Many people have made this book possible; they will be acknowledged shortly. But one man’s contribution was absolutely indispensable—that of William H. Smart himself.

This was a man who for fifty-one years faithfully recorded his actions, his thoughts, and the social, religious, economic, and political environment in which he lived. He unblinkingly recorded the torment, failures, and guilt of his addiction-ridden early adulthood years; the meteoric rise of his fortune and self-discipline during his few years as a Cache Valley sheepman; the challenges, successes, and failures of shepherding the temporal as well as spiritual development of Utah’s last frontier during two decades of virtually full-time service as president, in turn, of four Mormon stakes; his frequent interaction with the church’s First Presidency and political leaders during that intensely productive period; and his slide into poverty and the test of character and faith he met during his final fifteen years of living in straitened circumstances.

He made almost daily entries, except during his few wealth-building years as a sheepman, when he frequently summarized at length the activities of weeks-long gaps. His journals are the essential raw material of which this biography is primarily built.

There are fifty volumes, occupying 4.75 feet of archival shelf space and five microfilm reels in the University of Utah’s Marriott Library’s Special Collections (with photocopies in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). A few are odd-sized, but most are 4½ x 7, 5 x 7½, or 5½ x 9 inches, bound in red or black leather. Most contain two hundred pages, and almost all are filled cover to cover with Smart’s legible but usually small and crowded handwriting, invariably in black ink. Only rarely does the ink’s
fading make a word illegible. His spelling is shaky in the early years, but by midlife it is fairly consistent and accurate.

In the university archives and in the photocopies, the journals are oddly numbered: 1A to 7A, and 1 to 43. This is because Smart’s son, Thomas Laurence, was anxious to protect his father’s reputation. In turning the journals over to me, his son, he withheld the first seven volumes covering those painful early years of guilt and failure. Some years after the journals had been contributed to the university, realizing that his father’s triumph over his weaknesses actually added to his historical stature, he brought forth the missing volumes.

Also housed in the University of Utah’s Special Collections is a file of Smart’s personal correspondence and other papers, much of it with the church’s First Presidency and other General Authorities. This correspondence, together with all fifty of Smart’s journals, is included on the CD accompanying this book. Both the journals and the correspondence are searchable by date as well as by name and subject.

Smart’s journals are far more than a day-to-day recital of events. He was verbose in describing his feelings, the problems he faced, the sermons he heard, the things he experienced. As one small example, he filled ten pages in describing the plot and action of a play he saw on Broadway. That verbosity
created a problem; the journals are an important historical resource, but publishing upwards of 10,000 pages of them is impractical. Brigham Young University historian Ronald Esplin suggested a solution. Why not, he asked, recruit Smart’s descendants to transcribe them, put them on a CD, and distribute it with your biography?

That’s what was done. The task of transcribing proved too tedious and time-consuming for some. But others persisted through weeks, sometimes months, of eye-strain and monotony to complete the job. They are grandchildren or in-laws Charles Pearce Jr., Thomas B. Smart, Donna T. Smart; great-grandchildren or in-laws Eugene Fairbanks, Thomas Fife, Maureen Gale, Melinda S. Graves, Catharine Hintze, Lynne Jessup, Larry Maddocks, Kristen S. Rogers, Gary Smart, Marjean Smart, Martin Smart, Dorothy S. Toone, Stephen Woodbury, David Young; and great-great-grandchildren Kristi Gilbert, Jason Hoagland, Spencer Rogers, Rosanna Smart, David Toone. To them, especially to some who transcribed several journals, as well as to those who found it necessary to pay to have the work done, profound thanks.

Thanks also to others who gave valued assistance. Greg Thompson and his staff at Marriott Library’s Special Collections defused a crisis by recopying lost photocopies of two journals. As for the biography, staff in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were helpful in identifying and accessing relevant materials, as were staff at the archives of the Utah
State Department of History. Craig Fuller of that department graciously shared insights gained in his years of studying and writing about Uinta Basin history. Kristen Rogers of the same department has reviewed much of the manuscript; her incisive comments have improved the content.

The support, guidance, and critical evaluation of John Alley, executive editor of the Utah State University Press, has been invaluable, as has been the meticulous and most helpful work of the press’s copyeditor Kathleen Capels. At the outset, Alley questioned whether a descendant could write a balanced, objective, honest biography of his ancestor. Even if he could and did, when his name is almost identical to the subject’s, would the public perceive it that way? After reading the first three chapters, Alley was satisfied and gave the go-ahead. After reading the entire manuscript, the two peer reviewers agreed that the objective had been met. The final judgment will be by the reader.

A special heroine in this project is William H. Smart’s great-great-granddaughter in-law, Holly Rogers. As a recently maternal stay-at-home mom, she transcribed many journals others had abandoned. She then accomplished the arduous task of editing all fifty journal transcriptions into a standard format, ascribing to each entry its date, month, and year, so the CD can be searched by date as well as by name and subject. Lastly, she compiled the biography’s index.

Without Holly, this project could not have been completed. Without her husband, Jedediah Rogers, it would have been less than it is. As a PhD candidate in history (Arizona State University), he has taken time from his studies, research, and his own writing to critique each chapter, point to additional original sources and citations, and suggest historical contexts and insights.

Finally, without the gentle but persistent prodding of my wife, Donna, the project might not have been started in the first place. She has been unfailingly patient, helpful, and supportive, transcribing journals, unscrambling the snarls created by my computer illiteracy, and generally seeing it through to the end.