



James E. Talmage (1862–1933). James at about age seventeen, when he was attending Brigham Young Academy in Provo, Utah. Courtesy BYU Photographic Archives.

Fishing on the Kennet: The Victorian Boyhood of James E. Talmage, 1862–1876

Raised in the bucolic Vale of Kennet, Talmage spent his formative years as the oldest son of a Mormon convert family, a student in Church of England schools, and an inn worker.

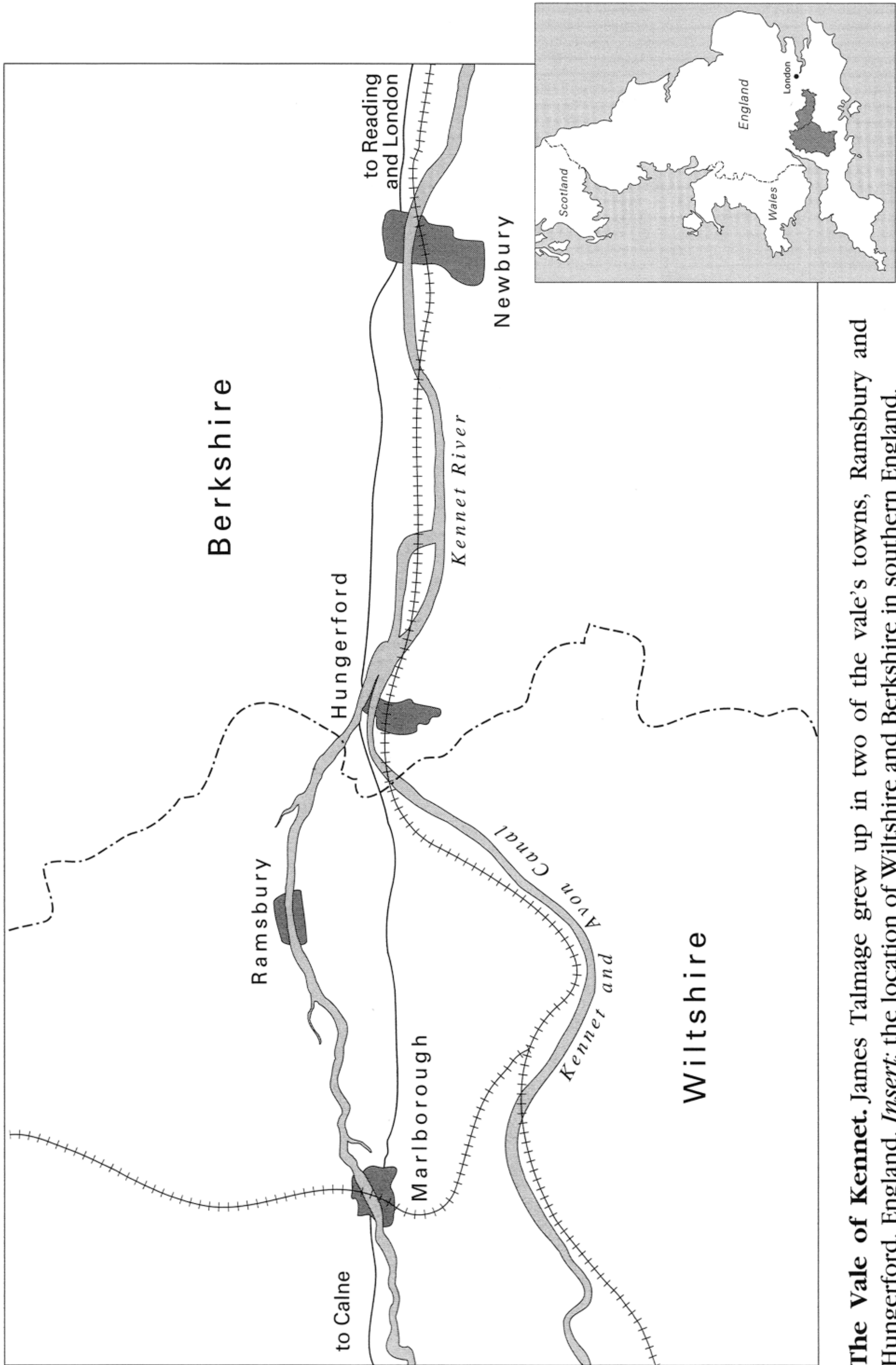
Dennis Rowley

To many people, the name of James E. Talmage is synonymous with the beauty and dignity of his masterful prose work *Jesus the Christ*. Two of his other religious books, *The Articles of Faith* and *The House of the Lord*, are almost as well known.¹ As an early president of the University of Utah, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a popular speaker and teacher, and the author of numerous scientific as well as religious works, he is an important figure in the history of Utah education and the Church. Because of the enduring significance and popularity of his writings, Talmage's childhood—the framing and foundational years—is worth consideration.²

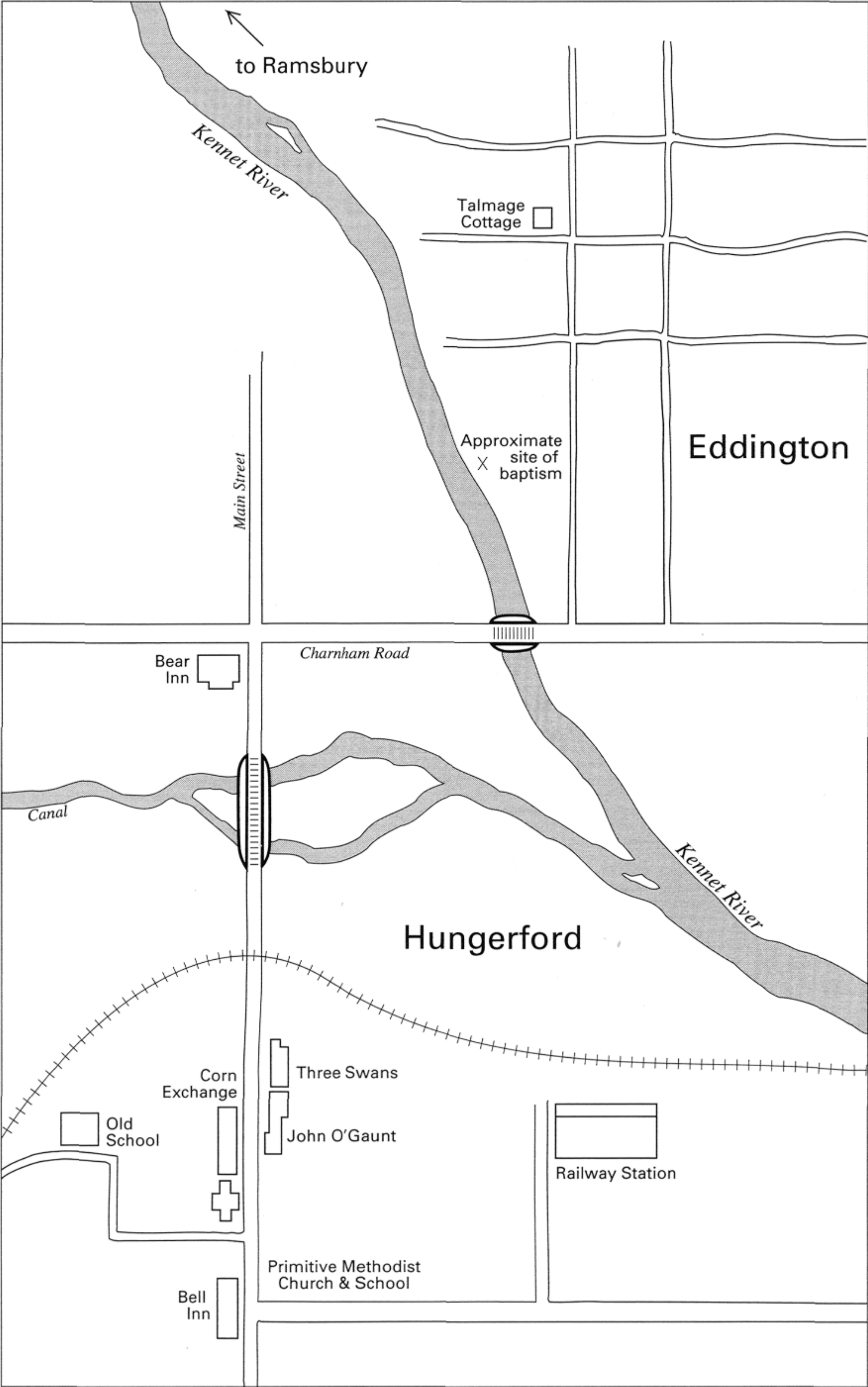
Talmage was a product of a Victorian English family, some of whose members were making the change from the Anglican Church to Mormonism. His family, home, church, and schools nurtured his wit; his love of learning; his ability to write clear, powerful prose; and his devotion to the LDS Church.

Birth and Family Background

James Talmage was the first son of Susannah Preater and James Joyce Talmage.³ He was born on Sunday, September 21, 1862, in his parents' living quarters in the Bell Inn⁴ in Hungerford, Berkshire, England.⁵ Hungerford, a prosperous market and resort



The Vale of Kennet. James Talmage grew up in two of the vale's towns, Ramsbury and Hungerford, England. *Insert:* the location of Wiltshire and Berkshire in southern England.



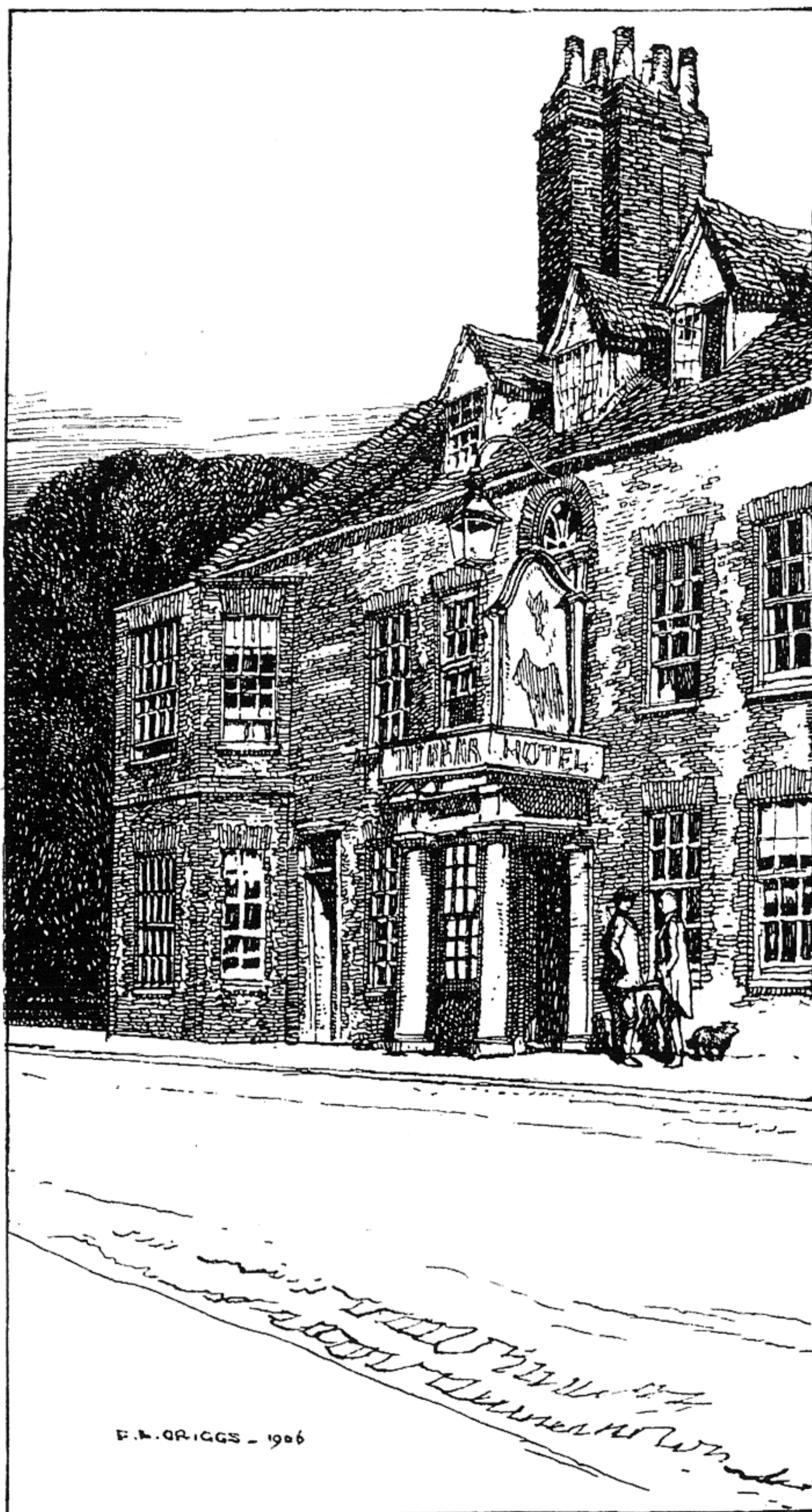
Hungerford and environs. James Talmage was born in the Bell Inn and fished in the canal. His main home and baptismal site are north of Hungerford.

town of southwestern England, was located in west Berkshire about seventy miles west of central London.⁶ Hungerford is linked by the Kennet River with Newbury to the east and with Ramsbury and Marlborough, Wiltshire to the west. The Kennet rises in north-eastern Wiltshire and flows east to the Thames and the sea. The winding, shallow valley shared by the four towns was known as the Vale of Kennet. The river and the proximity of the four towns tied them almost inseparably together, linking them economically as well as geographically.⁷ Market days, with each town having a different day and some of them different products, were held in all but Ramsbury.⁸ The residents of the vale patronized the markets in all of the towns. The Great Western Railway line, which ran through three of these towns, tightened these natural bonds.⁹

James's father was the manager—and possibly the proprietor—of the Bell Inn, a hotel founded in 1494 and one of approximately fifteen such establishments then operating in Hungerford.¹⁰ Information about the Bell is skimpy. Despite its early origins, by the 1860s it was clearly a secondary establishment, smaller and quieter than its more successful contemporaries, the Bear, the Three Swans, and the John O'Gaunt.¹¹ The Bell was located south of the Kennet and Avon Canal in upper Hungerford. Most of the larger and more prosperous hotels were situated on Charnham Street (the old stage road from London) near the Kennet River Bridge in north Hungerford. Even with the large number of travelers who stayed in Hungerford, competition was keen with inns as large and famous as the Bear.

The life of James's parents was characterized by long hours, alcoholic beverages, noise and frivolity, hot stove and hearth, and a wide variety of guests, including some travelers of questionable moral character.¹² The Talmages risked disfavor of some townspeople and the local clergy by earning their living as innkeepers and by dispensing alcoholic beverages at a time when the temperance movement was strong and active in the area.¹³ The Talmages also suffered under the unfavorable reaction of their neighbors to their religious views.¹⁴

James's ten younger brothers and sisters were born in the Bell Inn or in the family cottage in Eddington, a northern suburb,



The Bear at Hungerford, 1906. A competitor of the Bell, this most famous of the inns of Hungerford is still operating today and appears much the same as it did in Talmage's day. (James Edmund Vincent, *Highways and Byways in Berkshire* [London: Macmillan, 1919].)

where the Talmages moved shortly after James's birth. About that same time, James's older sister, Patience, died at the age of two.¹⁵

Life in Ramsbury

When James himself was two, his parents took him to live with his grandparents, James and Mary Talmage, in Ramsbury.¹⁶ Under such an arrangement, James became deeply attached to his grandfather, and the old man's influence was probably the single most important factor in James's young life:

In later years he delighted in telling his own children and grandchildren stories of Grandfather Talmage, stories of formal and informal lessons taught and learned, of occasional stern admonitions, of joyous outings in pursuit of fish in the [Kennet and Avon] Canal that ran . . . [through] Hungerford and Ramsbury, or of waterfowl and small game in the marshes and fields—and through them all ran always the vibrant feeling of loving remembrance that invariably lights the eye and warms the voice of one speaking of someone unusually close and deeply loved, who has exerted a major influence for good on the speaker's life.¹⁷

Were there sufficient sources, we would do well to study the elder Talmage more closely. What little we know of him comes mostly from family tradition. He was a farmer and a leading citizen of Ramsbury. His roots were anchored firmly in the soil of Wiltshire, where his family had resided for over a century. Other members of his family lived nearby. With the exception of a few, such as his son and a daughter, they viewed with disfavor his acceptance of Mormonism. He was a religious man with a strong sense of fair play, and, if his relationship with his grandson is any indication, he had a knack for relating to children.

Grandfather Talmage's initial encounter with Mormonism, probably in the early 1840s, demonstrated his courage, sensitivity, honesty, sense of fair play, and ability to influence his friends and neighbors. According to family tradition, he was at first a leader of the anti-Mormon mobs. Later, a change came over him, and when the elders came to his home attempting to escape from an angry mob, he hid them in a closet and threw the mob off the trail. His wife fed those missionaries, and he was later converted by them.¹⁸

Grandfather Talmage participated in local politics and community affairs. The full extent of his involvement is not known,

but the esteem in which he was held by his fellow citizens is evidenced to some degree by his election as a member of the annual Hocktide Jury in Hungerford in 1867 and 1869. Hocktide, a local holiday celebrated since feudal times on the second Tuesday after Easter, was marked each year by the election of new town officials and a jury of leading citizens to oversee the annual financial accounting to the citizenry. The jury examined the town records and certified that they had been accurately kept and that the financial accounts were true and balanced. When all was reported and in order, the jurors signed the report page in the high constable's record book. James E. Talmage's signature was as big and bold in the record—although a little shaky in 1869—as was that of his grandson on Utah and Brigham Young Academy documents many years later.¹⁹

During the three years he lived in Ramsbury, James was also undoubtedly influenced by his grandmother, Mary Joyce Talmage. Unfortunately, we know little of her during that time. James did not mention her in his journal until they were both living in Utah, and family records reveal little about her beyond her birth in Hampshire. However, it is inconceivable to think of James living in her home in his early years and being around her for the rest of his young adult life without having been influenced in a major way. James was impacted by other members of the Talmage family in Ramsbury as well. When he was twenty-nine, James wrote that his cousin Ada “was as light-hearted and winsome as she used to be, when as a boy, I gazed upon her as my ideal of gentle womanhood.”²⁰

James resided in Ramsbury approximately three years, attending infant school from time to time.²¹ Infant schools, also called dame schools, were sponsored by the National Society of the Church of England. They were attended by children ages two to seven and were usually taught by women. The schools were very common in the 1860s in the country as well as the towns although “on the whole dame schools were little more than baby-minding establishments and . . . the education which they gave was extremely rudimentary.”²² These schools could hardly have been otherwise as they consisted of a group of twenty or more children at widely varying stages of development, all entrusted to

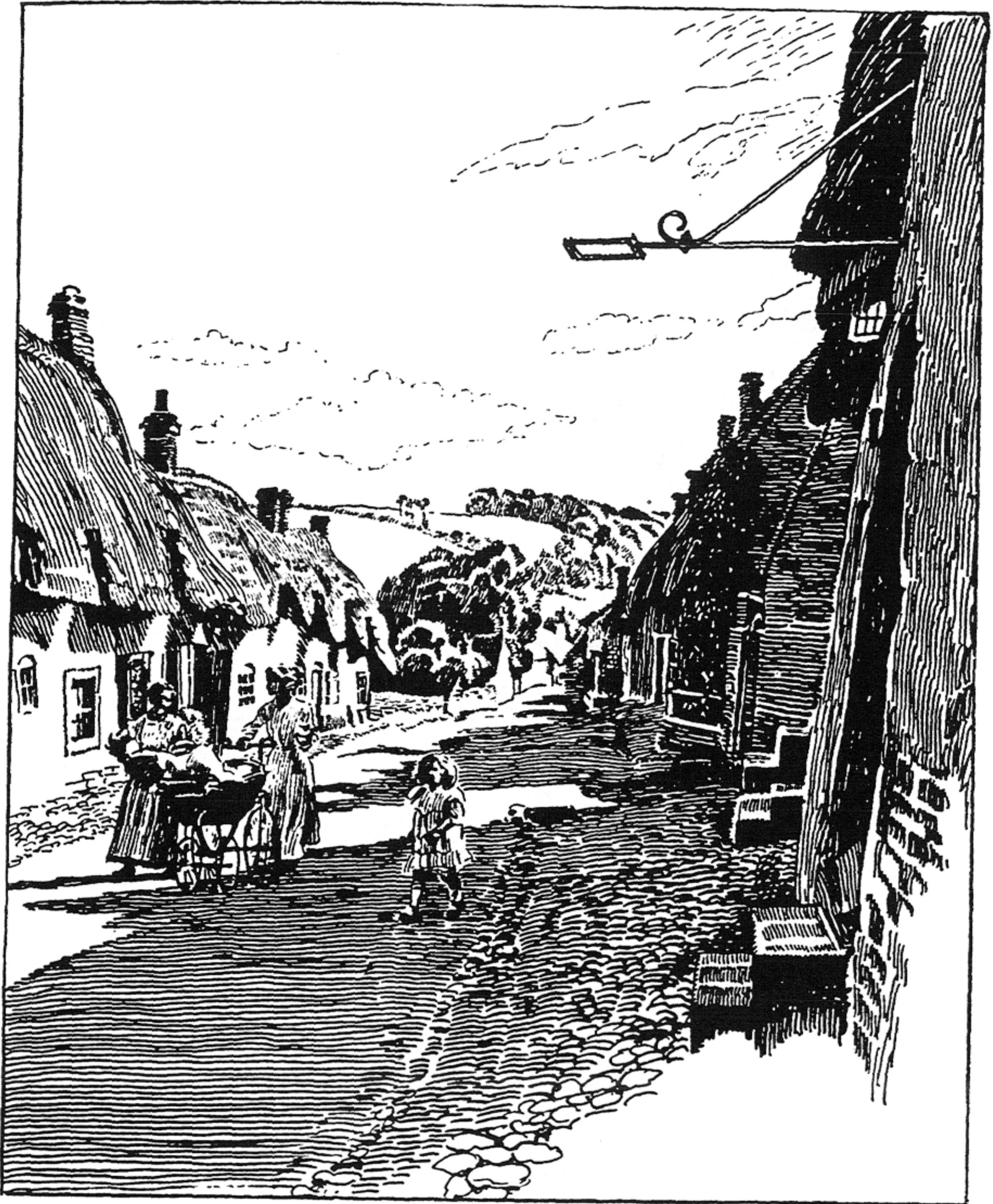
the care of one elderly woman. The weekly fee of a few pence she received for each pupil would have been well earned in simply maintaining order and assisting the smaller children with their personal needs. Depictions of life for the children in the dame schools are usually either grim or idyllic, the quality of a child's experience usually depending on the disposition of the teacher. That James attended only intermittently and was given formal lessons by his grandfather suggests that the quality of his early education left something to be desired.²³

Not only was Ramsbury the Talmage ancestral home, with all its natural ties and emotional attractions, but it also offered a somewhat contrasting environment to Hungerford for the rearing of a child. Hungerford was a prosperous market town situated at the crossroads of southwest England. Ramsbury, on the other hand, was a large village²⁴ with a small pottery industry and several tanners, shoemakers, glovers, brewers, and collar makers.²⁵ Ramsbury's inhabitants were a conservative, rural people who frowned on noise at night and drunkenness. In the 1860s, frequent letters were written to the editors of local newspapers from citizens irate over intemperance.²⁶ About the only excitement that occurred in Ramsbury during Talmage's boyhood resulted from the annual meat (stock) show at Christmas, the fall hiring fair, an occasional brass band concert, and the unrest of the laboring classes.²⁷

Ramsbury boasted several churches, including the Anglican, the Primitive Methodists, the Congregationalists, and the Independent Baptists.²⁸ Christian service was evident. For example, on March 26, 1863, a fire destroyed eight cottages in Ramsbury. Within two weeks, the Reverend J. Hawkins, one of the local clergy, collected nearly thirty pounds in currency and distributed it to the victims of the fire.²⁹ In a related vein, local businessman E. Meyrick sponsored an annual Christmas dinner for the indigent in Ramsbury.³⁰

The Talmages and the Church

It is not clear how early Talmage was exposed to the tenets and principles of Mormonism,³¹ a faith viewed with general disapproval, derision, and hostility in Hungerford and most of England



Ramsbury street scene. This idyllic lane is typical of the views from James Talmage's early childhood. (James Edmund Vincent, *Highways and Byways in Wiltshire* [London: Macmillan, 1919].)

in the 1860s.³² In his journal, he later recalled the many times he had attended St. Savior's Anglican Church in Eddington, "when a very little boy, . . . before Father had become a member of the Mormon Church."³³ Neither do we know precisely when Mormonism first entered Hungerford and Ramsbury. Apparently missionaries were active and successful in the immediate area in the early 1840s as a part of the early burst of missionary work in England. By June 4, 1843, nearby Newbury had twenty-two members, including one elder and two priests.³⁴ In September of that year, a disturbance in Hungerford was attributed to the Mormon elders. In response, Hugh Bourne, a founder of Primitive Methodism and an ardent preacher at open-air camp and revival meetings, "had to rush to Hungerford," despite his seventy-one years of age, because "the society [of the Primitive Methodists] had been disturbed by the influence of the Latter-day Saints."³⁵

Steady growth continued in the LDS Church thereafter. Four years later (1847), when the first companies of Mormons were arriving in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Newbury had 93 members—an increase of 71 members—and one year later the total had grown to 123 members, and they were called the Newbury Branch in the *Millennial Star* for the first time.³⁶ Conversions in England reached a peak in 1851 when 2.8 percent of the Mormons in England—some 840 out of 30,000—resided in Wiltshire, most of them apparently from the poor and laboring classes. After 1851 the number of conversions and members fell steadily as the result of both emigration and unfavorable publicity spread by the critics and enemies of Mormonism who were increasingly active after the public announcement of the doctrine of polygamy.³⁷

One source states that "in the early 19th century several houses in Ramsbury were registered for worship by dissenters. One may have been that used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in which 30 attended the service held on Census Sunday in 1851."³⁸ Branches were organized in Ramsbury and Hungerford on January 1, 1852, at which time they were placed in the Reading Conference.³⁹ A few years later they were changed to the Wiltshire Conference, and by Talmage's eleventh year there was a single branch, which was headquartered in Ramsbury and was part of the London Conference.

James's father was president of the Ramsbury Branch for a time although the exact dates of his service are not known.⁴⁰ James later stated that his mother's house in England "was opened to the elders and not a few of them learned to call her 'Mother' from the kind treatment they received from her hands,"⁴¹ no doubt a reference to the years when she was a branch president's wife. James recalled his own deep attachment to his mother:

Mother and I were close and confidential companions. She shared my boyish troubles, heartened me in failure, rejoiced in every little success, and was a loving friend in my youth and early manhood. It was a joy to tell her, by word and deed, of my thankfulness and appreciation while yet she lived in mortality; though no expression of gratitude could be adequate.⁴²

Return to Hungerford

When James returned to Hungerford to live with his parents at age five, it is likely that the purpose of the three-year visit had been achieved. Certainly, his grandparents were still able to care for him, since his grandfather, at least, was actively involved with James right up to the month before the old man's death in 1874. But James was old enough to help around the hotel at age five, and there were younger children who also needed attention. He almost certainly helped care for them. Moreover, he needed to receive a quality education, and the Ramsbury schools were inferior to those of Hungerford at that time.⁴³

That James was probably helping with the hotel and the younger children is implied in a journal entry which states that he attended school only "at irregular intervals" for the next three years. He also may have missed some school because of his parents' inability to pay the weekly fee or his own need to escape periodically from the daily inculcation of Anglican dogma. The latter two possibilities are unlikely, however, since the fee was only a few pence, and children with frequent absences were required to pay even higher fees. This penalty was to encourage high attendance in order for the school to pass inspection at the annual visit by a royal inspector.⁴⁴

A high absence rate was normal for most of the children attending the national school during the same time period, and

night school was held for those twelve and over (including adults) whose daily work prevented their attendance. All over Victorian England, children were an important part of the economic structure, and Talmage was probably no exception to the general rule. He was needed at home. Except for occasional visits to Ramsbury and some schooling there during his tenth year, he spent his fifth to twelfth years in Hungerford.

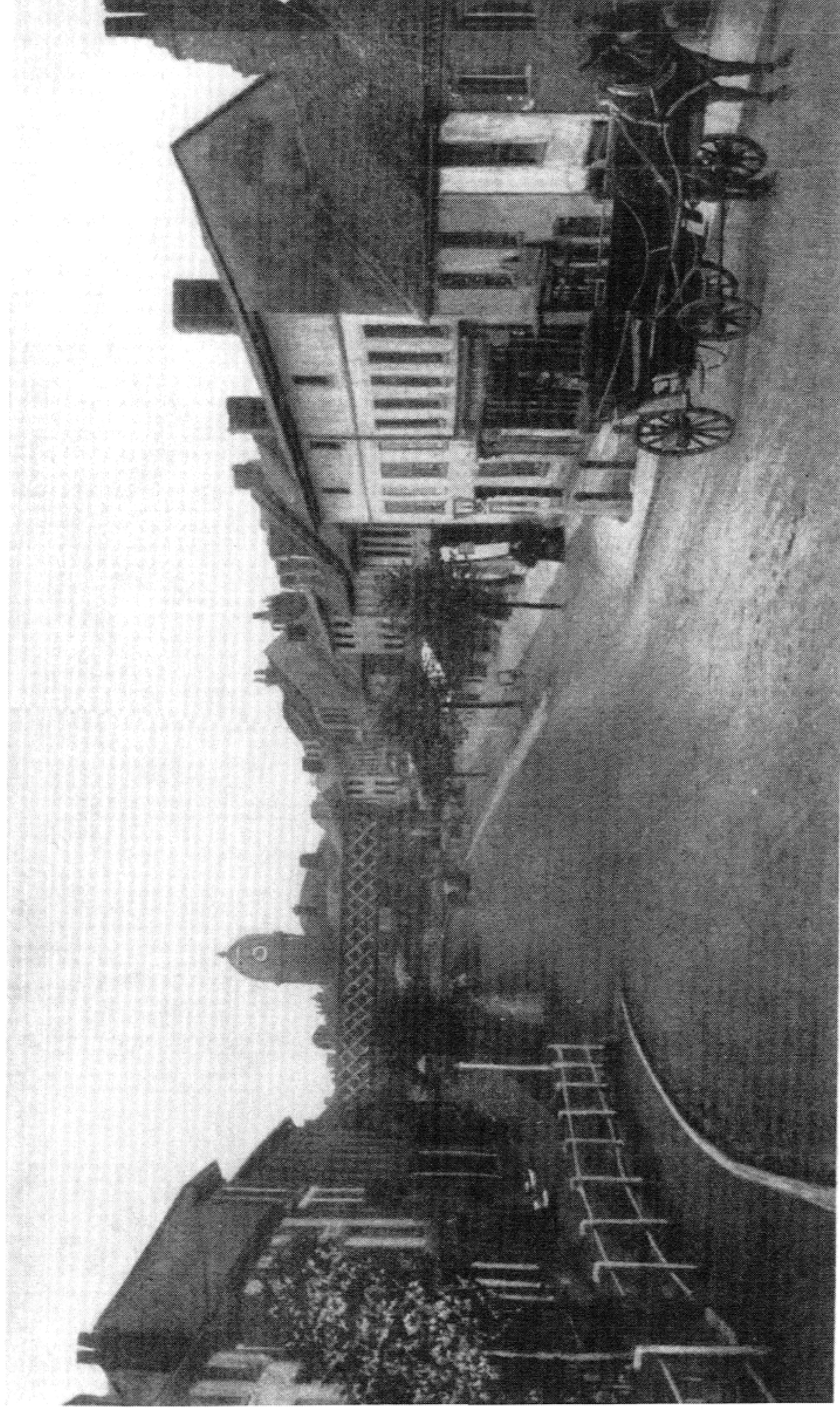
Life in Hungerford

Agriculture was the mainstay of Hungerford and its neighboring towns, and many of the services rendered and events held were an outgrowth of an agrarian and pastoral society. The soils of the Vale of Kennet were among the most fertile in England.⁴⁵ In most years, the vale was lush and green from abundant rainfall. During the dry years, the farmers irrigated the meadows and fields from the waters of the river.

Barley was the principal crop of the area. Some of it went to support the local brewing industry—Hungerford was famous for its beer. Some barley was consumed locally by the citizenry and used for livestock feed, and the remainder was shipped by rail to London, along with wheat, oats, beans, peas, and occasionally potatoes. By 1874 haymaking “became general” in the neighborhood of Hungerford.

Cows and horses were kept, of course, as a necessity for daily life, but sheep were especially plentiful and supported a thriving industry. The annual Hungerford Sheep Fair was held in August, attracting several thousand entries and exciting all with a myriad of related festivities, including races at Hungerford Downs and nearby Lambourn.⁴⁶

Nearly as important as agriculture in the economy of Hungerford and Ramsbury were the Kennet River and the fishing industry. Hungerford was “a towne famous for its Troutes” as early as 1654. In 1688 no less a personage than Samuel Pepys commented on the “good trouts, eels and cray fish” after eating dinner in Hungerford. In its descent from the hills of Wiltshire to Hungerford, the river fell four hundred feet, its swift pace providing an excellent habitat for trout, salmon, grayling, and perch.⁴⁷ A principal reason that the



High Street, Hungerford, Berkshire. The clock tower of the town hall and the corn exchange loom in the center as they did when James walked the street both in his youth and during his 1891 visit. Courtesy Berkshire County Reference Library.

fish thrived was the abundance of crayfish, which was a favorite trout food.⁴⁸

Equally important was the fishery maintenance and preservation program implemented by the town authorities, who regularly destroyed trash and predator fish such as carp and stocked the stream with trout.⁴⁹ By limiting the length of the season, by limiting bait to artificial flies, and by limiting fishing to the commoners with a vested right⁵⁰ and to those visitors with tickets purchased at a reasonable cost, the Fishing Committee insured a future for the fishery and the revenue it generated.⁵¹ Visitor revenues, whether from fishing or from purchases made in the shops and hotels, were important to the local economy.

Hungerford was a popular resort and holiday spot. From earliest times, it had been a gathering place for visitors—some who while enroute to other places simply stopped to enjoy a day of rest on the banks of the Kennet and others who came specifically for the fishing or the climate of Berkshire. The air was pure and bracing on the downs and mild in the valleys. No equally level country in England could compare with the Vale of Kennet for picturesque scenery. Its meadows, heathlands, chalk hills, pinewoods, and royal park and forest attracted many visitors each year.⁵²

Within Hungerford, “there were the carriers’ carts, the ‘Sociables,’ and the four, six, and eight-horse waggons,”⁵³ and a large fleet of yellow-and-blue horse cabs called flies. The flies ran between the hotels, the business district, and the railway station. In the busy streets with the market traffic and the flies going back and forth to the trains a dozen times a day, horse and cart accidents were a regular occurrence.⁵⁴

One example of the nature of the local tourism industry is the following advertisement run by the Bear Hotel in an 1877 guide to Berkshire:

A very Old-established family, Commercial, and Posting House.
Situating on the London, Bath and Bristol Road. Flies to and from
every train.

FISHING EXCELLENT⁵⁵

Among those who had responded to the enticements of such advertisements and enjoyed the pleasures of Hungerford were

some of the most famous names in English history, including Henry VIII, Queen Ann of Cleves, Queen Elizabeth I, Charles I, and William of Orange.⁵⁶

When James was not in school, at work in the hotel, at the cottage in Eddington, or by the canal fishing, he strolled the streets of Hungerford with his friends. The town's surprisingly cosmopolitan air, high level of activity, medieval traditions, and mixture of the urban and rural made Hungerford a vivid and interesting place to spend one's boyhood. Especially exciting was market day, when the streets were alive with people. Every Wednesday the farmers brought their produce, livestock, flour, and bread to town to sell or trade. The many shops did a thriving business.

Captivating for James and his friends was the wide variety of offerings in the many shops and cottage industries. Always available were foodstuffs produced locally. The smell of fresh-baked bread and pastries mingled with the scent of fresh



The Kennet and Avon Canal at Westfields, Newbury. James Talmage fished in this canal as a boy in Hungerford and environs, possibly wandering as far east as this point in Newbury. (James Edmund Vincent, *Highways and Byways in Berkshire* [London: Macmillan, 1919].)

meat at the butcher's (lamb chops, kidney, and salmon or trout from the Kennet), the rich bouquet of leather from the glover's and the saddler's, the fragrance of kiln-dried oak and beechwood at the lumber dealer, and the clean, medicinal smell of the chemist's shop (drugstore). Cheese, milk, and vegetables were available at the grocer's along with imports from Crosse and Blackwell in London. Imports included exotics such as pickles, orange marmalade, calves' feet in jelly, spices, and mushroom catsup.⁵⁷

The people of Hungerford provided many additional activities and annual events that were sheer heaven for a boy—even a studious boy or one with no pence to spend. There were celebrations on most holidays, with a special two-day affair on New Year's Eve and Day which included bell-ringing, Church services, and a pigeon shoot "for a fat pig."⁵⁸ (Due to a shortage of pigeons, the latter was cancelled the year James was twelve.) There were bicycle races, horse races, cricket matches, flower shows, and fairs in the summer and fall; ice skating on the canal in the winter; and concerts and circuses year round. Hungerford had a brass band (as did Ramsbury), a drum-and-fife band, a singing class, a choral society, and numerous choirs, including the boys' choir from the national school. There were many clubs, including a chapter of the Order of Foresters, which sponsored an annual fete in Hungerford Park. A parade, music, a cricket match, much food and drink, hurdle racing, flat racing, jumping in sacks, dancing, and quoits (ring toss) marked the all-day affair. In James's eleventh year, the fete was attended by over two thousand visitors, and the park was cleared at 8 P.M. "after a most successful day."⁵⁹ The Annual Hiring and Pleasure Fair in 1862 was

the usual heterogeneous collection of gingerbread stalls, penny shows, shooting targets, etc., which are the invariable concomitants of a statute fair, . . . and had many patrons. Nor did the various public houses lack patronage, judging from the numerous specimens of inebriated rusticity to be seen in the evening.⁶⁰

There were regular excursion trains to Kensington Station in west London to visit the Great Exhibition and the Crystal Palace; in short, there was no dearth of diversionary activities.

One highlight of the year for all the children of Hungerford was Hocktide Court. On the second Tuesday after Easter, the

townspeople gathered at the sound of “the Hungerford Horn, presented to the corporate body by John O’Gaunt. It . . . [was] blown every Horn Tuesday, to assemble the inhabitants for the election” of the high constable and other officials for another year.⁶¹ Hocktide was also a holiday, harkening back to an annual renewal of feudal pledges between the Lord of the Manor and his serfs. Anciently, “before the days of policemen, two tithingmen were appointed annually to keep a watch over the inhabitants and property of Hungerford; and on Hock Tuesday were entitled to demand a penny a head from the townspeople for services rendered during the past year.”⁶²

By Talmage’s day, the tithingmen were no longer limited to two and were composed chiefly of tradesmen of the town (thus James’s father was eligible). Their duties had long ceased, but the tradition was perpetuated. After receiving from the high constable a staff gaily decorated with flowers, surmounted by an orange, and bedecked with blue ribbon, the tithingmen began their progress through the town. First they went to all the schools, requesting a holiday for the children, who were immediately released from school. The children then accompanied the tithingmen from house to house, with the officials requesting a penny from the men and a kiss from the ladies. The day’s festivities were concluded with a grand distribution of oranges to the children.⁶³

On the following Friday,

a court called Court Baron [was] . . . held, at which the officers elect [were] . . . sworn in; every resident in the Borough above fourteen years of age [was required to] . . . attend or be fined one penny. . . . A banquet [was] . . . served in the evening [probably at the Bear Hotel] in honor of the new constable. The ‘immortal memory of John O. Gaunt’ [was] . . . drunk in solemn silence, and a breakfast on the following morning [terminated] . . . the Hocktide revelry.⁶⁴

Abundant cultural events and activities also occurred in Hungerford.⁶⁵ In addition to the national school, which offered night classes and the use of its facilities to clubs and community groups, there were several smaller church-related schools. Frequent lectures, some in a religious vein, were sponsored in the Corn Exchange and Town Hall by the churches and various clubs and lodges. For example, “An Evening with the Poets” was held in

the Congregational School on January 31, 1874, and in the spring of the same year, several foreign missionaries spoke on Sierra Leone, Madagascar, and other African countries.

There was no free library as such, but James had no dearth of reading material. He was able to draw upon half a dozen local newspapers, four published in Marlborough and two in Newbury, and, if he desired, papers from Reading, Oxford, and London. He could also listen to the cracker-barrel-type discussions of the contents of those papers which took place at the Bell Inn. The local papers covered world events through excerpts from the *Times*, providing ample coverage of world news—including such events as the U.S. Civil War, the settlement of the American West, an occasional sensationalistic article on the Mormons⁶⁶—and of national and regional news, including descriptions of the activities and beliefs of Victorian social reformers. James was taught Anglican doctrine in school, and he had ready access to the standard works of the Mormon faith as well as related works such as the *Millennial Star*⁶⁷ and missionary tracts. In no sense of the word was he a sheltered boy.

Compared to many of his contemporaries in the psychologically depressing slums of the large cities, James E. Talmage's childhood was idyllic.⁶⁸ Children in the back-to-back houses of the great, industrial towns experienced inadequate sanitation and water supplies as well as little familial time and attention. After spending long hours in the sweat shops of the manufacturing districts of industrial England, parents were too tired to care at the end of the day, and the children, who all too often joined them as members of the work force, were too tired to play.⁶⁹

Talmage's Schooling

Between the ages of five and eight, James was enrolled in the Infant School of the Hungerford National School. It carried that name because the local board, in order to obtain outside funding, was willing to subscribe to the "terms of union" of the National Society of the Church of England. (The infant school that James had attended in Ramsbury was part of the same system.) These terms of union required that the children be instructed in the holy

scriptures and in the liturgy and catechism of the established church, with such instruction supervised by the parochial clergyman; that the children be regularly assembled for the purpose of attending service in the parish church; and that the masters and mistresses be members of the Church of England.

The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church—its full name—was formed in October 1811 as an arm of the Church of England. In order to accomplish its purpose of educating the poor throughout England and Wales, the National Society provided financial support to schools at all levels, from infant schools to training schools for teachers, disbursing funds by diocese. Hungerford Parish, as a part of the Diocese of Oxford, was one of 242 places receiving part of a total of £19,970 prior to December 1868 for the purpose of constructing local school buildings.⁷⁰

The school day began with a roll call for which a form was provided with spaces to indicate whether the student was “Present,” “Absent with leave,” “Absent without leave,” “Absent-ill,” or “Absent-weather.”⁷¹ Following the daily roll and, on Fridays, the payment of weekly fees, there were devotionals and prayers and then two religion lessons. The religion lessons, one lasting twenty-five minutes and the other twenty minutes, included memorization of hymns, scriptures, and the Lord’s Prayer. Children under age nine were given picture lessons on the Old and New Testament. This morning routine was followed Monday through Thursday. Friday was examination day. By age eight, the child was expected to have mastered step I, which consisted of proficiency in the following: accurate recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, some knowledge of God the Father as creator, some knowledge of God the Son as redeemer, some knowledge of God the Holy Ghost as sanctifier, knowledge of simple hymns, and a short and very simple form of private prayer.⁷²

Because hymns were required for graduation, Talmage sang them along with the other children. The National Society printed the hymns on large 18" x 30" posters for the teachers to use in leading the students. Some of the theology of the hymns ran counter to Mormon doctrine, but there was much that was familiar

and consistent, such as “Hymn to the Blessed Trinity” which sang praises to “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; Godhead one, and Persons Three.”⁷³ There were also the comforting words in such hymns as “Visitation of the Sick,” and “Hymn For Evening”:

Our changeful lives are ebbing to an end,
Onward to darkness and to death we tend;
O Conqueror of the Grave, be Thou our Guide,
Be Thou our Light in Death's dark Eventide;
Then in our mortal hour will be no gloom,
No sting in Death, no terror in the Tomb.

Thou, Who in Darkness walking didst appear
Upon the waves, and Thy Disciples cheer,
Come, Lord, in lonesome days, when storms assail,
And earthly hopes and human succours fail;
When all is dark, may we behold Thee nigh,
And hear Thy Voice, “Fear not, for it is I.”⁷⁴

Victorian schoolboys were taught to be proud of the British empire and to emulate the heroes of England's climb to the pinnacle of world dominance. The “success story was the favorite Victorian fiction.”⁷⁵ Heroes of such stories included not merely military men, explorers, and adventurers, but also businessmen and industrialists such as china king Josiah Wedgwood and railroad builder Sir Daniel Gooch, and social reformers such as Robert Owen. In Talmage's geography notebook and in his examination paper for standard six, the heavy emphasis on Britain's worldwide possessions testify that he was indeed taught to be proud of the British Empire. Also, the manner in which the notes were arranged and the emphasis on dates and other specific facts in James's history notebook, suggest that Dickens's description of Victorian education can be generalized and applied to Talmage.⁷⁶

Dickens contended that Victorian education engaged in “taking childhood captive, and dragging it into gloomy statistical dens by the hair.” Victorian school children, he wrote, “had been lectured at from their tenderest years; coursed, like little hares.” In the classroom, “it hailed facts all day long, so very hard.” The children were an “inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured

into them until they were full to the brim." "The schoolmaster seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them out of the regions of childhood at one discharge." "You are never to fancy," instructed the government inspector, as he sternly lectured the students of Dickens's schoolmaster, Mr. Choakumchild, on the first day of school:

Fact, fact, fact! . . . You are to be in all things regulated and governed . . . by fact. We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact and of nothing but fact. You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact.⁷⁷

There is ample evidence in Talmage's surviving school records and papers and in his speaking and writing of later years that he was a capable memorizer and that he developed a good head for facts at an early age. However, he never lost his appetite for "fancy," as may be seen in this combination of fact and fancy from his geography notes:

Cape Colony, Africa. The climate is on the whole healthy. The worst defect is the irregularity of rain which either falls in torrents or is absent for very long periods. Sometimes long droughts, or heavy rains or stifling hot winds come and make the settlers wish they were at home in Gt. Britain again. . . . The summit of Table Mountain is often covered by a cloud which people call the Table-cloth, when the Table-cloth is spread then stormy weather may be looked for.⁷⁸

The school's afternoon was occupied by the teaching of secular subjects. The content of the curriculum varied with the individual school and depended upon what each school could convince the crown inspector to approve. Five subjects were standard fare in all elementary schools—reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Other subjects offered in some elementary schools of the time were algebra, geometry, natural philosophy, natural sciences, political economy, English history, English literature, French, Latin, German, singing, and military drill. In addition, the boys of Hungerford regularly met the boys of Ramsbury in cricket matches.

No record has turned up of how well James performed in infant school, but on May 8, 1874, at age twelve, he passed the examination of the Oxford Diocesan Association for a second-class certificate, which meant that he had completed the requirements for “graduation” from elementary school. Second-class certificates were the highest offered at that stage in a child’s education. He was then eligible to earn a first-class certificate through “good service” and go on to enroll in a training school for teachers.

In order to prepare himself for the examination to earn his second-class certificate and to qualify as an Oxford Diocesan Scholar, James had undergone four years of stringent schooling. From age eight to ten, he had attended the Hungerford National School, and from age eleven to fourteen, he had probably attended both the new board school in Ramsbury and the Hungerford National School. His progress, and that of all the students, was checked periodically—at least annually—by a church/crown inspector. For example, the *Marlborough Journal* reported that “children of the National School were examined on Monday by the Rev. DuPort and Mr. Pierce. The children passed successfully and a favourable report will be given on Wednesday.”⁷⁹

When we analyze James’s extant schoolwork, the picture that emerges is one of an earnest, hardworking child who was not without his foibles and who did not lack a sense of humor. A history notebook written at age ten and geography notes and an examination written between the ages of eight and twelve reveal firm, clear handwriting, in ink, complete with Spencerian flourishes and embellishments, a characteristic of much of his later work. He wrote with the earnestness of a typical ten- to twelve-year-old child, with occasional spelling errors and some problems with verbs—for example, he tended to pluralize at the wrong time. Periodically, the serious and almost parrot-like recitation of facts was interrupted with an expression of his own feelings or with a snappy comment. His notes include the following:

Australia. The natives are black or sooty brown very lean and very lazy but they are clever at hunting the kangaroo and other animals and can well use the weapons needful to kill or catch them.

Malta. The poor speak Arabic and can beg in English. The polite tongue is Italian.

Gibraltar. It has been denominated, the 'Key of the Mediterranean,' which means that through holding it the British can if they please keep any ship from entering, or coming out of that sea.⁸⁰

Comments such as this one at the end of the section on Gibraltar—"Englishmen in Spain have to endure many an uncivil act because we keep that rock"—demonstrate a plucky forthrightness on his part, no matter what the origin or authorship of the comment may have been.⁸¹ The style of the exam questions, "Describe the British Possessions in Europe," "Describe India," "Describe the South Coast of England," required the student to write a clear essay at an early age. Needed were a thorough knowledge of the facts, an organized mind, and the ability to write clearly. Talmage seems to have had all three. Seeing these qualities in him at age ten to twelve helps us understand more fully how he could become a member of the Brigham Young Academy faculty at age seventeen and a member of its governing board before he was thirty.

A final indication of his seriousness and the quality of his schoolwork is found in his practice of transcribing notes. While teaching in the Brigham Young Academy in 1880, he copied his notes from an English history course taken in 1872 into a larger more permanent notebook at no small effort and with minimal changes. By way of comparison, this task would be comparable to a college freshman of today copying his fifth-grade notes into his college notebook to use in his job as a tutor to high-school students.

The abuses to children generally present in Victorian Society were not practiced in the Talmage household. If Mrs. Bedoneby-asyoudid⁸² had called on a given Friday to check on James's welfare during his later school years, the only person she would have found guilty of ill-using the boy was the schoolmaster. Mr. James Newhook found nothing strange or unusual in the thrashings he gave James and indeed would have been quite appalled to have been challenged; a common belief was that a boy needed a few belts each day for general purposes. It was not uncommon to knock a boy down "in order to teach him (as young gentlemen used to be taught at public schools) that he must be an extra good boy that



Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. The Victorian fairy sternly oversees an act of recompense by one of Charles Kingsley's water babies. (Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* [London: Macmillan, 1863], 218.)

day.”⁸³ Newhook taught only the upper classes,⁸⁴ meaning that he encountered James Talmage after the boy's introduction to Mormonism and possibly after his baptism in 1873. Aggravating the situation was Mr. Newhook's hearty condemnation of Mormonism. James was harassed, thrashed, and beaten by Newhook, possibly as a result of his faith rather than for any school-boy infractions.⁸⁵

James's later schooling may have been more formative in his development because it was broader and deeper. In all likelihood, it still included a generous dosage of Anglicanism. The absences of his fifth to seventh years were probably not repeated because by his eighth birthday the Education Act of 1870 was made law.⁸⁶ One of its provisions empowered local school boards to pass laws for compulsory attendance of all children ages five to thirteen.

Talmage's Baptism

In the spring of 1873, his eleventh year, James became violently ill and was near death. His father, for an unexplained reason, attributed the illness to his own failure to have James baptized prior to that time. He solemnly promised the Lord in prayer that if James recovered he would promptly baptize the boy. Shortly thereafter James did recover and plans for the baptism were made. James later described that important event as follows:

During my eleventh year, in the spring of 1873, I was stricken with a severe illness; and, as my parents afterward informed me, my life appeared to be near its close. My father associated this illness with the fact that my baptism into the Church had been deferred beyond the time at which it should have been attended to. At that time, father was president of the Hungerford and Ramsbury Branch of the Church.

As my father afterward told me, he made a solemn covenant with the Lord that if my life should be spared he would lose no time in having me baptized after my recovery. We were then living at Eddington, a suburb of Hungerford, Berkshire, England.

Ellen Gilbert, also in the eleventh year of her age, a faithful daughter of a devoted mother, was to be baptized at the same time. Ellen Gilbert's brother, Elijah, was then a deacon in the Branch. On June 15, 1873, my father and Elijah Gilbert left our house shortly before midnight, traversed the Kennet bridge back and forth, looked around the neighborhood, and returned to the house telling us that all seemed clear, and that Ellen and I were to prepare to enter the water. In the interest of caution they went out once more, and returned with the same report. Ellen and I accompanied father and Brother Elijah to the place selected in the mill race for our immersion.

I was to be baptized first. As father stood in the water and took my hand, I being on the bank with Ellen and her brother, we were veritably horror-stricken by a combined shriek, yell, scream, howl—I know not how to describe the awful noise—such as none of us had ever heard. It seemed to be a combination of every fiendish ejaculation we could conceive of. I remember how I trembled at the awful manifestation, which had about it the sharpness and volume of a thunderclap followed by an angry roar, which died away as a hopeless groan.

The fearsome sound seemed to come from a point not more than fifty yards from us, near the end of the great bridge. The night was one of bright starlight, and we could have seen anyone on the bridge, which was built of white stone with low walls. Elijah Gilbert, with courage unusual for so young a man, started to investigate, but father

called him back. Father, who was also trembling, as were the others, then asked me if I was too frightened to be baptized; I was much too terrified to speak, so I answered by stepping into the water. I was baptized, and Ellen Gilbert was baptized immediately afterward.

As we started back to the house, not more than three hundred yards from the spot at which we had been immersed, father and Elijah went toward the bridge, surveyed the immediate vicinity, but failed to find any person abroad besides ourselves.

The frightening noise had sounded to us as loud enough to be heard over a great area; but none except ourselves seemed to have heard it, as not even a window was opened by anybody in the neighborhood, and no mention or inquiry concerning the matter was later made by others. Neighborly gossip was quite the order of the time; and surely, if that blood curdling shriek had been heard by others than ourselves it would have been the subject of talk for many a day.

But we heard it, as we shall never forget.

Sister Ellen, Brother Elijah and I have spoken together on the matter as we have occasionally met. On January 20, 1912, I was a visitor at the home of Bishop and Sister [Ellen Gilbert] Hyer, in Lewiston, Utah; and when mention was made of the unusual incident associated with our baptisms, I requested Sister Hyer to relate in detail the circumstance as she remembered it, for I have often wondered whether the distance of time had in any way distorted my view and rendered my remembrance inaccurate. I was struck by the strict agreement, even as to minute details, between her recital and my recollection. On July 20, 1919, I was again in the home of Sister Hyer and made a similar request; but as Sister Hyer wisely suggested that as her brother Elijah was present, he should be the one to tell the story. This he did, and his account agreed with our remembrance in all details.⁸⁷

Blinding of Talmage's Brother

This was but one of several significant events which transpired in James's boyhood and left a profound emotional and spiritual impression upon him. A second occurred a few months after his baptism. He was working with a digging fork on a very dark night. His brother Albert, then about five years of age and six years his junior, came quietly towards him without giving notice of his approach. James later wrote that

until he screamed I had not an idea he was near me; then to my horror I discovered that while in the act of pitching with the fork I had struck

him with the tool, one grain piercing the ball of his left eye. This organ was finally removed, though not before the right had become sympathetically affected and he was almost absolutely blind, being only enabled to distinguish very bright colors and then only when within a few inches of the eye. . . I need say nothing in regard to my feelings and reflections at this mishap; . . . my relief lies in the promise pronounced on him by the priesthood of God that he shall recover.⁸⁸

Albert never fully recovered, and James was deeply solicitous of his welfare into their retiring years.

Events such as his baptism and the accident with Albert suggest that James had ample reason to be serious and spiritually oriented while yet a boy. Talmage's son John wrote of the injury to Albert's eye as follows: "More than any other event, or series of events, this awful occurrence may account for the deep, almost fanatical dedication to work, to Church duties and to all the serious adult responsibilities that marked the life of young James E. Talmage from that terrible day forward."⁸⁹

Grandfather Talmage's Death

A third event occurred the following spring. James had just returned from a month-long tour of Hampshire and Berkshire with his grandfather⁹⁰ when the old gentleman became quite ill. The old man died on July 16, 1874, after four weeks of illness, during which time James remained with his grandmother helping her to nurse his grandfather. Again James recorded his feelings:

Having been very closely attached to him his death affected me severely; and the more so as I never before lost a near relative to my knowledge. I began to reflect seriously on his actions, as brought up by memory to note them very closely, and at length to meditate on his present lot; fully knowing he died in the possession of the priesthood and a firm belief and faith in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-Saints. One night while meditating in this manner I received a very curious dream concerning him, which had the effect of so firmly imprinting on my mind the conviction that his lot was 'allright,' that not the slightest doubt in that respect has ever been entertained.⁹¹

Following that account was the final boyhood entry in his journal:

My father was making calculations to emigrate with his whole family to Utah, America, at the time of my grandfather's demise; then however he was necessitated to remain in England until affairs were

settled. He moved with his family from Hungerford to the family estate at Ramsbury where all remained until a sale was effected. We left Ramsbury and enrolled as Mormon emigrants set out on our journey to America, May 22nd 1876. Set sail on board the Steamship 'Nevada' of 'Guion Line of Steamers' from Liverpool, May 24th 1876.⁹²

Overall, mid-Victorian southwestern England was a stimulating environment for a boy and an idyllic inculcator of the character traits James E. Talmage would exhibit as a man. The bucolic countryside; the romance and adventure of the river; the bustle of business; the discipline of school; the diversions of fun and frolic; the love and companionship of family; the stimulation of culture and travel; the wisdom and joys of religion; the sobering influence of persecution and sorrow—all of these James knew as a boy. And all of these he drew upon as a man. In his adult life, James Talmage responded as faithfully to the call of duty as the River Kennet answers gravity's pull to the sea.

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NOTES

¹ Elder Melvin J. Ballard, his colleague in the Council of the Twelve, once predicted that Talmage's writings would "be read until the end of time, because that which he has written is so clear and so impressive that it shall ever be among the cherished treasures of those who love the works of God" (from Elder Ballard's sermon at Talmage's funeral, quoted in Albert L. Zobell, ed., *The Parables of James E. Talmage* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973], 71).

² In most writings about Talmage, his boyhood is either not mentioned or mentioned only briefly. John R. Talmage's *The Talmage Story: Life of James E. Talmage—Educator, Scientist, Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972) provides the most information about the childhood years, but even it provides little more than a reiteration of information drawn from Talmage's personal journals, which give few details of his childhood.

³ LDS Family History Center, Patrons Section, 1962, microfilm 422323. Susannah was probably attended by Dr. Harry Pike Major, the most well-known and respected of the local doctors and midwives. It is also possible that James

was delivered by his own father, who, according to his grandson John, “acted as village doctor in Hungerford, though he had no formal medical schooling or degree” (John R. Talmage, “James Joyce Talmage and Susannah Preater Talmage,” box 24, folder 13, James E. Talmage Papers, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University [hereafter cited as Talmage Papers]).

⁴ *Marlborough Times*, September 27, 1862; and Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 1.

⁵ The birth notice in the *Marlborough Times*, Marlborough, Wiltshire, September 27, 1862, reads “On the 21st inst., at the Bell Inn, Hungerford, Berks, the wife of Mr. James Talmage, of a son.”

⁶ The borough of Hungerford “was originally part of the royal manor of Kintbury, and as such was ancient demesne of the [English] Crown. . . . The town and borough were included in the grant of the manor to Sir Walter Lord Hungerford in 1446” (William Page and P. H. Ditchfield, eds., *A History of Berkshire*, 4 vols., The University of London Institute of Historical Research, Victoria History of the Counties of England [1906–24; reprint, London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1972], 4:185). The manor passed in and out of Hungerford family hands over the following years. In the fourteenth century, John O’Gaunt granted the manorial rights, including common pasture and fishing, to the citizens of the manor and the borough. The commoners of Hungerford control the main street, the fishing rights to the Kennet in and near Hungerford, and a great deal of private property to the present day.

⁷ Their histories are closely intertwined. Much that is known of Hungerford and Ramsbury, for example, is drawn from the newspapers of Marlborough and Newbury. Those of greatest value for this essay were the *Marlborough Times*, the *Marlborough Journal*, the *Newbury Weekly News*, and the *Hungerford Gazette*. All are available on microfilm in the British Library, London.

⁸ No Ramsbury market day was mentioned in any of the newspapers cited. Compare the following from D. A. Crowley, “Ramsbury,” in *A History of Wiltshire*, ed. R. B. Pugh, Elizabeth Crittall, and D. A. Crowley, 14 vols., University of London Institute of Historical Research, Victoria History of the Counties of England (London: Oxford University Press, 1953–), 12:40. A market was held in Ramsbury in 1219 but was discontinued ten years later because it was a threat to the one at Marlborough. It was held again from 1300 to 1319 “but nothing is known of it thereafter. The lack of surviving references to it suggests that it failed to flourish and that it petered out long before the 1790s when it was expressly said to have been discontinued.”

⁹ *Berkshire: The Official County Map and Guide* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Stationer’s Hall Court, 1877), 10 (hereafter cited as *Berkshire Guide*); and W. H. Summers, *The Story of Hungerford in Berkshire*, ed. Harold Peake (n.p., 1926), 158. The Great Western Railway line was first completed in 1847 and ran west from London to Newbury and then passed through Hungerford, Marlborough, and Great Bedwyn on the way to Bath, Bristol, and the coast.

¹⁰ James E. Talmage wrote that the Bell was “kept” by his father; see Journal 1:1, in Talmage Papers. Talmage may have been the owner or the lessor. See, for example, the Craven Arms Inn Lease Agreement, 1840, Berkshire Records Office, Reading, Berkshire. The twenty-one-year lease for the Craven

Arms, also in Hungerford, included fishing and commons rights, a pew in church, outbuildings, and certain privileges. Both nearby Swindon and Ramsbury also had a Bell Inn, apparently a popular name of the time. *Newbury Weekly News*, August 12, 1869, and *Marlborough Journal*, May 16, 1874. Two of the Bell's competitors, the Three Swans and the Bear, the latter also founded in Tudor-Stuart times, are still operating today.

¹¹ Frequent references to these inns and others can be found in the local newspapers. The Bear and the Three Swans were hosts for large public gatherings comparable to those of Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs in American restaurants of today. The Bear was the most popular, being praised often in the newspapers for the quality of the food.

¹² Begging, poaching, stealing, and related lawlessness were a continual problem because of the large number of transients and itinerant tramps crisscrossing the countryside and passing through Hungerford and Ramsbury on their way to and from London or Bristol. Trespassing and catching wild game, especially rabbits, on another's property were strictly punished. In 1870 in the Hungerford District of the Berkshire Constabulary, 1,328 tramps were arrested and assisted, and in the Newbury District, 2,819 were arrested. See the issues of the *Marlborough Journal* for June 1874.

¹³ Frequent letters to the editors of local newspapers during the 1860s expressed strong feelings about intemperance. For general information on the temperance movement in England during the Victorian period, see Dawson Burns, *Temperance in the Victorian Age . . . from 1837 to . . . 1897* (London: Ideal Publishing Union, 1897), a contemporary view of the growth of the movement during the nineteenth century; Janet Roebuck, *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, 1982), 28, 63–64, 96–97; Edward Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History, 1750–1985* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), 238–43; and Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp, eds., *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 64, 110, 113.

¹⁴ Richard O. Cowan points out:

Whilst the missionaries often had to take the brunt of the opposition directed against the Church, the local members were by no means immune. Sometimes persecution was aimed at branches or other groups of saints, but most often it hit individuals or families quite directly. Hostile landlords would sometimes order converts out of their homes. Some employers withdrew work from Mormons unless they would renounce their faith. And, perhaps most difficult of all, many families disowned their own members when they accepted the gospel. Such pressures were most intense in rural areas, where the poorer saints had fewer options in employment or lodging and where the clergy of the established church had more pervasive influence. ("Church Growth in England, 1841–1914," in *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, ed. V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987], 218–219)

¹⁵ Henrietta Patience Talmage died November 24, 1862. For this information and Talmage family genealogical information, see Talmage Papers, box 24; and LDS Family History Center microfilm 422323.

¹⁶ The village of Ramsbury was located about five miles up the river from Hungerford. It was the largest of several villages in the parish of Ramsbury and enjoyed a certain ecclesiastical prominence in medieval times when the Bishop of Salisbury's manor and a cathedral were located there. By Talmage's day, there were several hamlets, manor houses, and large farms located nearby as well. The parish was in the hundred of Ramsbury, which was a geographical unit of Wiltshire. Wiltshire has deep, even ancient roots. For occasional Ramsbury references in Wiltshire's history from 1099 to the present, see the index entries in *History of Wiltshire*, vols. 1-5; and for an extended and detailed history of Ramsbury hundred, parish, and village, see volume 12, especially D. A. Crowley, "Ramsbury Hundred," 1-2, and Crowley, "Ramsbury," 12-46.

The history of the village of Ramsbury was little different in kind than hundreds of other English villages. Its citizens participated in the events of the neighboring towns, and there is evidence that people in the larger communities of Marlborough and Newbury thought of Hungerford and Ramsbury as practically one town. The newspapers sometimes listed news of Ramsbury under Hungerford, and there was frequent contact between their residents. See A. W. Batson, *Ramsbury, Past and Present*, a series of articles in *Wiltshire Advertiser*, ending April 16, 1908, reprinted (n.p., n.d.). See also E. Doran Webb, "History of the Hundred of Ramsbury," in John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire . . . 1801-1825*, 3 vols. (London: Werner and Hood, 1801-25). See also the entry for Ramsbury in Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England . . .* 5th ed., 4 vols. (London: S. Lewis, 1844), 3:608-9.

¹⁷ Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 1-2. The woods were alive with foxes, badgers, wild boars, deer, otters, rabbits, and mice and the following birds: thrushes, redwings, blackbirds, nightingales, wrens, warblers, tits, sparrows, nuthatches, swallows, martins, finches, starlings, magpies, crows, ravens, rooks, woodpeckers, owls, hawks, doves, ducks, and swans. Charles J. Cornish, "Mammals," in *History of Berkshire* 1:167-72; and Heatley Noble, "Birds," in *History of Berkshire* 1:141-66.

¹⁸ Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 2-3. Grandfather Talmage was forty-four years old in 1843, and the mob in question may well have been part of the "disturbances" in Hungerford that brought Hugh Bourne there in September of that year. See note 32. Malcolm Thorp's description of rural areas in England in the 1840s provides a broader perspective:

In rural areas where the social powers of the Anglican vicar and the local squire continued to be influential, there tended to be more intolerant behaviour, and there were episodes in such areas where the local magistrates would not afford protection to the missionaries, there were also many instances where elders went about without purse or scrip and were either well received or at least treated with indifference. Serious persecution was the exception, not the rule. (Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration in Britain: Political, Social, and Economic Conditions," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 66-67)

While grandfather Talmage was not the vicar or the local squire, he was a prominent local figure. As such, the details of his conversion add interest and complexity to the overall process described by Thorp.

¹⁹ For a general description of the hocktide holiday and related terms see *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. “hock,” “hock-cart,” “hock-day,” “Hock Monday,” “hock money,” “Hocktide,” and “Hock Tuesday” (hereafter cited as *OED*). Compare the more detailed entries in *OED*, 1st ed. For a description of actual events of the time, see the *Marlborough Journal*, April 18, 1874. Additional general information is found in W. L. Barker, *Hungerford* (ca. 1880), 11–12; in *Berkshire Guide*, 19; and in Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* 2:573. For grandfather Talmage’s signature, see the entries for April 30, 1867, and April 6, 1869, in Hungerford Borough Records, Administration, Constable Accounts, 1658–1922, 5 vols., Berkshire Records Office, Reading, Berkshire.

²⁰ *Journal* 4:166–71.

²¹ *Journal* 1:2.

²² Howard Clive Barnard, *A History of English Education* (1947; reprint, London: University of London Press, 1963), 2–3. Barnard presents a rather grim picture of the dame schools, especially when contrasted with the rosy and charming views of proper education portrayed by Charles Kingsley in *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* (1863; reprint, New York: Garden City, 1937), 19, 210–15, 220–22, 230–41.

²³ When James began attending infant school in Ramsbury, the board schools administered by local citizens were of inferior quality, and the deficiency was not rectified until 1875, his thirteenth year. In 1875 new board schools were opened in Ramsbury with 130 boys in one school and 100 infants in another. These “replaced all the schools in Ramsbury except the girls’ school” (Crowley, “Ramsbury,” 46). The *Marlborough Journal*, January 9, 1875, lamented that “it is a sad fact that the education of the children of Ramsbury is very deficient even in the most elementary courses.” Similar deficiencies were present in the Hungerford National School in the 1860s. Hungerford National School Minute Book, 1837–1903, Berkshire Record Office, Reading, Berkshire (hereafter cited as Hungerford Minute Book). On July 7, 1862, the inspector’s report in the Hungerford Minute Book read as follows:

The Scholars are on the whole well behaved, attentive children; they are very young—only 3 out of 173 present were over 12. More distinctness in reading should be aimed at, and the minds of the children should be awakened more; their work shows neatness. The lower classes in the Infant department are not in a satisfactory state.

²⁴ In 1861, Ramsbury parish had 2,533 inhabitants and Hungerford parish had 3,001. Ten years later, the respective figures were 2,480 and 3,064. George S. Minchin, “Table of Population, 1801–1901,” in *History of Berkshire* 2:238, and Margaret Saunders, “Table of Population, 1801 to 1951,” in *History of Wiltshire* 4:350, 356. There are no comparative figures available for the smaller village or town. In general English use, a town is commonly designated as “an inhabited place larger and more regularly built than a village, and having more

complete and independent local government" (*OED* 18:320). A village, in a difference that the *OED* calls "somewhat indefinite," is a "collection of dwelling-houses and other buildings, forming a centre of habitation in a country district; an inhabited place larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, or having a simpler organization and administration than the latter" (*OED* 19:632). Although the population of the two parishes was similar between 1861 and 1871, Ramsbury was clearly a large village and not a town, as witnessed by its lack of an independent market and a newspaper and by the tendency of the newspapers of the region to list Ramsbury news under Hungerford, as though the former were an appendage (or suburb) of the latter.

²⁵ Crowley notes:

From the 17th century Ramsbury had many trades related to agriculture and typical of a large village. The leather trade has been the most prominent. There was a tan house at Ramsbury in the 1630s, when inspectors of leather were appointed at the view of frankpledge, and there were tanners, shoemakers, glovers, and collar makers throughout the 18th century. In 1780 there were three or more tan yards. . . . In addition to tanners and curriers there were seven bootmakers and shoemakers and a collar maker at Ramsbury in 1848. . . . In 1839 London was the destination of much of the beer from the brewery south of the Square. ("Ramsbury," 40-41)

²⁶ See, for example, the *Marlborough Times*, December 1862. See also note 13.

²⁷ *Marlborough Times*, December 27, 1862. As in other rural areas of England between 1840 and 1870, jobs were scarce or decreasing in number for agricultural and common laborers due to Ramsbury's declining tourism and due to the growing wool industry, which resulted in the further enclosure of fields for sheep grazing. The laborers occasionally held meetings, sometimes with a speaker from London. On one occasion, Joseph Arch, founder of the National Agricultural Labourer's Union spoke to them in a field provided by one John Talmage, most likely James E.'s uncle. Arch outlined the advantages of immigration to Canada and New Zealand. Subsequently, a few of the labourers departed for both places. *Marlborough Journal*, February 28, 1874.

²⁸ Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* 3:609.

²⁹ *Marlborough Times*, March 28, and April 11, 1863.

³⁰ *Marlborough Times*, December 27, 1862. For related general background, see Batson, *Ramsbury, Past and Present*; and Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*.

³¹ Talmage was possibly exposed to Mormonism between the ages of three to five, when his grandfather may have taught him some of the principles of the gospel in Ramsbury.

³² For a reference to anti-Mormon feelings in Great Britain in the 1860s, see John D. Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England* (London: Duckworth, 1971). Gay writes:

Mormonism had reached its 19th century peak in England by 1851. In 1852 the Mormon doctrine of polygamy was officially formulated by Brigham Young, who stated its authority rested on a special revelation from God to Joseph Smith eleven months before his death.

The official organ of Mormonism in England, the *Millennial Star*, set about proclaiming the new doctrine with gusto, and very quickly the Mormons became a laughing stock. Membership figures fell drastically and for the next hundred years English Mormonism was in the doldrums. (194)

Compare conversion statistics for the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s in Richard L. Evans, *A Century of Mormonism in Great Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1937), 244; Richard L. Jensen, "The British Gathering to Zion," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 197; and Jensen and Thorp, *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain*, 187, 188, 210, 226.

³³ Journal 1:168. Complete and precise information about conversion dates for James's parents and grandparents is not available. We know, for example, that his mother was not baptized until 1868, James's sixth year. His father was born in 1840, baptised in 1850, and married in 1860. See Talmage Papers, box 24, folder 13; and LDS Family History Center microfilm 422323.

³⁴ *Millennial Star* 4 (July 1843): 33-34.

³⁵ John T. Wilkinson, *Hugh Bourne, 1772-1852* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 158. See also P. A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of Their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 37-38.

³⁶ *Millennial Star* 9 (August 1, 1847): 230; and *Millennial Star* 10 (May 15, 1848): 148.

³⁷ Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 20-24; and Gay, *Geography of Religion*, 193-94.

³⁸ Crowley, "Ramsbury," 45.

³⁹ *Millennial Star* 13 (November 1, 1851): 333. No early records for either branch exist in the LDS Church Archives. Along with the Newbury Branch, members in Hungerford and Ramsbury had been a part of the London Conference prior to the time branches were officially organized in both towns.

⁴⁰ He was named president of the Ramsbury Branch sometime in the late 1860s. Talmage Papers, box 24.

⁴¹ Obituary from the *Salt Lake City Intermountain Republican*, June 4, 1906, included in Journal 11:64. Talmage wrote that "the speakers [at her funeral] were those who knew Mother best—elders who had called her 'Mother' while in their mission fields abroad, and neighbors who loved her more as they knew her better."

⁴² Talmage Papers, box 24, folder 5.

⁴³ See note 23.

⁴⁴ For a caricature of a royal inspector, see Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, (1854; New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1961), 15. Regarding fees for absences, see Hungerford Minute Book, April 3, 1871: "It was ordered that children who fail to attend the Government Inspection having kept the required number of days shall be charged double fees."

⁴⁵ See the section entitled "Forestry," by J. C. Cox, in *History of Berkshire* 2:341-353. At one time, the entire south part of the county as far west as Hungerford was covered by the Forest of Windsor. By the mid-nineteenth century, most of the arable farm land around Hungerford and Ramsbury had been

deforested and enclosed. The soil was chalky loam, covered with a stiff red clay with flints in spots. "Some of the best timber [especially oak and beech] in the county [grew] upon the clay with flints, and good crops [were] often found on it in spite of the stony ground" (Horace W. Monckton, "Geology," in *History of Berkshire* 1:19).

⁴⁶ The composite description of events and daily life in Hungerford and environs in this paragraph and those immediately following, except where noted otherwise, is drawn entirely from the *Marlborough Times*, the *Marlborough Journal*, the *Newbury Weekly News*, and the *Hungerford Gazette* for the years 1862-74.

⁴⁷ Pope immortalized the river in verse as "The Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned" (Barker, *Hungerford*, 20).

⁴⁸ T. R. R. Stebbing, "Crustaceans," in *History of Berkshire* 1:124; and C. H. Cook, "Fishes," in *History of Berkshire* 1:133-34.

⁴⁹ *Marlborough Journal*, October 11, 1873, reads:

Hungerford. News for the Angler. On Tuesday the Fishing Committee, . . . had the water netted to catch the jack, previous to their placing 10,000 young Trout into the famous trout stream. Not only has there been some very large trout caught this year, but there are plenty left for next season, some very large ones having been caught and carefully replaced into the stream for future sport.

⁵⁰ Records do not indicate whether James's father or grandfather was a commoner in Hungerford, which would have guaranteed the men the right to fish in the stocked and highly-protected Hungerford Fishery without having to purchase a ticket. The commoners held such rights in perpetuity as the result of a grant from John O'Gaunt in the fourteenth century. However, James and his friends did fish in the Kennet and Avon Canal, watching the canal boats go by and spending many a lazy summer afternoon "at the waterside, hour after hour, catching nothing" (Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 101). On June 23, 1891, when Talmage was in England to be made a fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, he recorded the following in his journal. He was twenty-nine years old:

My heart throbs wildly as I retrace the old paths, and visit again the places of such personal interest to me, from which I been away now fifteen years. I walked along by the canal, in which I used to fish; and seeing there a boy afishing, I hired his tackle for a time, to enjoy again the old sport. I had good luck, and in half an hour landed five fine perch: these I left with the boy, to gether with 3d. (Journal 4:164-65)

⁵¹ See, for example, the *Marlborough Journal*, September 6, October 11, and November 1, 1873, and March 14, 1874. It is so even today. When I visited Hungerford in 1978, the Kennet fishery was beautiful and well maintained. Visiting fishermen are required to pay £400 a season for the privilege of catching the large fish from the stream where they swim among the constantly undulating watercress.

⁵² Summer was the busiest time for the townspeople of Hungerford. The schools closed in August for harvest vacation, the hotels were full as anglers and

tourists flooded the town for the annual trout season from May through August, and the merchants and cabs were busier than ever. For instance, in 1836 over two hundred London and Bath coaches passed each week, with additional coaches in the summer. There was also heavy north-south traffic from Oxford to Salisbury with as many as fifty coaches a day in the 1840s. By Talmage's time the railroad had eliminated most of the cross-country coach travel.

⁵³ Summers, *Story of Hungerford*, 156.

⁵⁴ Some accidents were apparently caused by improperly controlled animals. For example, it was illegal—and subject to a fine—to drive a cart horse without reins (*Marlborough Journal*, September 13, 1873, and August 14, 1875).

⁵⁵ *Berkshire Guide*, 4.

⁵⁶ A prospectus of the Bear Hotel, n.d., in the author's possession.

⁵⁷ *Berkshire Guide*, advertisements. James's mother could have purchased a new Wanzer Sewing Machine at the ironmonger's for upwards of £4 or a bicycle or a set of Canadian sleigh bells by special order from Moir, Hutchins, and Hickling, Queen Victoria Street, London.

⁵⁸ *Marlborough Journal*, January 3, 1874.

⁵⁹ *Marlborough Journal*, August 9, 1873.

⁶⁰ *Marlborough Times*, October 18, 1862.

⁶¹ *Berkshire Guide*, 19.

⁶² Barker, *Hungerford*, 11.

⁶³ See the description of events in *Marlborough Journal*, April 18, 1874.

⁶⁴ Barker, *Hungerford*, 11-12. See also Hungerford Borough Records, 12; *Berkshire Guide*, 19; and Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* 2:573.

⁶⁵ The poor and the laboring classes were excluded from many of the cultural events and activities described above. Most of the financial support for education by the British government, the Church of England, and other voluntary societies was intended to alleviate the plight of the poor, and to an extent it did. As noted above, poor-relief measures were instituted by the churches and various individuals in Hungerford and Ramsbury. One reason, other than natural feelings of charity, was the compelling number of the poor and the recurring problems of the laboring classes in a complex and changing economy. Many of the poor were transients and itinerant tramps, roaming the countryside and providing the source of much of the crime. *Marlborough Journal*, June 1874.

⁶⁶ See for example, "Co-operative Mormons and Gentile Trades," *Newbury Weekly News*, September 9; "Rebellion amongst the Mormons," *Newbury Weekly News*, October 14; and "The Salt Lake City," *Newbury Weekly News*, November 25, 1869.

⁶⁷ Taylor states:

Millennial Star, which by 1852 was being issued weekly, was filled with news of the Mission, reports of life in Utah, discussions of Mormon doctrine, as well as with detailed instructions. . . . To reassure [converts] about the character of the [emigration] journey, the *Millennial Star* printed abundant reports and letters from leaders of emigrant companies, or letters from ordinary emigrants to their relatives in Britain. To keep Zion firmly in their minds, the journal carried numerous reports and articles describing conditions in Utah, developments in

communications, proceedings of conferences, and the movements of Church leaders. Such articles commonly bore the title 'News from Home,' for it was an essential part of Mormon teaching that, for a convert his birthplace, his original home, in Europe was really an exile. (*Expectations Westward*, 25-26)

⁶⁸ Compare the childhood of his countryman George Reynolds, who was born twenty years James's senior in the west end of London. George developed an interest in Mormonism and began attending the Paddington Branch of the Church with the maid of a "lady lodger" living with his parents. When he refused to desist, his parents enrolled him in a school in Paris for a year at age twelve. Less than a year after he returned, he was baptized a Mormon in the Somers Town Branch. By the last weeks of his fifteenth year, he was an ordained priest and was preaching in the streets of London, still without his parents' approval. Grant R. Hardy, "George Reynolds: The Early Years" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972), 8-14.

⁶⁹ For a description of family life in an English factory town such as Preston in the 1830s and 1840s, see Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration," 48-53. Thorp, and the recent scholarship he cites, warn against the dangers of stereotyping; for example, life in all large Victorian towns was not the same, and "not all factory children were subjected to . . . petty tyrannies" (50). For a graphic and revealing selection of photographic views of London in the 1860s and 1870s, see John Betjeman, *Victorian and Edwardian London from Old Photographs* (New York: Viking Press, 1969). Also, compare and contrast Talmage's favorable boyhood circumstances with the following passage from Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, 127. Citing from the *Millennial Star*, Taylor states that complaints about their poverty among prospective Mormon emigrants increased in the 1860s:

Church members were now described as domestic servants, weavers, shoemakers, miners, farmworkers, seamen's wives or widows, while the effects of unemployment, strikes and lock-outs were mentioned. In the Norwich Conference, only half a dozen members in 1858 were earning more than £1 a week. Three years later in the District which comprised Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall, "hundreds will never be able to emigrate by their own means, for their circumstances are such that they can barely exist, to say nothing of living. . . . Their clothes are in pawn, their house-rent unpaid, and their provision-shop accounts increasing." (*Millennial Star* 20 [October 30, 1858]: 703; and *Millennial Star* 23 [March 2, 1861]: 141)

⁷⁰ In the Oxford Diocese alone in 1870, twelve training schools for masters and twelve for mistresses either belonged to or were connected with the society, and a substantial number of the young men training to be schoolmasters were given maintenance grants for at least part of the expense of their training and education. Also, between 1856 and 1869, the society granted some funds to every building application submitted, with 2,350 grants totaling £81,115 for the thirteen-year period. The above figures and statistical information are available

from the Church of England, National Society, in their Annual Report, vols. 1865-1878, available at the British Library, with the latter figures taken from vol. 1878, pp. 2-5, 54-55, 70-71.

⁷¹ Church of England, National Society's Capitation Class Register, 1863, British Library.

⁷² Church of England, Oxford Diocese, Board of Education, *List of Lessons . . . in . . . Religious Instruction for Schools . . .* (Oxford: James Parker, 1875), 6-7, British Library.

⁷³ Church of England, National Society, "Hymn for Schools," 1864, British Library.

⁷⁴ From "Hymn for Evening," in "Hymn for Schools."

⁷⁵ R. J. White, *The Horizon Concise History of England* (New York: American Heritage, 1971), 185-87.

⁷⁶ Dickens's descriptions of Victorian education can be applied to Talmage notwithstanding that Dickens's works abounded in poetic exaggeration, caricatures, and stereotypes in order to induce change in England.

⁷⁷ All of the Dickens quotes are from *Hard Times*, 12-20.

⁷⁸ Talmage Papers, box 9, folder 1.

⁷⁹ *Marlborough Journal*, February 17, 1876. See also Dickens's caricature of a royal inspector in *Hard Times*, 15.

⁸⁰ Talmage Papers, box 9, folder 1.

⁸¹ Talmage Papers, box 9, folder 1.

⁸² Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid is a fictional character of English author, poet, and clergyman, Charles Kingsley. In his book-length fairy tale, *The Water-Babies*, this great fairy and her sister, Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, "the former the ugliest and the latter the loveliest" (182), watched over the behavior and welfare of English children. Every Friday Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid called up and punished all those who had ill-used little children. The list was a long one and included parents and schoolmasters (204-25).

⁸³ Kingsley, *Water-Babies*, 19. Compare the ill-treatment of some children in the mills of large English towns two decades earlier. See, for example, passages from the autobiography of Thomas Wright Kirby quoted in Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration," 50-51. Kirby, who began working in a Norfolk silk mill at age seven recounted that

most of those who had charge of us younger Children were Ignorant and cruel to us and would whip us for the least little Mishap. . . . [One] tawl Muscular fellow by the name of Palmer . . . was always watching to give some poor boys a knock with his big hand. Then there were women . . . who were also very tyranical and would Smack us over the head and ears, with their hand or with a stick more because they were cross than for anything else. They [would] follow [us] through the noise and rattle of the machinery and say I'm just in the right temper for you to-day and you shall catch a whipping which we were Pretty sure was true and any being young children would begin crying and then they would whip us because we cried for nothing.

⁸⁴ For multiple references to Newhook and his wife, who was appointed "Infant Schoolmistress" in July 1874, see Hungerford Minute Book, 1874-77.

⁸⁵ According to his journal, it was in the Hungerford National School where he received “so many thrashings” (Journal 4:165). He did not specify if they occurred early or late, but one strongly suspects that they occurred later, under Newhook’s tutelage. However, it is also possible that he did not take a religion course during the years ten to twelve, because the Education Act of 1870 allowed parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction in all schools receiving public funds. The Hungerford National School did receive some public funds and was inspected regularly by the royal inspector. Hungerford Minute Book, July 7, 1862, August 3, 1863, September 5, 1864, October 3, 1866, and April 3, 1871. The thrashings suggest that he did take religion and disagreed with the teacher or that Newhook made a point of his religious differences by harassing him in nonreligious classes.

Newhook was not a one-dimensional stern schoolmaster, however. Evidence of other traits is found in the following newspaper report about “Mr. Newhook’s concert,” an annual event held in Hungerford’s Corn Exchange. The newspaper called it “the richest musical treat we annually get in Hungerford,” and it was presented to standing-room-only crowds. The glowing report included the following:

Mr. Newhook is the master of the National School and he has taken infinite pains to teach a number of the boys some of the best choruses from the operas. These with members of the parish Church, St. Saviour’s and Congregational Church Choirs form an orchestra of between 50 and 60 voices. . . . Never have we seen in Hungerford such a rush for places as on Thursday night. The Exchange was literally crammed, and numbers had to go away not able to squeeze in. (*Marlborough Times and Marlborough Journal*, January 10 and 17, 1874)

⁸⁶ The Education Act of 1870 was the result, in part, of the intense and at times bitter rivalry between the nonconformists and the churchmen, with the former demanding the right to an education without compulsory religion for the children of England. With the act, the nonconformists won a paper victory, but it was well into the twentieth century before all of the act’s provisions were made reality. The effect of the act on James was probably minimal, resulting in at best a more tolerant attitude toward non-Anglican children’s resistance to the proffered faith, since there was no competing board school (i.e., a school governed by a locally elected school board as the 1870 law made possible) in Hungerford for him to attend. John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973), 226.

⁸⁷ Typescript in Gilbert Family Biographical Materials, mss/SC 272, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Compare his more nearly contemporary journal entries:

July 21st 1873. At Hungerford, Berkshire, England was baptized by my father—‘Elder James Talmage’ into Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, and confirmed as such during the same month. . . . August, 1873. Was ordained by ‘Elder Charles Marchant,’ of Ramsbury branch - London Conference of L.D.S. Church, to the office of a Deacon. (Journal 1:260)

⁸⁸Journal 1:3. Compare the account of this incident in Earl T. Pardoe, *The Sons of Brigham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1969), 205–8: “Previous to his sixth birthday, Albert Talmage was hammering some spikes when one flew up and split his left eyeball.” Pardoe’s description is probably the story the family agreed to use for public consumption (or at least that Albert told anyone who asked, especially during his later years when Pardoe gathered the information for his book) so as to keep the matter private and protect James’s and Albert’s feelings.

⁸⁹Talmage, *Talmage Story*, 7.

⁹⁰An indication of how much James could have seen in a month is found in the Railway Time Tables from the *Newbury Weekly News* for 1869. For example, James and his grandfather could have left Hungerford on a Sunday morning at 9:20 and arrived in London at 3:25 P.M., with a required three-hour stopover in Reading. They could have caught the return train to Bristol at 4:45, arriving in Hungerford at 7:22 P.M., having had a day-long excursion.

⁹¹Journal 1:2.

⁹²Journal 1:3.