

Thomas Bullock as an Early Mormon Historian

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Thomas Bullock was intimately associated with leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for more than twenty-five years. He served twenty-one years in the Church Historian's Office and also clerked in many city, county, and territorial positions, acting as scribe, clerk, and personal secretary to Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, Willard Richards, and the Council of the Twelve. During this time he was privy to important events of late Nauvoo and early Utah Mormon history. His was a critical role not only in recording the history, but also in gathering and preserving historical documents. Bullock frequently referred to himself as a man who was "doing my duty,"¹ and he surely fulfilled in his life the revelatory injunction: "It is the duty of the Lord's clerk, whom he has appointed, to keep a history, and a general church record of all things that transpire in Zion" (D&C 85:1). This essay will focus on how well Thomas Bullock fulfilled the duties he was given, particularly as they relate to his contributions to Mormon historiography.

When Joseph Smith, Jr., was celebrating his eleventh birthday, across the ocean in Leek, Staffordshire, England, Thomas Bullock was born on 23 December 1816, the ninth child of Thomas Bullock and Mary Hall.² Very little is known about his early childhood. He attended school and was considered to be the second-best scholar in his class when he left school at age thirteen to become a clerk in the law office of John Cruso in 1830.³ Bullock worked there until 1838 when he was hired as an excise officer. In this capacity he inspected and rated articles liable to excise tax, sometimes calling himself "One of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria's Officers of Excise."⁴ He was small in stature and occasionally referred to as "little Tommy Bullock."⁵

Bullock married Henrietta Rushton, also of Leek, on 23 June 1838, after at least five years of courting.⁶ They were baptized into the LDS church three years later on 20 November 1841.⁷ Bullock

continued as an exciseman and labored as a lay missionary for the Church before departing for America on the ship *Yorkshire* in March 1843. En route to America, he prophesied that “the hull of this old vessel” would carry them safely to New Orleans. The vessel nearly capsized in a storm as the masts snapped in two, leaving nothing but the hull, but they completed the voyage, boarding the steamboat *Amaranth* at New Orleans and arriving at Nauvoo, Illinois, on 31 May 1843.⁸

In the late fall of the same year, Bullock was employed as a clerk to Joseph Smith. He served as a letter copyist, clerk of the April 1844 general conference, clerk of the steamboat *Maid of Iowa*, and clerk of the Nauvoo Masonic lodge. In Nauvoo he later labored as deputy city recorder, clerk to Church Historian Willard Richards, and clerk of the Council of Fifty, a position he held from 1846 to 1882.⁹ On 25 January 1846, Thomas Bullock married a second wife, Lucy Clayton, sister of William Clayton, another noted clerk, recorder, and secretary to Church leaders.¹⁰

As a trusted observer, Bullock was assigned by Brigham Young to remain and record the events of the last days in Nauvoo after the main body of Saints departed during the freezing exodus of February 1846. Bullock’s 1845-46 Nauvoo diary clearly depicts the dismal demise of the “City Beautiful.”¹¹ In the fall of 1846, after the remnants of Nauvoo had been driven to the west bank of the Mississippi River, it was Thomas Bullock’s pen that recorded in greatest detail the miracle of the quail and the westward migration of the “poor camp.”

When Bullock arrived at Winter Quarters, he continued his duties for Brigham Young and the rest of the Council of the Twelve. He was chosen as clerk of the vanguard company of pioneers that departed for the Great Salt Lake Valley in April 1847. In August of the same year, he continued as clerk for the company returning to Winter Quarters. The following spring he served as a clerk of the company headed by Brigham Young.

Bullock continued his labors in behalf of the Church and community in the Salt Lake Valley. He drew plats of the city for the land office, assisted in the establishment of the monetary system used in the valley, was the first proofreader for the *Deseret News*, served as recorder for the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, chief clerk of the Territorial House of Representatives, census taker, Salt Lake County recorder, inspector of liquors for the territory, clerk for Brigham Young’s exploration parties, and secretary of the Nauvoo Legion of Utah (rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel prior to his mission call to England in 1856). In addition, he wrote an *Emigrant’s Guide*, was president of the Twenty-Seventh Quorum

of Seventies, helped divide the valley into wards, was instrumental in copying and creating maps of the region, and continued clerking for Brigham Young and the Council of the Twelve. He also helped organize the first Utah library and was a member of the Deseret Theological Institute and home secretary of the Deseret Horticultural Society. He was frequently consulted on horticultural matters. He was also involved with the pioneer theater as a prompter, was an ardent reader, served on the Board of Regents of the University of Deseret, and was appointed by the board to examine schoolteachers.¹² From 1856 to 1858 he served as a missionary in his native land of England.

Bullock married a third wife, Betsy Prudence Howard, on 9 December 1852.¹³ He was the father of twenty-three children, though only thirteen lived to adulthood.¹⁴ After his mission he continued working in the historian's office until 1865 when he was assigned to work in the courts and county government in Summit County. He served as Summit Stake clerk, historian, and general recorder from 1879 to 1885. On 10 February 1885, Thomas Bullock passed away at his Coalville home without prolonged illness at the age of sixty-eight.¹⁵

Before examining Thomas Bullock's role as a Mormon historian, it would be well to briefly review American historiography from 1840 to 1860 when Bullock's main contributions were rendered. Then his contributions can be interpreted against the backdrop of this era.

The earliest attempts at historical writing in the New World were initiated by the Puritan religious leaders. A strong sense of dependence upon and acknowledgment of divine intervention were prevalent themes in the seventeenth century. By the late eighteenth century, European historical writers were being influenced more by the ideas of the Enlightenment; the advance of machines, particularly printing presses; and the beginnings of humanism. Early nineteenth-century American historians were fired with a patriotic zeal and a deep love for this land, yet many were also influenced by ideas from abroad. From about 1775 to 1830, some American historical writers were affected by the Germanic influence of historicism, the belief that "anything in the present must be understood primarily in terms of its historical development, the belief that the past makes and is the primary means of understanding the present."¹⁶ Another German influence was *Volkgeist*, the idea that "a distinct history . . . create[s] a distinct people."¹⁷ American historians such as Jared Sparks, Francis Parkman, Washington Irving, William H. Prescott, and George Bancroft combined these ideologies with a concern for the relatively short

time period of American history, which resulted in historical writings emphasizing stronger patriotic bonds and neglecting most historical writings outside of the New World.

Nevertheless, as feelings of nationalism swelled and as a sense of destiny grew, the pens of the patriotic historians were instrumental in forging a unique history of America. These historians valued common sense and maintained an awareness of divine providence in their writings, an approach that “never fully embraced Enlightenment skepticism.”¹⁸ Most of them viewed their work as a meaningful service for their contemporaries and for posterity as well. Historians of this era have since been referred to as “patricians” because patriotism was in part the purpose of their preservation of the past.

The people of the new nation seemed to thrive on discovering portions of the past. Historical books became best-sellers, newspapers frequently carried chronicles of yesteryear, and historical and genealogical societies grew and flourished, particularly after 1836, the year the ancient prophet Elijah visited the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple and restored the keys of “turning the hearts of the children to their fathers.”¹⁹ Antiquarianism, the collecting and studying of historical documents, rose dramatically.

American historical writers of the early nineteenth century were interested in making their histories read as smoothly as the novels of the great authors of the era, particularly emulating the likes of Sir Walter Scott. Like novelists, they emphasized character development. They were generally college educated, mature men with time and leisure, and money was not the major motivating factor in their historical writing.²⁰ Besides history, some of their reading interests were poetry, novels, and plays. History as an academic study was a fledgling field, and university-educated historians would not emerge in America until late in the century. While the earlier nineteenth-century historical writers espoused the virtues of “honesty, accuracy, and thoroughness,” they also practiced plagiarism and used literary license to alter or conjure up events to make the story flow.²¹ They tended to favor minutely developed scenes and long, flowing sentences. They not only corrected grammatical “errors,” but sometimes developed speeches or comments from fragments of phrases to portray the historical figure in what they thought the best way possible. As Callcott writes, “until about the time of the Civil War . . . people trusted that a careful editing not only made documents more interesting to the reader and fairer to the original author but also more accurate in recreating the past.”²² There was little perceived difference between an author and a compiler or editor.

When The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized on 6 April 1830, the Lord instructed the Saints that “there shall be a record kept among you” (D&C 21:1). This was more easily said than done, as enduring persecutions, moving to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, going on missions, building temples, providing for basic needs, and avoiding mobs were but a few of the numerous intrusions that deterred the work. In keeping with the practice of the time, Joseph Smith called various clerks who functioned as literary or historical editors. When John Whitmer was assigned to “write and keep a regular history” in March 1831, he was promised the Church history was to “be given him, inasmuch as he is faithful, by the Comforter” (D&C 47:1, 4).²³ Eight months later, Whitmer was told to “continue in writing and making a history of all the important things . . . writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining all things which shall be for the good of the church, and for the rising generations” (D&C 69:3, 8; see vv. 1-8). Similar counsel was rendered in November 1832, expanding the scope of the clerk’s “duty” to include keeping records of “apostates who apostatize after receiving their inheritances.” Church clerks would know what to record because it would again be given by “the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things” (D&C 85:2, 6; see vv. 1-6).

As the practice of baptism for the dead was commencing in Nauvoo, it was revealed, “let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms. . . . That in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven” (D&C 127:6-7; see also 128:3). To Joseph Smith the command to “keep a record” took on additional meaning after 1838, when he stated, “If I now had in my possession, every decision which had been had upon important items of doctrine and duties since the commencement of this work, I would not part with them for any sum of money.”²⁴ After his incarceration at Liberty Jail during the winter of 1838-39, Joseph Smith gave a greater emphasis to the injunction to “keep a history.” Previously his clerks had assisted in the translation of the Book of Mormon, the bringing forth of the Book of Commandments, and had kept numerous local Church records and personal papers in Kirtland and Missouri. In 1839 Joseph began dictating his personal history to clerk James Mulholland. He later testified, just before his death, as recorded by Bullock, one of his concerns about the history:

For the last three years I have a record of all my acts and proceedings, for I have kept several good, faithful, and efficient clerks in constant employ: they have accompanied me everywhere, and carefully kept my history, and they have written down what I have done, where I have been, and what I have said; therefore my enemies cannot charge

me with any day, time, or place, but what I have written testimony to prove my actions; and my enemies cannot prove anything against me.²⁵

It is characteristic of the historical style of the day that Bullock recorded this eighty-six-word quotation as a single sentence instead of dividing it into several sentences.²⁶

Several of Joseph's clerks apostatized or died in office, which resulted in problems of continuity. Calling Willard Richards to work on the history brought a man with a sense of purpose and direction who had an indefatigable drive and dedication to completing Joseph's history. Shortly after Richards began his work on the history, twenty-seven-year-old Thomas Bullock would assist him significantly.

Thomas Bullock arrived in Nauvoo in the summer of 1843, bringing with him not only his professional training as a law and customs clerk, but also his spiritual preparedness to sit at the feet of the leading men of the kingdom. He seemed to thrive on accurate accounts and had a penchant for precision, which perhaps had been acquired as a law clerk and exciseman. Before emigrating to America, Bullock had risen to the position of supervisor in his profession.

Within five months of his arrival in Nauvoo, Bullock was clerking for Joseph and Willard. The clerks involved in compiling the history of Joseph Smith took a very active role in collecting materials and contributing to the written history. Herein lies perhaps Thomas Bullock's most significant contribution to Mormon historical writing. Though he served only nine months as a scribe to Joseph Smith, he was frequently with the Prophet, and his records are some of the most valuable written before the martyrdom. Later, when the history was continued after Joseph's death, Church Historian Willard Richards and his successor, George A. Smith, relied heavily on Bullock's memory and notes.

Bullock's 1845 journal entries mention collecting, copying, and filing items for the history, sometimes spending the entire day and week working solely on the history.²⁷ On 15 March 1845 he wrote, "I have written fifty-six pages the last seven days—finished the year 1839." One week later he added, "I was writing history all day—finished 1840."²⁸ Ten of Willard Richards's journal entries from 22 February to 30 April 1845 simply say "History."²⁹ By 20 August 1845, the "manuscript history of the Church" was completed through 1842. Previous to Willard Richards's time as Church historian, a total of 157 manuscript pages had been written. By the time Bullock began clerking for Joseph, Richards had brought the total to 394 pages, and at the Prophet's death 655 pages.

By 4 February 1846, an additional 674 pages of the Church's history had been written. Richards and Bullock wrote over eight times as much material as previous clerks in a little over half the time.³⁰ Often they spent twelve or more hours a day in this writing marathon.

When the historian's office papers and books were packed on 4 February 1846, previous to the exodus, Bullock not only assisted in the packing process but indexed and inventoried the materials that were leaving with Richards. In May 1848 as Brigham Young's company left Winter Quarters for the Salt Lake Valley, Bullock drove the "Big Wagon" carrying the Church records. When the load proved to be too heavy, he helped cache some of the records that would later be brought by another company. As the records were unpacked in the Salt Lake Valley by Willard Richards, Bullock was again there to assist him. Bullock and Richards had so many responsibilities in the Salt Lake Valley that it was not until 1 December 1853 that Richards "wrote one line of History being sick at the time—and was never able to do any more."³¹

From 1854 to 1856, Church Historian George A. Smith, his chief clerk Bullock, and five other clerks compiled and wrote in the history. George A. Smith noted in a letter to Wilford Woodruff that he had "filled up all the reports of sermons by President Joseph Smith and others from minutes or sketches taken at the time in long hand by Dr. Richards, Wilford Woodruff, Thomas Bullock, William Clayton, Miss Eliza R. Snow &c." Furthermore, he indicated, "there were mostly only two or three words (about half written) to a sentence." From these accounts they produced "878 pages, averaging 700 words to a page, written in the large History Books."³² Although the final years of the manuscript are in the handwriting of clerks Robert Campbell, Jonathan Grimshaw, and Leo Hawkins, George A. Smith made clear the vital role Bullock played in this compilation:

Thomas Bullock acted with me as chief clerk, being a clerk in the history office previous to, and at the time of Prest. Smith's death, and has continued in it ever since. His pen wrote the principal part of the rough manuscript from my dictation, and his acquaintance with all the papers was of great assistance to me.³³

The authorship of Joseph's history, later printed as *The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, has come under fire from both Mormons and non-Mormons. Some argue that it is "defensive" history that only portrays the Mormon perspective. However, it should be remembered that this history was written immediately after the Missouri persecutions and that one of its functions was to "disabuse the public mind, and put all

inquirers after truth in possession of the facts, as they have transpired" because "evil-disposed and designing persons" had persecuted Church members, and authors had written "against its character as a Church" (JS—H 1:1).

Another problem developed when B. H. Roberts inserted the phrase "History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet: By Himself" as part of the title page of the *History of the Church*. As we have seen, the history was not written solely by Joseph Smith but rather was compiled according to historical methods commonly practiced in the early nineteenth century: that is, historical editors, such as Willard Richards, George A. Smith, and Wilford Woodruff assembled the "History of Joseph Smith." Joseph Smith supervised the writing and compiling to some extent and explained his method to Howard Coray, a clerk employed to work on the history in 1840. Joseph was to provide all the resource material, and "our business, was not only to combine, and arrange in chronological order, but to spread out or amplify not a little, in as good historical style as may be."³⁴ At the time of the Prophet's death, the history had only been compiled to 5 August 1838. It was ten years after Joseph's death before work on the history resumed. Therefore, the compilers were writing of events that had transpired up to sixteen years earlier. Modern researchers have ferreted out the sources of much of the material in the history, and little, other than the documents cited in the history, can be said to be from the Prophet Joseph himself. A more accurate, personal view of Joseph Smith unfolds in Dean C. Jessee's *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*.

Another method of compilation used by the Prophet during the period just before the Martyrdom involved his dictating to Willard Richards what to write, and then allowing Richards to expand according to his literary skill and style. In Carthage Jail, just before his death, Joseph instructed Richards how to assemble the remaining history, and Richards and Bullock later worked on it according to his instructions. Following Richards's death, George A. Smith and Bullock were invited to read the rough manuscript to Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and others of the Twelve, sometimes from early in the morning until late at night, seeking their suggestions, comments, and approval.³⁵

In these and other ways, the "History of Joseph Smith" was fashioned according to the style of the era. Yet its shapers desired that it do more than merely chronicle the life of the Prophet. Willard Richards and Wilford Woodruff were ever impatient that more was not being done on it. At Winter Quarters in 1846, Wilford Woodruff said that "he felt a great interest in this history, being a book of Books, and the one he should have to

be judged out of." Orson Pratt persuaded his brethren of the Twelve "that a sufficient per centage be levied upon the property to support the historian for his services."³⁶ Bullock recalled Willard Richards having said, "A man must have his mind free, who writes a history that is to last for time and thro' all Eternity, and not bothered with other cares." Wilford Woodruff further stated, "It is the duty of the H[igh] C[ouncil] to let the Dr. have a box to put the papers in, to find wood, beef, and etc. . . . I rejoice that we have a ready writer. Let the Dr. go to work and save the Church History."³⁷ The early shapers and compilers of the history shared with their contemporaries a view of historians as humanitarians rendering a tremendous service to mankind. However, unlike many of the noted historians of the day, the Mormon historical compilers were not independently wealthy and had more than the historical frontier to pioneer.

Thomas Bullock in some ways contributed as much as Willard Richards or George A. Smith to the "History of Joseph Smith." Though he was not the immediate author of the manuscript, his journals and memory were extensively drawn on. He wrote the final or rough draft of the manuscript for each year from 1839 to 1844. His participation in the history spanned from nearly the beginning of the renewed emphasis on the work in 1843 until it was completed in 1856, something neither Richards or Smith could claim. In this clerking capacity it appears that Thomas Bullock not only fulfilled his duty, but in a way more significant than has hitherto been revealed.³⁸

Thomas Bullock's contributions as a clerk were not limited to his work on the "History." By January 1844, it had become apparent to Captain Dan Jones, half owner with Joseph Smith of the steamboat *Maid of Iowa*, that the clerk of the little steamer, a man named Derby, was gambling away funds.³⁹ Shortly after this time, Thomas Bullock's name was mentioned in connection with the steamship, and on 13 May 1844 Joseph instructed him "to take charge of the books of the *Maid of Iowa* and go on board as clerk."⁴⁰ The position of clerk on the *Maid* was important because most of the crew were members of the Church and portions of their salaries were deducted as tithing for the temple. With potential tithing funds being gambled away, Joseph's intent may have been to get Bullock on board just long enough to straighten out the clerking problems. Many of the steamboats on the Mississippi were used for electioneering. Since Joseph was running for president of the United States, he might have wanted Bullock not only to clear up the financial records, but also to clerk for him in not only prophetic but also presidential pursuits.

Bullock's clerking responsibilities during Joseph Smith's presidential campaign of 1844 expanded to include being a copyist of the political pamphlets *Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*, *The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo*, and *Pacific Innuendo*.⁴¹ Bullock's handwriting appears in some of the important last letters sent by Joseph to Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois, presidential candidate John C. Calhoun, and various Church leaders such as John Smith, Charles C. Rich, and Wilson Law.⁴²

In compliance with the eighty-fifth section of the Doctrine and Covenants regarding a clerk's duty toward apostates, Bullock served as secretary for the court martial of Major General Wilson Law and detailed anti-Mormon activity in the Nauvoo area.⁴³ He recorded Joseph's final three sermons in Nauvoo, and eleven days before the Prophet's death, Bullock was transferred into his personal office.

Bullock's single most significant contribution while clerking for Joseph Smith was recording the King Follett Funeral Discourse delivered on Sunday, 7 April 1844, at the general conference of the Church held in Nauvoo. Disaffected Church members had hoped on this Sunday to proclaim Joseph a fallen prophet. In this swirl of negative sentiment, Joseph delivered one of his most glorious theological gems. Four of the most capable penmen in Nauvoo, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, William Clayton, and Thomas Bullock, recorded the sermon. Of these, as Donald Q. Cannon has noted, Bullock's "official conference minutes were by far the most nearly complete."⁴⁴ According to Howard Searle's count, Bullock wrote 3,990 words, Clayton 2,596, Wilford Woodruff 2,486, Joseph Smith's diary contains 1,443, the *Times and Seasons* account 4,760, and the *History of the Church* account 6,636.⁴⁵

The first published version of this talk, which appeared in the *Times and Seasons* in September 1844, was made by combining Bullock's and Clayton's notes only. In 1855 Jonathan Grimshaw, a clerk in the historian's office, published a version of the discourse using elements from all four scribes. In a 1978 article, Stan Larson differed with Grimshaw's method and used the following procedure to prepare a new amalgamation:

The account of Thomas Bullock was used as the basic running text. William Clayton's version was then superimposed, adding a number of refinements such as extra clauses and clearer development of ideas. Afterwards, the parts recorded by Willard Richards were compared with what already had been developed; generally the Richards account merely confirmed various parts, though it added a number of new elements also. Finally the Wilford Woodruff account

was considered, and its new material was added, with the understanding that his material may not be as likely to represent the words actually spoken by Joseph Smith, though the basic meaning would likely be preserved.⁴⁶

Larson indicated he chose the Bullock account because it was the longest "and there are indications that it was written down at the very time that Joseph Smith was speaking."⁴⁷ Thomas Bullock usually sat at a desk near the stand when the brethren spoke. Of the 1844 general conference, Bullock said, "These were the greatest, best, and most glorious five days that ever were."⁴⁸

Bullock had studied a little of Pitman's phonography but never fully developed the skills and techniques employed by it. He did however devise a modified version of shorthand that allowed him to record, as Ronald K. Esplin has noted, "precise phrases" when sermons were delivered.⁴⁹ Without Bullock, a knowledge of Joseph Smith's final public discourses, particularly the King Follett Discourse, could still be ascertained. However, with his recorded accounts the understanding of Joseph's declarations is greatly expanded and deepened.

Another important dimension of Thomas Bullock's historical work is found in the journals and diaries he kept while he served in clerking capacities for the Church or territory of Utah. As the keeper of so many various diaries and journals, Bullock sometimes had difficulty keeping a separation of Church and state and family. Hence his personal journals may read like a defense of the Church; some of his Church entries are highly personal; and his territorial papers occasionally combine public, Church, and personal observations. This was not uncommon for the various scribes who were engaged in clerking at many levels. Perhaps it says something about Bullock as a man that he still kept personal records while engaged in full-time writing for the Church and territory.

It also tells us how corporate his approach was to the Mormon community. Bullock was intimately involved with the inner circle of ecclesiastical, city, and territorial leaders from 1843 to 1865. For the sake of illustration we will examine his 1845-46 Nauvoo diary and his 1846-48 plains journals.

As we have noted, Bullock and his family were not among the main body of Saints departing from Nauvoo in February 1846 because he was left behind to record the fateful end of an era on the Mississippi. While other skilled clerks were writing for Brigham Young in the westward migration, Bullock labored in Nauvoo "for more than seven months, without receiving one cent for pay."⁵⁰ By July 1846, I am had written to Bullock requesting him to join them

at Winter Quarters "as we frequently need more writers,"⁵¹ but Bullock and his family were sick with ague and barely able to tend to their basic needs. He expressed frustration that he could not record more, yet his accounts of the last months in Nauvoo are unparalleled.⁵²

Bullock's 1845-46 Nauvoo diary gives a vivid picture of the desolation of the once noble city, the mob persecution, the attacks on the temple, and the loneliness of the Mormons who had been left behind. Since Bullock had been in the inner circle of leadership in Nauvoo, the mobbers came looking for him in September 1846. On one occasion he and other sick Saints were "carried into the tall weeds and woods, while all who could, hid themselves." With nightfall Bullock and his family returned to the shelter of George Wardle's home. The next morning about thirty men, "armed with guns and bayonets fixed, pistols in belt, the captain with a sword in his hand, and the stripes and stars flying about," approached Wardle's home. Bullock wrote that he "was raised from my bed, led out of doors, supported by my sister-in-law and the rail fence":

The captain then stepped out to within four feet of me, pointing his sword at my throat, while four others presented their guns with their bayonets within two feet of my breast, when the captain told me, "If you are not off from here in twenty minutes, my orders are to shoot you." I replied, "Shoot away, for you will only send me to heaven a few hours quicker, for you may see I am not for this world many hours longer." The captain then told me, "If you will renounce Mormonism you may stay here, and we will protect you." I replied, "This is not my house, yonder is my house (pointing to it) which I built and paid for, with the gold that I had earned in England. I never committed the least crime in Illinois, but I am a Mormon, and, if I live, shall follow the Twelve."⁵³

When Bullock finally left Nauvoo, he must have made a pathetic picture. As small as he was, his sickness had reduced him still further, and his head had been shorn as the recommended cure for ague. But the records he brought with him, by contrast, were meticulous and of incalculable value.

As a plains-crossing diarist, Thomas Bullock detailed the accounts of four major migrations from 1846 to 1848. The trained eye of an exciseman who possessed a keen wit illuminates the dark and dreary as well as the joyous and tender moments. In the 1847 vanguard journey to and from Salt Lake Valley and the 1848 company headed by Brigham Young, Bullock's handwriting appears on nearly every letter signed by Brigham Young and Willard Richards. Bullock kept the minutes of presiding priesthood inner-circle meetings and conscientiously took census of each of the camps. Many of the pioneer-trail letters left for following camps

were written by Bullock, and during July 1848 he was writing epistles in the name of the President of the Church and the Twelve Apostles.⁵⁴

Other leading diarists on the trek benefited from Bullock's journal-keeping assignment. William Clayton wrote that he had "the privilege of copying from Brother Bullock's journal."⁵⁵ Clayton in turn allowed Howard Egan to copy from his journal in trade for doing Clayton's laundry.⁵⁶

Bullock's camp journals consist of brief phrasing, usually condensed statements giving a sense of urgency to his work. He recognized the historic impact of the treks and wanted his journals to reflect his best efforts. Though what he wrote is insightful and comparable to the work of other leading diarists, his 1847 vanguard journal is not what it could have been, probably because he had been assigned to drive a team of oxen and tend to the cattle. All of the men in the company had specific responsibilities such as taking their turns at guard duty, but most of the men could perform their assigned duties during the day and have some time to themselves in the evenings. Bullock not only had to tend the cattle, but clerked for Brigham Young and Willard Richards, and kept the camp journal and minutes of all the meetings of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency. In this light, his two camp journals, each indexed in the back, seem to be a remarkable achievement.

One of the most evident characteristics of Bullock's writing is his sense of humor. On one occasion, after a group of hunters returned with their bounty, Bullock boasted of his own hunting skill by stating that he had killed a mosquito. Another time he wrote of Porter Rockwell and three others who left camp searching for two horses stolen by a band of Pawnees. After finding the trail and traveling almost the entire distance the camp traveled that day, Rockwell got off his horse and leveled his pistol at what he thought was a wolf, "which brought up the resurrection of 15 Pawnee Indians."⁵⁷ When the company was returning to Winter Quarters in the fall of 1847, Bullock noted the cries of the wolves more than in the spring: "At night we have a Grand Solo, Quartet and Chorus from the Throats of a very musical band of Wolves."⁵⁸ His wit very naturally blends into the tapestry of history he wove.

Bullock's diaries and journals show evidence of an honest man who wrote what he felt. He did not withhold material as one might do if he thought some future descendant would one day be reading the diary. Along with many of the pioneers, Bullock recognized the historic impact of their pioneering experience. In some of the official diaries he kept for the Church, he directed future scribes to other minutes by himself or others that would be

useful in the compilation of Church history. He specifically cited William Clayton as a key writer.⁵⁹ In allowing Clayton to copy from his journals, Bullock was working in the tradition of nineteenth-century historical writers because “historians usually felt flattered rather than insulted when their words were used by another” to compile a better history.⁶⁰

Bullock’s polished penmanship was used by the Church and the territory of Utah when petitions, certificates, or official papers were needed. Much of the correspondence to Washington, D.C., during the Winter Quarters era and the early settlement of Salt Lake City are in his handwriting, including the 1849 petition for territorial status and the Constitution of the state of Deseret.⁶¹ Bullock’s participation in writing the Constitution of the state of Deseret further defines him as a man who fulfilled his “duty,” for as Peter Crawley has pointed out there apparently never was a constitutional convention.⁶² Nevertheless, detailed minutes in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock accompanied the Constitution to Washington, D.C. Bullock’s involvement in this episode should not mar or stain the rest of his written material, for he accurately wrote what he saw transpiring. In this case, the desire of the Saints “to be governed by their own”⁶³ spawned hasty action, directed by the First Presidency, in which all of the leading men of Deseret directly or indirectly participated.

Thomas Bullock’s written volumes for the Church, the city of Nauvoo, and the territory of Utah are unnumbered. His handwriting appears in the Nauvoo Legion minutes, the Nauvoo municipal court records, Nauvoo city council proceedings, Joseph Smith’s diary, letters, and sermons, *Maid of Iowa* steamboat records, pamphlets, patriarchal blessings, general conference minutes, personal journals kept for the Church, temple proceedings, presidential pamphlets, maps, Church court records, and the manuscript history of the Church.⁶⁴ In addition, he helped preserve and transport many valuable documents from the early history of the Church.

A valuable resource for further understanding Thomas Bullock’s historical contributions are the numerous letters he wrote to his first wife, Henrietta. He was very much in love with her and wrote lengthy letters.⁶⁵ Most of what is known about his preparatory development as a clerk and religious-seeking man in England comes from these sources, and in addition these letters help to clarify several important historical issues. Bullock’s letters from Nauvoo to Willard Richards in Winter Quarters superbly blend his wit and witness. In his letters to the *Millennial Star*, Bullock refutes the false allegations made by Judge Drummond. His 1857 letters as

a missionary in England relate the British reaction to Johnston's Army:

The Newspaper Editors in London are either very ignorant of Geography west of the Mississippi, or they believe and publish lies rather than truth; for instance, the past fortnight. One day they publish Brigham Young arrested by Col. Sumner and on his way to Washington guarded by troops. in a day or two they publish he is gone on a secret tour to hide away from the rebellious Mormons. in a day or two after that we hear he is in Russian America establishing a new colony. Next he is at the head of the Utah troops within a 100 miles of Omaha City come to fight the U.S. Troops. in a day or two after we learn he is in Council with Col. Van Vleet in the Social Hall, threatening to burn every house in the Valley and go into the Mountains leaving all a desolate waste. and today I learn that a large company of Mormons dressed as Indians, have killed 500 U.S. Soldiers somewhere in Minnesota. such conflicting statements appear, and they are all believed to be true. no apology for the previous lies, no qualification for the rapid change of events. no telling how time and distance is annihilated or how he has the power to be in several places hundreds, yea thousands of miles apart at one time.⁶⁶

After Bullock returned from his mission, he was gradually eased from the inner circle of power. He had a home in Summit County, and in 1862 Brigham Young began giving him assignments there. In 1865 he was called to work in the probate courts and as county clerk. Perhaps Bullock was too popular in the eyes of Governor Cummings, who was impressed with how well the records of the territory had been kept, and appointed Bullock as clerk of the territory. Maybe Brigham wanted to remove the old regime of clerks either because they were getting too old or too attached to the office.⁶⁷

In any event, Bullock's clerking days were not yet over. His final years in Summit County reveal an interesting development in his handwriting. His once minuscule and meticulous penmanship gave way to larger and somewhat less legible print, surely a sign of either eye trouble or a less sure hand due to his age. Nevertheless, he still rendered a fine service to the stake and the county. When the stake leaders considered whether he should be released as stake historian, they concluded that even in his advancing age no one else was as qualified to record the history of the stake. They knew, as few people today know, that Thomas Bullock was instrumental in forging and shaping the history of the Church.

NOTES

¹Thomas Bullock to Henrietta Rushton Bullock, 30 July 1857, Thomas Bullock Collection, Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). This collection includes personal papers, letters, appointments, journals, documents, and microfilm copies of original documents on file in the LDS Church Archives.

²Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1901-36), 2:599-60, 4:695.

³James Turner letter of recommendation, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁴Thomas Bullock to Henrietta Rushton Bullock, microfilm of letters for 1839, Thomas Bullock and Henrietta Rushton Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁵This term is used in a letter to the editor of the Salt Lake *Daily Herald*, 12 February 1885, on the occasion of Bullock's death. Bullock mentioned in his journal of 27 June 1848 Heber C. Kimball's calling him "little Tommy." Howard Clair Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography: Writing the History of the Mormons, 1830-1858" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1979), 96, gives Bullock's weight as 116 pounds. The coat Bullock wore crossing the plains in 1847 is on display in the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Museum in Salt Lake City. It appears that it would fit a slight man, approximately 5'2" to 5'6" in height, weighing about 110-40 pounds.

⁶Thomas Bullock to Henrietta Rushton Bullock, 12 January 1856, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁷C. Ward Despain, "Thomas Bullock: Early Mormon Pioneer" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1956), 9. Before his baptism, Bullock was in the Anglican church and referred to himself as a High Churchman (see *Millennial Star* 14 [3 July 1852]: 299-300). For further information about his spiritual development see Thomas Bullock to Henrietta Rushton Bullock, Thomas Bullock and Henrietta Rushton Bullock Collections, LDS Church Archives.

⁸*History of the Church* 5:380, 415.

⁹D. Michael Quinn, "Joseph Smith III's 1844 Blessing and the Mormons of Utah," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Summer 1982): 69-70. For a more complete study on the Council of Fifty and its individual members, see D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Winter 1980): 163-97.

¹⁰Kate B. Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1958-77), 8:287-89.

¹¹In December of 1987 Brigham Young University acquired this journal. See Thomas Bullock, *Journal*, 1845-46, Thomas Bullock Collection, Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo (hereafter cited as Lee Library).

¹²Most of these appointments can be found in the Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives. See also Despain, "Thomas Bullock," 61-72, 91-98. Bullock also wrote poetry and particularly enjoyed reading novels. See his 1839 letters to Henrietta Bullock, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

¹³Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage* 8:289-94.

¹⁴Family genealogical files in the possession of the author.

¹⁵*Salt Lake Daily Herald*, 12 February 1885, 8.

¹⁶George H. Callcott, *History in the United States, 1800-1860: Its Practice and Purpose* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 7. See also Michael Kraus and Davis D. Joyce, *The Writing of American History*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); and David D. Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: America, 1607-1884* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). For an excellent bibliographic list and insightful article, see David J. Whittaker, "Historians and the Mormon Experience: A Sesquicentennial Perspective," *Sidney B. Sperry Symposium Proceedings*, 26 January 1980, Brigham Young University (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 293-327.

¹⁷Callcott, *History in the United States*, 8.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁹See Mal. 4:5-6 for the prophecy, and D&C 110:13-16 for the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Also see Callcott, *History in the United States*, 19-53, for a thorough description of the early nineteenth-century historian. Callcott demonstrates that genealogical and historical societies did indeed grow after 1836. The first historical society in America was the Massachusetts Historical Society founded in 1791. By 1800 there were five such societies. In the 1830s there were forty-five societies. By the 1850s over 111 historical societies were established in the United States, and now the number of historical and genealogical societies is in the thousands.

²⁰Callcott, *History in the United States*, 47.

²¹*Ibid.*, 123-38. The classic example of historical editors making up speeches is found in the works of George Washington compiled by Jared Sparks (see Whittaker, "Historians and the Mormon Experience," 303).

²²*Ibid.*, 134; see also 129-34.

²³Whitmer's history was not published until the twentieth century. See John Whitmer, *An Early Latter Day Saint History: The Book of John Whitmer Kept by Commandment*, ed. F. Mark McKiernan and Roger D. Launius (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1980); and Whittaker, "Historians and the Mormon Experience," 318 n. 18.

²⁴*History of the Church* 2:198-99.

²⁵Ibid. 6:409.

²⁶Many of Thomas Bullock's sentences run from fifty to a hundred words. Sometimes he wrote nearly half a page before ending with a period.

²⁷Bullock, Journal, 15 March 1845, LDS Church Archives. See also Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 466-69.

²⁸Bullock, Journal, 22 March 1845, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

²⁹Willard Richards, Journal, 22 February-30 April 1845, LDS Church Archives. Richards's and Bullock's relationship was so intimate that when the law of adoption was revealed, Bullock and his family were sealed to Willard. For further information concerning the law of adoption, see Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830-1900," *BYU Studies* 14 (Spring 1974): 291-314.

³⁰Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," 468. By nineteenth-century standards, Bullock's spelling, vocabulary, and penmanship were superb. If he had a fault in his writing, it was in the punctuation and capitalization of hastily penned items. Finished copies, certificates, or final drafts of reworked shorthand notes were elegant.

³¹Ibid., 470.

³²George A. Smith to Wilford Woodruff, 21 April 1856, Historian's Office Letter Book, 1 (16 September 1854-5 December 1861), LDS Church Archives. Smith described the process of compilation in the following terms: "The greatest care has been taken to convey the ideas in the prophet's style as near as possible; and in no case has the sentiment been varied that I know of; as I heard the most of his discourses myself, was on the most intimate terms with him, have retained a most vivid recollection of his teachings, and was well acquainted with his principles and motives. . . . The plan of compiling the history of Joseph Smith from the Journals kept by his clerks, Willard Richards, William Clayton, Wilford Woodruff, and Thomas Bullock, was commenced by himself, extracting items of necessary information in regard to general and particular movements from the Times and Seasons, Millennial Star, Wasp, Neighbor, and other publications, extracts from city councils, Municipal courts, and Mayor's dockets and Legion Records, which were all kept under his direction; also the movements of the Church as found in Conference Minutes and High Council records, and the records of the several quorums. Together with letters and copies preserved and compiled them under date of transaction, according to the above plan which he while in prison just previous to his murder requested Elder Willard Richards to continue. . . . A large amount of testimony has also been written from the verbal statements of individuals, which was afterwards embodied in the manuscript of the History; also affidavits taken for the same purpose."

³³Ibid.

³⁴Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), xiv.

³⁵Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," 473.

³⁶Bullock, Journal, 17 December 1846, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

³⁷Richards, Journal, 17 December 1846, Willard Richards Collection, LDS Church Archives.

³⁸Bullock's contribution to the "Manuscript History" of the Church spans almost the last three hundred pages of volume 3 and most of volumes 4 through 7 in the currently published seven-volume set. Of the first 2,407 manuscript pages, Bullock wrote 2,013. George A. Smith did labor for approximately seventy days in Nauvoo with Willard Richards, so he was somewhat acquainted with Richards's system for writing the history.

³⁹Donald L. Enders, "The Steamboat *Maid of Iowa*: Mormon Mistress of the Mississippi," *BYU Studies* 19 (Spring 1979): 321-35.

⁴⁰*History of the Church* 6:377.

⁴¹Joseph Smith Presidential Pamphlets, 1844 papers, particularly 7 February 1844, reel 4 of F312, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁴²Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 386-87, 507-9, 568-70, 589, 689, 711. See also *History of the Church* 6:523-24.

⁴³Despain, "Thomas Bullock," 14-16, 19-22; *History of the Church* 6:362, 494.

⁴⁴Donald Q. Cannon, "The King Follett Discourse: Joseph Smith's Greatest Sermon in Historical Perspective," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 179-92. See also Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography," 277.

⁴⁵Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography," 277.

⁴⁶Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 193-208. See also Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 209-25.

⁴⁷Larson, "King Follett Discourse," 193.

⁴⁸Bullock, Journal, 7 April 1844, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁴⁹Ronald K. Esplin, in a personal conversation with the author in March 1987, made these comments when comparing the notes of Bullock as secretary of the Twelve from 1846-56, and the printed works of George D. Watt in the *Journal of Discourses*. Esplin said the flavor and color of the speakers were found in Bullock's records. He called Watt's wording "polished phrases" and Bullock's "precise phrases." George D. Watt was also a British convert who introduced phonography to the Church. He was president of the Phonographic Society of Nauvoo and also an adopted son of Willard Richards. For more information on Watt and phonography, see Ronald G. Watt, "Sailing 'The Old Ship Zion': The Life of George D. Watt," *BYU Studies* 18 (Fall 1977): 48-65.

⁵⁰Bullock, Journal, 25 September 1846, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁵¹Journal History, 7 July 1846, 6.

⁵²Bullock, Journal, 1845-46, Thomas Bullock Collection, Lee Library.

⁵³*Millennial Star* 10 (15 January 1848): 28.

⁵⁴Bullock, Journal, 16 July 1848, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁵⁵William Clayton, *William Clayton's Journal* (Salt Lake City: Clayton Family Association, 1921), 114.

⁵⁶Ibid., 176, 343 (23 May and 10 August 1847). It is evident in the Journal History that the history for the 1846-48 treks was compiled after 1915, when Egan's journal was printed, but before 1921, when Clayton's was typeset. Egan was quoted every day, Clayton hardly ever, and Bullock's official records were used to some extent. It appears that Egan copied from Clayton for the duration of the vanguard trek.

⁵⁷Bullock, Journal, 27 April 1847, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁵⁸Ibid., 5, 9 October 1847.

⁵⁹Ibid., 23 April 1847.

⁶⁰Callcott, *History in the United States*, 136.

⁶¹Bullock, Journal, 1 May 1849, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁶²Peter Crawley, "The Constitution of the State of Deseret," *BYU Studies* 29 (Fall 1989): 7-22.

⁶³Ibid., 20; see also 9, 19.

⁶⁴Thomas Bullock's handwritten materials are found not only in collections pertaining to his various clerical assignments, but also in the following personal collections in the LDS Church Archives: Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Willard Richards, Thomas Bullock, and Henrietta Rushton Bullock.

⁶⁵See the letters in the Henrietta Rushton Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives. Bullock wrote so small a hand that often a single page of his handwritten material requires one or two single-space typewritten pages. Often in his letters he would squeeze notes above his salutation or add lengthy postscripts when he had room left on the paper.

⁶⁶Thomas Bullock to Henrietta Rushton Bullock, 25 November 1857, Thomas Bullock Collection, LDS Church Archives. Most of Bullock's letters to Henrietta during 1857-58 can be found in the Henrietta Rushton Bullock Collection.

⁶⁷Searle claims that Bullock was released in 1865 because of illness (see Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography," 101). Wilford Woodruff suggested that Bullock was released because Joseph Young complained to his father, Brigham Young, that Bullock was getting too possessive of the materials in the historian's office, and Brigham thought Bullock would take items from the office that were not his. Woodruff felt Bullock was a man of integrity (see Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 26 March 1862, 22 January 1865, Wilford Woodruff Collection, LDS Church Archives).