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Mormon Passage of George D. Watt

Ronald G. Watt

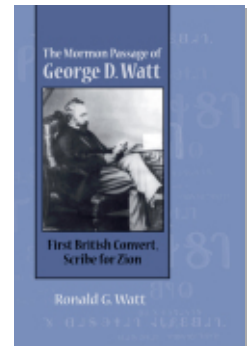
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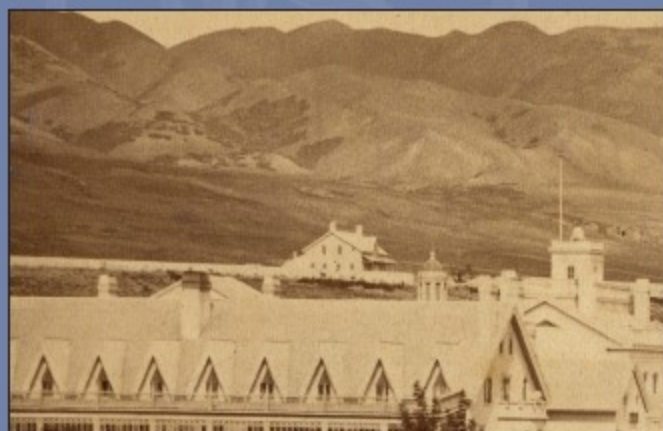
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Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

George Watt's house, middle background, looms over the homes of his employer, the leader of his church, and his eventual nemesis, Brigham Young.

George D. Watt was the first of many nineteenth-century English converts to the Mormon Church. A largely self-taught intellectual, he became a clerk for Brigham Young and the recorder and distributor of sermons by Mormon leaders (in the *Journal of Discourses*). He played the central role in creating the Deseret Alphabet, a unique Mormon orthography that was expected, in a typical demonstration of Mormon goals for self-sufficiency, to improve and distinguish the education and communication of church members. Once a loyal, essential employee of Brigham Young but a man with a strong will, Watt broke with Young and the Mormon Church over wages. Remaining a polygamist, he became a spiritualist, retired to social isolation on his rural farm, struggled to support his large family, but continued to write about what he knew and believed.

Front cover: George D. Watt, ca. 1860. Courtesy Daughters of the Utah Pioneers
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