watt believed that life for his family could become better. He dreamed that his farm would produce an abundance to bring his family a good life, but these dreams never materialized. It was a continual struggle for him to meet the needs of his ever-growing family.

The Kaysville Co-op daybook gives us an insight into George D. Watt's life during the month when he died. Only one or two of the family made the journey to Kaysville, and that individual usually asked each of the wives what she needed from the store. Richard, Elizabeth's twenty-year-old son, was usually the person who made this trip. On October 6, 1881, Watt was

53. Davis County Court, minutes, March 1, 1875, October 15, 1875, vol. A, p. 114, Davis County Auditor's Office. I am indebted to Harris Adams for these entries from the courthouse records.

54. U.S. Agricultural Census for Utah, 1880.

55. Receipt, September 17, 1872, holograph, invoice books, Young Papers.

56. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 26, 1873, photocopy of holograph in author's possession.

57. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, December 6, 1875.

preparing to harvest his barley. The threshers had scheduled his farm in a few days, and he needed to be ready for them.⁵⁸ He could not chance the wagons falling apart at harvest time, so he sent Richard to Kaysville to buy five pounds of oil and a can of axle grease to lubricate them. Two days later, Richard went back to purchase necessary food for the family, including sugar, rice, tea, tapioca, lard, and bacon.

On October 10, John Thornley rode up to the Watt home, and Alice asked him to buy thread and worm tablets, probably for her pigs. Two days later, Elizabeth and Richard traveled to the store. Elizabeth bought some unlisted articles while Richard weighed sacks of barley, which totaled 2,833 pounds, used as credit for their purchases. Richard also picked up a lantern and ten cents worth of candy, which may have been enough for the entire family. Seven days after that, an unknown friend stopped at Elizabeth's, and she sent some of her butter to the store as credit, which George W. Barnes, the clerk, listed as "per stranger." On Thursday, October 20, Richard, with a heavily loaded wagon, brought in 3,604 pounds of barley from the threshing machine for credit. Will, Martha's oldest son, who was eleven years old, rode with Richard, and the storekeeper let him have a pencil for his mother. Two days later, Richard brought in another 2,038 pounds of barley for credit. He also bought crackers and cheese, perhaps for himself or his father, who had a craving for it, and some cigarettes for himself.

58. Threshers must have been a welcome sight for those farmers who remembered threshing wheat and barley the old way. I found a poem about threshers that included George D. Watt's name.

T was the first of September—
 Hen's birthday it was—
 We were over the river
 Threshing a job
 When father George Watts
 Got caught in the rod.
 He must have been stout
 For his clothes were all stripped
 And his eyes were bunged out.
 He was a heck of a sight
 To be running about.
 Hurrah, Hurray the threshers we dread;
 We are a sad looking bunch
 And only half fed.
 Hurrah, Hurray the threshers we dread;
 We hardly have time to go to our bed.
 By Mont Maxfield; in author's possession.

There is no evidence to indicate the year when this happened. We know that the threshers came a few days before Watt's death in 1881. If it happened that year, the encounter with the threshing machine might have hurt enough to cause his death a few days later. That probably did not happen, however, because he took a load of grain to the store after that, which must have meant that he was healthy.

On October 22, two days before his death, Watt drove to the store to take care of some business that only he could transact with his wagon loaded with 2,183 pounds of lucerne seed, which the store credited him. Needing money for the threshers, he also drew out \$101.11 in cash, and then for unknown reasons—perhaps for Richard’s salary—he transferred \$65.90 from his account to his son’s account. He also bought a pair of shoes, probably for himself since he made the children’s shoes, and some cheese.⁵⁹

Not much is known about his sick times. Watt did not complain to others about ill health. He commented to Martha in 1868 that he no longer had his usual spring headache.⁶⁰ In 1871 he complained that he had just returned from a visit to Salt Lake City and was much fatigued.⁶¹ In 1873 he said that his health for the last three to four weeks had “not been quite so vigorous.” There is no record of him suffering with ill health for great periods of time.⁶²

On the morning of October 24, 1881, Watt had returned for breakfast at Alice’s house after his usual morning chores. How many people were there besides Richard and Alice is unknown. They talked for a few minutes, and then about 10:30 a.m., he asked for another cup of tea. The *Ogden Daily Herald* wrote that he was seized with a “faint of the stomach.” He then told those who were there he was going to die, and within a few minutes, without a struggle, he expired.⁶³ A few minutes before his death, Richard burst out the door and ran breathless to the larger house, shouting, “Come quick! Father’s sick.” They all rushed down to the little house, but they were too late.⁶⁴ The families were heartbroken.⁶⁵ At 2:30 p.m., Christopher Layton, now a counselor in the stake presidency, sent a telegram to John Taylor announcing Watt’s death.⁶⁶ The *Deseret Evening News*, which had been silent on Watt’s activities since his excommunication, published an obituary.⁶⁷

The *Salt Lake Herald* wrote a longer article. It had a copy of his autobiography and reviewed it before writing the obituary. “Being a self-made man of strong character, there is not a little in his career which is remarkable, and not a little which commends itself to the young man struggling for a place in the world,” the obituary read. It reviewed his life and some of his major accomplishments: “He was a religious devotee and pursued the subject assiduously throughout his entire career.” The article mentioned that

59. George D. Watt account, Kaysville Cooperative Mercantile Institute, Daybook, 1881–83, October 6, 8, 10, 12, 19, 20, 22, 1881, holographs, Heritage Museum, Layton, Utah.

60. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, May 9, 1868, holograph, Perry Special Collections.

61. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, July 7, 1871, holograph, Perry Special Collections.

62. George D. Watt to Martha Watt, August 26, 1873.

63. “Geo D. Watt Dead,” *Ogden Daily Herald*, October 24, 1881, 3.

64. Annie Watt Anderson, “History of Martha Bench Watt Kilfoyle,” p. 5.

65. Stringham and Flack, *England’s First “Mormon” Convert*, 108.

66. Christopher Layton to John Taylor, October 24, 1881, holograph, general correspondence, John Taylor First Presidency records, LDS Church Archives.

67. Untitled, *Deseret Evening News*, October 24, 1881, 14: 3.

he had often spoken in public in Salt Lake City “and had the reputation of being a man perhaps as well versed in the theological lore as one could find.” He was one of the most reliable stenographers in the country. “A man naturally of great individuality and strong convictions, it could not be expected that he would fail, at times, to conflict with others upon important matters,” the writer noted. The newspaper wrote that he was “honest, truthful and sincere.” It claimed that he could have accumulated great wealth, but his heart was so wrapped up in “religious matters of the abstract” that he failed to do that, and he died comparatively poor. The newspaper thought that many would mourn him and “will remember him with favor as a friend and for earlier days of congenial fellowship.”⁶⁸ Many of his neighbors probably felt like Jane Hooper, a resident of Kaysville, who said that he had once been highly thought of but for several years had been an apostate; she considered him a wicked man, “but he has gone to be judged for the good and evil he has done.”⁶⁹

With the funeral pending, the wives took stock of their “church clothes” and found them wanting. Martha went to the store and bought some hose and cloth for herself; some ruffling, crape cloth, and gloves for Elizabeth; and crape, other cloth, and gloves for Alice. She also purchased some sugar, probably to make treats for the guests afterward, and some much-needed soap. The wives spent the next few hours fixing their old dresses, adding a ruffle and handkerchiefs so they would look neat and proper.⁷⁰

Watt’s funeral took place on October 27 in the Kaysville Ward meeting-house and was very well attended by many friends from Salt Lake City and also many local people. He had a regular Mormon service, and according to family tradition, John Taylor allowed him to be buried in his temple robes, although that seems doubtful. Taylor had seen Watt’s long letter about his belief in Spiritualism. John Thornley, his old friend, spoke, but the rest of the program has been lost. Thornley likely praised him for his individuality and helpfulness to him throughout his life. Watt was buried in the Kaysville Cemetery.⁷¹

Following his death, Watt’s four wives remained on the farm, but it was very difficult to feed twenty-three mouths. The family was destitute. In 1882 Christopher Layton paid the taxes for them. In 1881 the total value of real and personal property was \$1,884. By 1889 the total value was only \$1,195. The family’s cattle had declined from nine to six. They had four horses and mules in 1881, and by 1889 that number had decreased to three. For sev-

68. “Geo D. Watt Dead,” *Salt Lake Herald*, October 25, 1881, 8; “Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” October 24, 1881, LDS Church Archives.

69. Jane Wilkie Hooper, *Diary*, October 24, 1881, LDS Church Archives.

70. George D. Watt account, Kaysville Cooperative Mercantile Institute, *Daybook*, 1881–83, October 25, 1881, p. 112.

71. Davis Stake High Council, records, November 16, 1881, LDS Church Archives.

eral years after Watt's death, the county remitted part of the taxes because the family was classified as indigent.⁷² Elizabeth's oldest son, Richard, who was twenty when his father died, became the manager of the farm. He was a responsible young man, but he had no other men to rely on. The next oldest son, Will, Martha's boy, was only eleven when his father died.

Sometime before his death for some unknown reason, Watt made each wife promise that she would not remarry, but he did not expect to die as soon as he did. Also the promise could have been requested in jest.⁷³ He wanted the wives to live together, but it was an impossible dream. Alice had almost no chance to remarry, but the last three wives were much younger. Elizabeth was forty, Martha thirty-four, and Sarah only thirty-one when Watt died. Each of the younger wives had several small children, however, which reduced their prospects of remarrying. About a year after Watt died, Frank Kilfoyle, who was about ten years younger than Watt, courted and married Martha. They lived for a while in the big house but moved to Kaysville to be nearer to Kilfoyle's work. It was during this period that four of Martha's children—Will, James, Mary, and Annie—left their home in Kaysville and walked the three miles back to the Watt farm to play with their other brothers and sisters. They were disappointed because Elizabeth had put them to bed, and she later sent Martha's children back in a wagon.⁷⁴

Kilfoyle was a laborer, and it was difficult for him to provide for his family. Martha's brothers finally offered her the old house on Main Street in Manti. Life was still hard in Manti, but at least the family had a home. Martha had three children by Kilfoyle, but one of them died as a baby and was buried in Kaysville. Tragedy struck Martha again in 1888 when Kilfoyle died. After his death, she remained a widow the rest of her life.

Martha often received food from the Presbyterian Church across the street. The LDS bishop apparently did not help her, or perhaps Martha refused his assistance because of the conflict with Bishop Layton in Kaysville. Martha's children also received a modicum of education from the Presbyterian school. She took care of the church in return for the children's education and some foodstuffs. After schooling in Manti, the youngest son, Frank Kilfoyle, went to Brigham Young University in Provo.⁷⁵

In reality Martha's life with Watt had been only a twelve-year interlude from her life in little Manti. She looked back with fond memories on this period. After her children left home, she spent most of her life with her

72. Davis County Assessments, 1881, 1888, 1889, ser. 6030, accession 2041-42, microfilm of holographs, roll 2-778, Utah Territorial Tax Assessment records, Utah State Archives.

73. Bigler interview.

74. Anderson to Louis Burtran Bigler family, December 17, 1939.

75. See T. Edgar Lyon, "Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas, 1865-1900 (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1962), section on Presbyterians; see also Jesse Smith Bushman, "A Qualitative Analysis of the Non-LDS Experience in Utah" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1995).

daughter Annie. She had her own room and a government pension of about thirty-six dollars a month because Kilfoyle had been a soldier. She gave her granddaughter her tithing money to take to the bishop, but for unknown reasons, Martha never went to church herself.⁷⁶ She died in 1926 in Portland, Oregon, while visiting one of her daughters. She was brought back to Manti and buried next to her second husband.

Sarah continued living in the big house with her children. In 1884 she was rebaptized, although it is unclear whether she had ever been excommunicated. People in that day were rebaptized for reasons other than readmittance into the church. In 1890 she became the second counselor in the new Relief Society in the Layton Ward. To provide for her family, Sarah washed clothes in other people's homes on a washboard for fifty cents a wash.⁷⁷ Elizabeth Watt Nalder, Sarah's daughter, remembers her mother making her clothes, and then Elizabeth would try them on and parade "across the room for mother to check the 'fit' and the way it 'hung.'" Sarah also knit her stockings.⁷⁸ When all of her children left the farm, she went to live with her children—John, Elizabeth, and Cora—in Southern California, dividing her time among them and busying herself with preparing food and crocheting. Sarah never showed emotion or divulged her secrets to others. Her granddaughter never remembers sitting on her lap "or getting a hug or kiss or having her say, 'I love you.' Of course, in those days people didn't show affection for others as they do today."⁷⁹ She died in the home of Elizabeth Watt Nalder, her daughter, in Inglewood, California, in 1932 at the age of eighty-two and was brought back to Kaysville to be buried next to her husband. She had been a widow for fifty-one years.

Elizabeth began to help her son Richard with the farm by selling dairy products. In 1883 she was named the administrator of the George D. Watt property, which the court awarded her. A few years after Watt died, she became ill with typhoid fever and took many months to recover. Some of the children were not baptized during Watt's lifetime because he was an excommunicated Mormon, and so after his death, she had the rest of them baptized.⁸⁰ She was also a Sunday school teacher for ten years.⁸¹

In 1889 the Kaysville second ward, later renamed Layton, was organized with Daniel B. Harris as the first bishop. Layton, named after Christopher Layton, was about twenty-five miles north of Salt Lake City. The Watt property was about two miles northeast of the town center.⁸² Bishop Daniel B.

76. Bigler interview.

77. Bybee, "The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder."

78. Ibid.

79. "Davinie Watt Lythgoe Life History," p. 9.

80. Kaysville Ward, record of members, 1882, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church Archives.

81. Layton, "Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt."

82. See Andrew Jenson, "Layton Ward," in *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1941), 419; Jenson,



Author's Collection

Elizabeth Golightly Watt and Family, ca. 1896

Harris chose Elizabeth Watt as the first Relief Society president of the new Layton Ward. The women sustained her by a unanimous vote with Mary A. Adams as the first counselor and Sarah Watt as the second one. In her acceptance speech, Elizabeth thanked all the women for their kindness. Sarah also thanked them.⁸³ Elizabeth found that it was convenient having Sarah close at hand to help take care of Relief Society duties. In March 1891 she and Sarah visited the sick in the ward.⁸⁴ She remained Relief Society president for fourteen years.⁸⁵

Elizabeth and Sarah supported their families by selling dairy products and farming.⁸⁶ Elizabeth Watt Nalder remembers Elizabeth and Sarah feeding the threshing crew of about thirty men: “Mounds and pounds of meat, potatoes, vegetables, bread, butter, milk, pudding and pies must be gathered and prepared.” For meat they bought and butchered a sheep. “Our potato patch was raided to get new potatoes; puddings were mixed, fruit-filled, rolled and boiled in a cloth, then served with dip or sauce.” When

“Layton Ward Manuscript History.”

83. Layton Ward, Relief Society records, September 17, 1890, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

84. *Ibid.*, March 19, 1890.

85. *Ibid.*, also see Layton Ward, roll book, 1904–10, holograph, LDS Church Archives.

86. Layton, “Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Golightly Watt.”



Author's Collection

Sarah Ann Harter Watt and Family, ca. 1895

they loaded the tables with the feast, the children waved tree branches over the food to keep flies away.⁸⁷

In Elizabeth's room was a lidded four-by-six-foot wooden box that contained her treasures, including pictures, gifts, clothes and Watt's proposal letter. She called it "me box" and showed its contents to very few people. On top of her box was Watt's picture, and whenever she saw it, she commented, "Nice man, Grandpa Watt, always so tender."⁸⁸

Elizabeth's family expanded into the rooms in the big house that Martha's family vacated. When all of her children except Andrew had married, Elizabeth and Andrew went to live with her daughter, Alice Layton, in the town of Layton. Andrew, who had an inflammation of the kidneys called Bright's disease, needed to be near a doctor. In 1902 two of her children died: Andrew of Bright's disease and Isabell Watt Williams of unknown causes. Then Elizabeth returned to the farm on the hill to nurse Alice. Her daughter Rachel and her husband, James Whitesides, also came to live with them on the farm. In 1907 Alice deeded her property to Whitesides. She died on November 21, 1909, and Elizabeth stayed a few more years in the little house.⁸⁹

87. Bybee, "The Life Story of Elizabeth Watt Nalder."

88. Stromquist, "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," p. 11.

89. Davis County Recorder's Office, Land Record, July 17, 1907, book Y, p. 174 (September 14, 1912). Perhaps Alice wanted to leave the property to Elizabeth, but Elizabeth convinced her to deed it to James Whitesides, her daughter Rachael's husband. According to Kennan Whitesides in Jane Stromquist's "She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone," his family lived with Alice. Perhaps Elizabeth lived in her old apartment in the big house.

During this stage of her life, she became concerned with temple ordinances for her ancestors and family. According to Mormon doctrine, ancestors need to be baptized vicariously and have other saving ordinances performed by their relatives in the temple. Elizabeth got great joy from sending her family names to the temple.

Franklin D. Richards had spoken to John Taylor, the president of the LDS Church, about Watt and his family a year after his death. They had even discussed the prospects for him in the afterlife because of his beliefs at the time of his death.⁹⁰ At this time, Elizabeth became concerned about his salvation. She wanted him reinstated in the church with his vital temple ordinances renewed. In 1886 she wrote a very polite letter to President Taylor informing him that her son Richard was going to the temple and asking if he could do the work for Watt. Taylor responded that the time was not yet right and “it would be better to let everything stand in his case, as it is, for the present.”⁹¹

A few years later in 1891, Elizabeth finally decided to travel to Salt Lake City to see the president of the LDS Church, now Wilford Woodruff. As she was waiting for the stage, she noticed President Woodruff across the road in his carriage. She quickly walked over and asked him for help. He told her to send Richard to the Logan Temple the following year, and he would be able to perform the ordinances for his father, which he did.⁹²

Elizabeth tried to maintain good relationships with Watt’s other wives. Sarah was her Relief Society counselor. She also visited Martha in Manti several times, and Martha visited her. Hazel Bigler, Martha’s granddaughter, remembered the visits to Manti: “oh, such happiness and such love—those old women with their arms around each other. . . . they were these little English ladies who just adored each other, and they had the grandest time.”⁹³

Elizabeth eventually left the sand ridge and her little home to live with her children. She lived with her oldest living daughter, Alice, until she died in June 1920. Then Elizabeth lived with Jane Ellison.⁹⁴ For several years, she lived with her daughter Rachael Whitesides, who ran a boardinghouse

90. Franklin D. Richards, Diary, April 3, 1882, LDS Church Archives

91. Elizabeth G. Watt to John Taylor, November 16, 1886, general correspondence, John Taylor First Presidency records; John Taylor to Elizabeth G. Watt, November 24, 1886, Letterpress Copybooks, Taylor First Presidency records. Based on Taylor’s answer, it is doubtful that he gave permission for Watt to be buried in his temple robes.

92. Logan Temple records, Baptisms for the Dead, February 3, 1892, book N, p. 50, microfilm of holograph, film no. 177853, Family History Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. The small writing above the entry reads, “and all former blessings sealed upon him as per written instructions of the Presidency of the Church, on file dated December 26, 1891.” On February 2, 1892, Richard journeyed to Logan, and the next day in the temple J. E. Roueche baptized him, N. C. Edlefsen confirmed him, and he restored all Watt’s former blessings vicariously.

93. Bigler interview.

94. Stromquist, “She Moved in a Beautiful Quiet Zone,” p. 15.

next to the sugar factory in West Layton with her husband. She helped feed the men who lived there until she slipped while carrying a kettle of boiling water and fell, breaking her hip. It took her months to recover from this accident, and her leg was never strong again. After that she sat on a pillow in her rocking chair in a corner of the living room. When she wanted to move, she tucked the pillow under her arm and shuffled along the floor, pushing the chair before her or holding another person.⁹⁵

Elizabeth's life after marriage was divided into sections. The first part took place in Salt Lake City, which she enjoyed immensely, reveling in her life as a prominent woman in her new home with her husband. Her second stage was one of poverty in Davis County while Watt lived and even greater poverty after his death. In 1890 she found new life serving her church. After that she became more of a guest in the homes of her two daughters. She never complained and asked for little. She finally died on September 18, 1930, at eighty-nine, having been a widow for forty-nine years.

The old townhouse was abandoned sometime after 1898, when Elizabeth left. The windows were broken, and the house slowly decayed. Only one photograph of it exists, showing it as a deserted shell. Sometime prior to World War II, the house was razed, but the foundation remained for about twenty more years. Alice's house, which was smaller and more useable, survived, although it was much changed by new additions.⁹⁶

The memory of George D. Watt lived on in his wives, who praised him to their children and grandchildren as a kind and gentle man. The wives did not leave the LDS Church but remained faithful in the church that Watt had abandoned. He probably would have wanted it that way. He had given himself and almost all his worldly goods to the church and the territory of Utah. He was a man with strong character and definite beliefs.

Unlike some of the other Godbeites who left the LDS Church, Watt's life was never lost among the faithful. His claim to fame was his baptism in 1837 as the first English convert. Others, such as Mormon biographer Andrew Jensen, remembered that he was one of the first dry farmers in the territory of Utah, but his accomplishments are greater than that. He acted in the theater and played viola in the best orchestra of that day in Utah. He wrote about economic theory and practical agricultural. But his knowledge of Pitman shorthand and its use to record the sermons of President Brigham Young are undoubtedly his greatest contributions. He also helped create the Deseret Alphabet. Throughout his life he was foremost a religious man, but also a newspaper journalist, a shorthand reporter, an actor, a musician, an artist, an economist, an agriculturist, a philosopher, and a theologian. All of those attributes mark him as a key player on the stage of nineteenth-century Utah life.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 9. Alean Ellison Layton wrote that Sarah fell at Jane Ellison's home.

96. The house is just north of Antelope Drive.

Still Watt will always be remembered for his act of defiance against Brigham Young, when he left the president's office and later the church that had given him spiritual nourishment for more than thirty years and embraced Spiritualism. His actions were prompted by hurt feelings but also his strong character. Andrew Jenson began a biographical sketch of Watt for his *Biographical Encyclopedia* but did not include it in the volume. Jenson wanted to glorify fervent pioneers and stalwart Latter-day Saints, and Watt did not qualify.

After his death, his wives tried to forget being hurt by their neighbors. Alice handled it well because she remembered the better days in Salt Lake City. Elizabeth and Sarah devoted themselves to the church that Watt had eschewed. Martha survived because she moved back to Manti, where she had family who supported her. All of them nurtured their good memories of life with Watt.

George D. Watt's writings reveal him as a human being full of emotion and contradiction. One of his most poignant statements was his marriage proposal to Elizabeth: "I offer myself to you, if you can in return give me this love, and with it yourself, which offering would be prized by me above the glittering and perishable treasures of earth."⁹⁷ He could argue emotionally and logically with Willard Richards about Richards not paying him for his work. Yet when Richards died in 1854, Watt called him "one of the best and greatest men that ever trod the earth."⁹⁸

He could address Brigham Young as a brother and a father. While he was employed in Young's office, he seemed to depend upon him for advice and help. After leaving the office, however, Watt cut off this channel of communication. Christopher Layton, his bishop, had predicted in a public meeting that Watt would apostatize. Watt reacted much like his fictional counterpart, "Little George," telling Brigham Young, "Espionage, or adversity only stiffens my neck and sets me in defiance, while generous kindness, and smiling friendship melts my soul into tears of gratitude and resolves of eternal affiance."⁹⁹ In his letter to John Taylor, he was introspective and thoughtful when he expressed his religious beliefs, yet he acknowledged his responsibility for many of his problems: "In strict accordance with my impulsive nature [I] kicked over the bucket and spilled the milk."¹⁰⁰

Over a lifetime, Watt appears contradictory and erratic, yet he remained consistent emotionally. He needed the love and friendship of others. In 1852 he told Willard Richards, "You can lead me but you cannot intimi-

97. George D. Watt to Elizabeth Golightly, 1858, holograph, George D. Watt Papers, LDS Church Archives.

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

99. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, August 23, 1871, holograph, incoming correspondence, Young Papers.

100. George D. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878, holograph, general correspondence, Taylor First Presidency records.

date me: while a kind word from your lips vibrates through my soul like the sweetest sounds of harmony.”¹⁰¹ In 1871 he told Brigham Young that only through generous kindness and smiling friendship would he follow. He told John Taylor in 1878, “While love sings, and friendship pleads resistance dies.”¹⁰²

To many his life story may seem like a tragedy. He started out as almost an orphan: unkempt, unclean, unwanted, and uncared for. Religiously he began as a Primitive Methodist, journeyed through Mormonism, and ended as a spiritualist. This religious wavering makes him seem inconsistent, yet he consistently sought to be a religious and righteous person. He had little formal education, mostly from a teacher in the poorhouse, yet he became the foremost philosopher of economic theory in Utah. Though he became embroiled in confrontations, he desperately wanted people’s love and acceptance. In the final analysis, George D. Watt was a unique individual: a product of his time, yet very much his own person.

101. George D. Watt to Willard Richards, September 29, 1852, holograph, Willard Richards Papers, LDS Church Archives.

102. Watt to John Taylor, December 5, 1878.