

The Historians Corner

Edited by James B. Allen

Whether "right" or "wrong" so far as facts are concerned, the feelings of the contemporary observer are an essential source of history. Whenever we can view events through the eyes of those who were there we come closer to experiencing the feelings that went into the making of history. This is why letters and other personal accounts are so important to our understanding of the broader picture. Feelings and attitudes lead to actions, and therefore become important ingredients in the mixture of materials from which we form our historical perspectives.

In this issue of the Historians Corner we present three personal views of four different aspects of Mormon history. The first is significant for it reveals a modern Jewish scholar's initial introduction to Mormon society, and his reaction to it. The second piece was prepared by a young Mormon scholar engaged in a biographical study of President Heber J. Grant. Impressed with the way his call to the apostleship overwhelmed this young Church leader, Ronald Walker has presented some of the intimate, personal letters that portray the feelings of both the new apostle and his closest friends. Going back another step in history, we also present a document recently discovered by a BYU religion teacher. It reveals Thomas L. Kane's first impression of the Mormon people as he found them camped on the plains of Iowa. This first contact was highly important to both Kane and the Mormons, for it was the beginning of a long and productive friendship between them.