

The Historians Corner

Edited by James B. Allen

Every time we look at a new diary, reminiscence, or other "eye-witness" account of something that happened in the past, not only do we learn something new but we also get a new perception. And this is why the continued study of history is so fascinating. We realize that no matter what our present perception is, new information and new insights into the perspectives of others results in continuing growth and change in our own understanding of the past.

The documents presented in this issue of "The Historians Corner" may provide such new perceptions for many. First, we present a most interesting reminiscence of a Shaker who had a confrontation with some of the earliest Mormon missionaries in Ohio. Though his comments are not necessarily favorable to the Church, the account is significant for it represents how others viewed the Mormons at the time. Particularly interesting are his comments on Sidney Rigdon, who had just recently been converted and who became one of the greatest preachers in the Church in the 1830s, and Leman Copley, who was formerly a Shaker, then a Mormon, and eventually went back to his old religion. The journal from which this is taken is in the Shaker Museum, Old Chatham, New York, but Dr. Lawrence Flake was given a copy of the entry to submit for publication.

The second item, which actually consists of two related documents, should prove of special interest to students of Utah history. The story of the 1858 "Move South" as Johnston's Army approached Salt Lake City is well known, and yet few diary accounts of that event have been made generally available to readers. The detailed reminiscence of a faithful Saint together with the very sketchy day-to-day diary entries of a bishop who was one of the organizers and leaders of the move provide two different perspectives that are most helpful in understanding both the attitudes and experiences of those who participated.