

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF  
MORMON STUDIES

Volume 2

Spring 2009

## PUBLICATION DETAILS

### EDITOR

David M. Morris

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Zachary R. Jones

Kim B. Östman

The *International Journal of Mormon Studies* is a European based internationally focused, peer-reviewed online and printed scholarly journal, which is committed to the promotion of interdisciplinary scholarship by publishing articles and reviews of current work in the field of Mormon studies. With high quality international contributors, the journal explores Mormon studies and its related subjects. In addition, *IJMS* provides those who submit manuscripts for publication with useful, timely feedback by making the review process constructive. To submit a manuscript or review, including book reviews please email them for consideration in the first instance to [submissions@ijmsonline.org](mailto:submissions@ijmsonline.org).

*International Journal of Mormon Studies* (Print) ISSN 1757-5532

*International Journal of Mormon Studies* (Online) ISSN 1757-5540

Published in the United Kingdom.

©2009 *International Journal of Mormon Studies*

All rights reserved.

<http://www.ijmsonline.org>

ENLARGING THE MEMORY OF MORMONISM: HISTORIAN  
ANDREW JENSON'S TALES FROM THE WORLD TOUR, 1895–1897

Reid L. Neilson

On March 26, 1895, Danish-American historian Andrew Jenson filled out a U.S. Department of State passport application in the presence of his wife, Emma. He was hopeful that the presiding First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as Mormon or LDS Church) would approve his petition to personally visit all non-North American Church missions and local units to gather historical data. Jenson's passport form provides twenty-first century observers with the basic biographical details of his life. He was born on December 11, 1850 in Torslev, Denmark. After converting to Mormonism as a young boy with his parents, Jenson and his family immigrated to Utah in 1866. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1873. Moreover, because photographs were not attached to nineteenth-century American passports, Jenson provided the required personal physical description, which reads as follows. Age-forty-four-years old; stature-five feet, seven inches; forehead-regular; eyes-hazel, sometimes gray; nose-aquiline (hooked); mouth-ordinary; chin-rounded; hair-light brown; complexion-fair; and face-oval. To the question, When do you intend to return to the United States? Jenson wrote in two or three years hence.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of what

---

<sup>1</sup> "Andrew Jenson, 1895," in U.S. Passport Applications, 1795–1925 [online database]. (Provo, UT: Generations Network, 2007). Important sources on Jenson's life and labors as a historian of Mormonism include Andrew Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938); Louis Reinwand, "Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Historian," *BYU Studies*, vol. 14 (1973/1974), 29–46; Keith W. Perkins, "Andrew Jenson: Zealous Chronologist" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974); and Davis Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington, *Mormons and their Historians* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 41–55.

Emma may have thought of her husband's pending departure on such a lengthy journey, Jenson was eager to go!

Weeks later Jenson received word that the Church leadership had authorized his global<sup>2</sup> fact-finding mission. The intrepid Dane departed from Salt Lake City on May 11, 1895, and did not return to the "City of the Saints" until June 4, 1897. Over the course of his twenty-five month solo circumnavigation of the world, Jenson passed through the following islands, nations, and lands (in chronological order): the Hawaiian Islands, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, New Zealand, Cook's Islands, Society Islands, Tuamotu Islands, Australia, Ceylon, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Italy, France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Prussia, Hannover, Saxony, Bavaria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. He traveled 53,820 miles by a variety of steamships and small boats on water; his land conveyances included railroads, carriages and other animal-drawn vehicles, jinrikishas pulled by humans, horseback, donkeys, and camels.<sup>3</sup> Jenson's global tour was an unprecedented adventure in LDS history. In fact no member of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve Apostles had ever visited the isles of the Pacific (with the exception of Hawaii) or the continents of Asia and Australia up to this juncture. As the South African Mission was then closed (1865-1903) and the Japan Mission not yet opened (1901-1924), Jenson became the first Latter-day Saint to visit all of the existing non-North American LDS missions, since the Mormon evangelization of the Pacific basin frontier commenced in the 1840s.

My purpose in this article is not to detail Jenson's travels abroad (my forthcoming documentary history chronicles the entire

---

<sup>2</sup> I consciously use the term global rather than international when referring to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints around the world. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) defines global as "of, relating to, or involving the entire world," and international as "of, relating to, or affecting two or more nations." Historically, the term international Church has described Mormonism beyond the borders of the United States, which privileges American members: the leaders and laity living in the Great Basin are assumed to be at the center while everyone else is relegated to the periphery.

<sup>3</sup> Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson*, 386-87.

journey),<sup>4</sup> but rather to sketch out the events and forces that propelled the intrepid Dane on this fact-finding mission and to suggest several enduring legacies of his two-year mission for the First Presidency. Jenson's world tour was a watershed event in Mormon history. After sixty-five years of persecution and decades of exile in the American West, the LDS Church was emerging from the shadows of plural marriage, theocracy, and isolationism and adopting a new identity as part of the American mainstream and global Christianity. In fact, while Jenson was abroad the Territory of Utah would gain American statehood. As historian Richard E. Turley Jr. points out, the Church Historian's Office, which sponsored Jenson's two-year journey, had largely been focused on chronicling the history of Brigham Young and the Mormon colonization of the Great Basin Kingdom up to this point. "By the end of the century, a great opportunity existed to document and preserve the history of the Church throughout the world," and Jenson would single-handedly jumpstart the Office's transition from a provincial to a global worldview.<sup>5</sup> His success abroad would also solidify and elevate his employment status to full-time in the Church Historian's Office. And Jenson's tour of the borderlands of Mormonism would later enable him to compile the *Encyclopedic History of the Church*, with entries on every important place in the LDS past. While visiting the missionary outposts of Mormonism in Polynesia, Australasia, the Middle East, and Europe, Jenson trained local LDS clerks in proper record keeping procedures and would, in time, help formalize and standardize Mormon history writing standards.

---

<sup>4</sup> Reid L. Neilson, ed., *Tales from the World Tour: The Letters and Journal of Mormon Historian Andrew Jenson, 1895–1897* (forthcoming). The Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University has generously supported and championed the research and editing of this documentary history.

<sup>5</sup> Richard E. Turley Jr., "Gathering Latter-day Saint History in the Pacific," in Grant Underwood, ed., *Pioneers in the Pacific: Memory, History, and Cultural Identity among the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005), 147–48.

### Enlarging the Memory of Mormonism

The idea to tour the Church's non-North American missions seems to have been the culmination of years of hard work domestically on the part of Jenson. Beginning in 1889, he began a series of visits to local church units to collect ecclesiastical and pioneer records. During these outings Jenson gathered information from whatever official records he could find as well as personal writings from the early settlers. Stake presidents and bishops were informed of Jenson's task and encouraged to cooperate, in the form of a First Presidency letter. This official endorsement proved useful and ensured that Jenson traveled in relative comfort. He often took the opportunity to address local congregations on the importance of record keeping. In the span of a little more than five years, Jenson visited practically every stake and ward of the Church in Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Mexico and Canada, as well as important historical sites in the eastern United States. By March 1895 Jenson had completed his assigned task on behalf of the Church Historian's Office. Over the next few weeks Jenson resumed his work indexing a history of Joseph Smith that had been published in Church's *British Millennial Star* and drafting a history of Apostle Charles C. Rich.<sup>6</sup>

That April Jenson prepared a report of his activities for his file leader Franklin D. Richards, Church Historian and president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He informed Richards that he had now visited all North American stakes and most of the wards, branches, priesthood quorums, and auxiliaries that had existed since the 1830 organization of the Church. Jenson had traveled almost forty thousand miles on behalf of the Church Historian's Office in the process. "In all my travels, public discourses and private conversation I have endeavored to follow your instructions to the letter. I find that a thorough reform in records-keeping throughout the stakes of Zion is necessary; the public Church records, in almost every instance, are kept in a very imperfect manner," he wrote. "Hundreds of the original records kept in older wards years ago have been lost entirely, and others are found in

---

<sup>6</sup> Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson*, 227-228, 387.

the hands of private individuals and parties who have no right to them whatsoever. Jenson further noted to Richards that he had made it a point of his visits to instruct local leaders: "I have given suggestions to clerks, recorders and others as to what ought to be written and what might be left unwritten. My instructions have generally been well received by all concerned, and as a rule I have also been well received personally and treated with due kindness."<sup>7</sup>

Church leaders were impressed with Jenson's North American labors and determined after much discussion to send him on an extended fact-finding mission around the world.<sup>8</sup> (It is interesting to note that while the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles debated the merits of such a journey into early April, Jenson had secured his passport in anticipation by late March.) As an official representative of the Historian's Office, Jenson was expected to replicate his domestic labors abroad to have enough materials to later write histories of all of the Church's missions, districts, and branches. Jenson

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 227–228.

<sup>8</sup> In subsequent years the idea of sending other church leaders and representatives abroad was discussed by these presiding quorums. In an April 1896 meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Francis M. Lyman proposed that at least one apostle should annually visit each of the church's non-North American missions. "He favored a trip around the world at least once a year by one of the Apostles. He felt the Apostles should be in a position from personal knowledge through visiting our missions to be able to report their condition correctly to the Presidency of the Church," one attendee noted. Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, April 1, 1896, Anthon H. Lund Collection, typescript in Quinn Papers, Yale University Library. Moreover, Heber J. Grant, as a junior apostle, contemplated touring the missions of the Pacific on several occasions, including while serving in Japan as mission president between 1901 and 1903. Ronald W. Walker, "Strangers in a Strange Land," 148; and Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 358. The First Presidency also encouraged and financed an exploratory tour of China by two enterprising missionaries—Alma Taylor and Frederick Caine—on their way home from Japan in 1910 to determine whether or not they should resume the evangelization of the Chinese. See Reid L. Neilson, "Alma O. Taylor's Fact-Finding Mission to China," *BYU Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2001), 177–203.

spent the balance of April 1895 fulfilling his family and ecclesiastical responsibilities in anticipation of his pending departure and projected two year absence. He baptized his daughter, Eleonore Elizabeth, in the Salt Lake Tabernacle basement font and witnessed the birth of his son, Harold Howell. Jenson also moved his historical materials and personal papers and books from his Rosenborg Villa to his home in Salt Lake. "I took the documents to my new study in the second story of my 17th Ward home, and for several days I was busy arranging the papers in the respective shelves and pigeon holes which I had provided."<sup>9</sup> Concerned that Jenson was not paying the proper attention to his family, especially his newborn son and wife, Emma, who had just endured childbirth, Elder Richards encouraged his ambitious employee to curtail his history gathering activities until his departure. "I advised Andrew Jensen [sic] not to go to San Pete but visit & bless his family till his long journey," Richards noted in his diary.<sup>10</sup>

The evening of May 2 was a special moment for Jenson and his family. The entire First Presidency—Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith—together with their wives, and a number of apostles and Church luminaries gathered at Jenson's home in Salt Lake City, where they enjoyed food and musical entertainment by several of the valley's finest singers. Jenson's father, mother, and brother, Joseph, were also in attendance. That night Church leaders toured his personal library which pleased Jenson very much. "They expressed themselves highly pleased with the order in which documents, books and papers were arranged." Only another historian and bibliophile can appreciate the pride with which Jenson showcased his collection that evening. President George Q. Cannon, joined by the other priesthood holders and leaders then set apart and blessed Jenson in anticipation of his world tour. According to Elder Charles W. Penrose's shorthand recounting of the blessing, Jenson was told that the Lord was pleased with his inspired historical efforts, that he would be successful and protected while he traveled to the far reaches of Mormondom, and that he

---

<sup>9</sup> Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson*, 228.

<sup>10</sup> As cited in Perkins, "Andrew Jenson: Zealous Chronologist," 155–56.

would be blessed in all his activities abroad. "My memory should retain that which I should see and hear while abroad. The angels of the Lord would accompany me in my travels on sea and on land; the Holy Ghost should also be my constant companion and enable me to carry with me that influence which I would need in the accomplishment of my arduous and varied labors," Jenson noted of the priesthood prayer. Cannon also promised him that his life would be preserved for many years to come, which prompted Jenson to cancel his life insurance policy days later. Elder Richards then dedicated Jenson's library for safekeeping during his absence.<sup>11</sup>

A week later the First Presidency presented Jenson with a formal missionary certificate that endorsed his history gathering mission to the nations of the world, and bore witness of Jenson's worthiness and ability to perform priesthood ordinances abroad. "We invite all men to give heed to his teachings and counsels as a man of God, and to assist him in his travels and historical labors in whatsoever things he may need, or that may be advantageous in the prosecution of his inquiries. And we pray God the Eternal Father to bless Elder Jenson and all who receive him and minister to his comforts, with the blessings of Heaven and earth, for time and all eternity." Elder Richards also honored Jenson with a lifetime membership certificate to the Genealogical Society of Utah. Its leadership hoped that Jenson, a founding member, would also look after their interests while traveling abroad.<sup>12</sup> After weeks of preparation and goodbyes it was time for Jenson to begin his world tour.

Saturday, May 11, 1895, was the day scheduled for Jenson's departure. "My folks packed my valises and lunch basket, and everything being ready, I called the family into the library, where I united with them in earnest prayer," he recorded in his journal. Jenson then gave priesthood blessings to his wives, children, and in-laws. "In blessing and praying with the family we were all melted to tears and the spirit of God was with us." Late that afternoon Jenson left his home and made his

---

<sup>11</sup> Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson*, 228-30.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-31.

way with family and friends to the Union Pacific Railway station in Salt Lake City. At 5:20 p.m. his train pulled out of the City of the Saints bound for Ogden, Utah, and from thence, the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia.<sup>13</sup> From the deepwater Canadian port of Vancouver, he crossed the Pacific Ocean by steamer, arriving in Honolulu, Hawaii. There he remained for two months touring the branches and districts of the Hawaiian Mission. Jenson next boarded a steamer heading to Suva, Fiji, although the isles of Melanesia hosted no LDS congregations or missionary outposts. After the Fijian Islands the LDS historian toured the Samoan Mission, comprised at the time of the island nations of Samoa and Tonga. New Zealand was next on his itinerary. In a matter of weeks Jenson came to love the Maori Latter-day Saints and their devotion to the gospel. From New Zealand he traveled east to the Society Islands and French Polynesia. Here he stayed for nearly two months, the region of Mormonism's earliest venture into the Pacific world in 1844. The continent of Australia, together with the members and missionaries of the Australasian Mission, was his final stopover down under. Afterwards Jenson made his way to the Middle East, via the Indian Ocean. After Cairo and Jerusalem, he made a circular tour of Europe. Jenson collected LDS historical data from England, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Wales, Ireland and Scotland.

### **Jenson's Tales from the World Tour, 1895–1897**

Jenson kept meticulous records during his global adventure. Not only was he gathering history: Jenson was making it himself. Before leaving Utah, he arranged to have the editors of the LDS Church-owned *Deseret Evening News* serialize his travelogue letters. Jenson was in hopes that Latter-day Saints in Utah would take interest in his journey and catch the vision of proper Mormon record keeping. His first letter, written on May 13, 1895, from Portland, Oregon, was published two weeks later on June 1, under the series title "Jenson's Travels." Over the next year Jenson drafted regular letters, chronicling his adventures in

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 231.

places that most Latter-day Saints would never have the means, time, or reason to visit personally. He penned his eightieth—and final—letter to his *Deseret Evening News* readers during the summer of 1896, but it was not published until February 19, 1898, one and a half years later. “The letters have been written under many difficulties, quite a number of them on ship board, when my fellow passengers would be wrestling with seasickness or idling away their time in the smoking parlors, playing cards or other games,” Jenson explained. “The last sixteen communications, which have not been dated, were mostly written on board the steamer Orotava, on my voyage from Port Said, Egypt, to Naples, Italy, but not submitted to the editor of the ‘News’ till after my return home, June 4, 1897.” He concluded his travelogue by expressing hope that his two years abroad on behalf of the Historian’s Office would lay the foundation for future historical studies of global Mormonism. “During my mission I circumnavigated the globe, traveled about 60,000 miles, preached the Gospel on land and on sea, whenever I had the opportunity, and gathered a great deal of historical information, which I trust will prove beneficial and interesting when it is prepared hereafter and incorporated in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of the Nineteenth century.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition to his published correspondence, Jenson also chronicled his movements and activities in an almost daily journal, a habit he had begun decades earlier as a young man. While his voluminous handwritten diaries remain unpublished in the LDS Church History Library, the Danish-American historian did excerpt and print entries spanning his life as the *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson* in 1938, just three years before his death. Jenson devoted 161 pages (227–388) of autobiographical text to his 1895–1897 world tour, or about 24 percent of the entire book. A careful comparison of the two published accounts reveals that Jenson likely used his more detailed letters as the basis for his corresponding journals. Jenson’s serialized letters total over 210,000 words while his parallel *Autobiography* passages total about

---

<sup>14</sup> “Jenson’s Travels,” *Deseret Weekly News* (Salt Lake City), February 19, 1898.

98,000 words. Nevertheless there is incredible overlap between the two records. Moreover, “Jenson’s Travels” end in July 1896 when he departed from the Holy Land to tour the Church’s missions in Europe. Fortunately, Jenson’s *Autobiography* supplies the details of his final nine months in Europe, as well as his homecoming in America. Reproducing all of “Jenson’s Travels” together with Jenson’s non-overlapping *Autobiography* sections provides readers with a fascinating account of his door-to-door adventure.<sup>15</sup> I am in the process of editing and annotating both “Jenson’s Travels” and relevant portions of his *Autobiography* in preparation for publication.

Jenson’s personal writings offer twenty-first century readers a unique window into the LDS past, as well as life around the world at the end of the nineteenth century. Each of his letters and *Autobiography* entries provide a snapshot of particular place and time. Taken together, they present a panoramic motion picture of Gilded Age Mormonism abroad. Jenson describes in great detail daily life and worship for native Latter-day Saints in their homelands. In terms of studying “lived religion,” few sources come close to the scope of Jenson’s writings. In addition, Jenson tells the story of missionary life in the Church’s non-North American evangelism outposts. From his letters and journal one learns that Mormonism was experienced somewhat differently by Euro-American elders and sisters, and their native charges. Jenson also sheds light of the relationship of Mormon and non-Mormon missionaries in various lands, as they competed for new converts, especially commenting on the strained relationships between the LDS and RLDS representatives in the Pacific. Moreover, he offers readers historical overviews of the settlement and colonization of each land and isle he visits, together with a précis of subsequent Mormon beginnings. Always resourceful, Jenson relied on interviews with Church members, missionaries, leaders, former members, other religionists, locals unconnected with religion, government officials, librarians, museum

---

<sup>15</sup> Jenson published his own account in Danish as *Jorden Rundt: En Reigenbeskrivelse Af Andrew Jenson* (Around the World: A Travelogue of Andrew Jenson) (Salt Lake City: [s.n.], 1908).

curators, newspaper editors, site docents, and anyone else whose ear he could bend. He worked fifteen hours a day, for over two years, gathering materials to take back to Utah, in his capacity as professional (meaning paid) historian, and amateur anthropologist, ethnographer, sociologist, and geographer.

While Jenson's published letters and autobiography share the status of non-North American Mormonism and offer details about the public man, they are simultaneously silent about the inner historian. Jenson is quick to reveal his feelings about race, place, and space around the world, yet he is hesitant to disclose his thoughts on his family, friends, and co-workers. His writings are littered with references to his continual bouts of seasickness on the oceans, but virtually lacking entries about homesickness for his children and wives back in Utah. Between May 1895 and June 1897 he makes almost no mention of his relations. One notable exception occurs when his wife, Emma, travels to Europe for a surprise meeting. Jenson devotes just a handful of sentences to their reunion, and then Emma again disappears from his narrative. Another anomaly occurs months later when he asks the Lord in prayer if he should remain in Europe or return to Utah. Jenson writes that he is delighted when he feels impressed to go home. Yet readers are left wondering if he is more excited to be reunited with his babies or his books—his families or his files. When his train pulls into the Salt Lake City depot, twenty-six months after he left for Vancouver, Jenson notes: "On our arrival there I soon caught sight of my wives, Emma and Bertha, and four of my younger children, namely Minerva, Eleonore, Eva and Harold. They gave me a hearty welcome." Yet he went back to work unpacking his boxes and preparing his files for further historical work that day.

A number of reasons might account for Jenson's lack of transparency in his personal writings. To begin with, Jenson knew that whatever he wrote would soon appear in print in one of Utah's largest newspapers, the *Deseret Evening News*, and likely in memoir to be published. Jenson was mindful that the eyes of Church leaders and laity were following him as he circumnavigated the globe. As such, every-

thing we read is filtered and packaged for general LDS consumption. Moreover, the entire world tour seems to have been Jenson's idea from the beginning. Failure abroad would likely curtail domestic opportunities in the future. It was important to Jenson to be viewed by Latter-day Saints at home as competent and courageous, especially as he was spending lots of Church funds. His reputation rested on how he followed through on his ambitious plan. If the leading brethren were to sense that Jenson was incapable of accomplishing his assigned mission they might call for his premature return or otherwise curtail his ambitious plans. He wanted to be seen as in control of his surroundings, mission, and emotions. And it appears that Jenson was: He never noted any mental breakdowns or even fleeting moments of self-doubt or discouragement. Yet it is possible, given his past strained interpersonal relationships, that there may have been some of Jenson's co-workers in the Historian's Office who were silently rooting for his failure, jealous that Jenson got to undertake such a journey while they remained fettered to their desks in Salt Lake City.

Another possibility for Jenson's lack of private detail in his writings was that Jenson was having the adventure of a lifetime, and did not suffer from bouts of homesickness or feelings of inadequacy. He seemed to treat his world tour just like all of his other extended missionary labors for which he was set apart. Aside from seasickness and shifting weather, Jenson experienced few trials and encountered a small number of obstacles in his travels. And he appears willing to endure anything for the cause of Mormon history writing—it was both his vocation and his avocation. Furthermore, life “on the road” was simple: Jenson only had to worry about food, transportation, housing, and record keeping. Back in Utah, however, he had to juggle his work, church, and family commitments. Jenson was constantly being pulled in multiple directions. But for two years he was left alone to his passion of history. Jenson also enjoyed the celebrity of touring the Church's missions as an official representative of the presiding brethren. “Traveling through the West and the nation, working with bishops, stake presidents, and mission presidents and staying in their homes, he was

treated very much like a General Authority,” Louis Reinwand points out. “Almost invariably, he was given an opportunity to speak in local wards, and was often called upon to speak in stake conferences.”<sup>16</sup> Back at church headquarters, however, Jenson was merely an overworked and underappreciated clerk in the Historian’s Office with an uncertain future and minimal stipend. But on the road he was taken care of like Church royalty. Mission presidents, branch presidents, and local members bent over backwards to accommodate his wishes and make his visits comfortable. Even non-Mormon heads of state and captains of industry in Hawaii, Tonga, Samoa, and French Polynesia agreed to be interviewed by Jenson. Feasts and meetings were held in his honor, especially in the Pacific isles. Perhaps Jenson complained so little in his personal writings because there was not much to fuss about.

Jenson returned to Utah and LDS Church headquarters on June 4, 1897, twenty-five months after saying goodbye to his loved ones. Once he had greeted his family and friends he went to the Historian’s Office, where he was welcomed home by apostle and Church Historian Franklin D. Richards and the First Presidency. Jenson had traveled nearly 59,000 miles over land and sea by steamship, schooners, boats, trains, carriages, jinrikisha, and on the backs of horses, camels, and donkeys. In addition to his historical labors, Jenson also accomplished a great deal of church work. He delivered over two hundred and thirty sermons and discourses, baptized two converts, confirmed eleven new members, blessed six children and eight adults, ordained four men to the priesthood, set apart one sister, and healed many through the priesthood blessings. Jenson further logged that he had enjoyed great vigor despite his arduous schedule: “In all my travels I enjoyed good health considering that I had been subject to so many changes in climate and diet, and returned home well satisfied with my labors. I worked hard and was in this respect perhaps more zealous than wise, for I often stuck to my task sixteen hours a day.”<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly, Jenson was back at his historical labors shortly after his return to Utah.

---

<sup>16</sup> Reinwand, “Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Historian,” 38.

<sup>17</sup> Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson*, 386–88.

Weeks later he shared tales from his world tour from the pulpit in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.<sup>18</sup>

### **Legacy of Jenson's World Tour and Historical Labors**

What was the heritage of Jenson's expedition to Mormonism abroad? How did his two year fact-finding mission help shape the balance of his life and the LDS historical enterprise? To begin with, Jenson's historical gathering prowess and determination abroad secured him a fulltime position at home in the Historian's Office, something his previous labors failed to accomplish. On October 19, 1897, three months after his return, the First Presidency called Jenson as Assistant Church Historian, a position he had sought for years. He was sustained by church members the following April general conference. The significance of this formal calling to Jenson personally and the LDS Church institutionally cannot be overstated. It provided Jenson and his family with financial security, professional respect, and ecclesiastical support. In return, Jenson devoted the next four decades of his life to the gathering and writing of Mormon history. "Andrew Jenson's contributions to Latter-day Saint historical literature seem almost incredible, especially in the light of his background," Reinwand describes. "At each stage in his career Jenson exhibited a rare dedication and resourcefulness. His limitless energy and ambition-his capacity to endure, even to enjoy, the drudgery of historical research and writing-made it possible for this otherwise unpromising convert-immigrant to become one of the foremost historians of the Latter-day Saints."<sup>19</sup>

During his sixty-five-year career, which began in 1876 and ended in 1941, Jenson was constantly in the harness of Mormon history. He was the "author of twenty-seven books, editor of four historical periodicals, compiler of 650 manuscript histories and indexes to nearly every important historical manuscript and published reference work, zealous collector of historical records, faithful diarist, and author of more than five thousand published biographical sketches," according to

---

<sup>18</sup> See "Sunday Services," *Deseret Weekly News*, July 3, 1897.

<sup>19</sup> Reinwand, "Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Historian," 46.

historians David Bitton and Leonard J. Arrington. “Jenson may have contributed more to preserving the factual details of Latter-day Saint history than any other person. At least for sheer quantity his projects will likely remain unsurpassed. Jenson’s industry, persistence, and dogged determination in the face of rebuffs and disappointments have caused every subsequent Mormon historian to be indebted to him.”<sup>20</sup> It would be difficult to come up with grander praise from two more highly regarded Mormon scholars, who knew the historical field better than any other historians of our day. Many of my colleagues have remarked that it would be almost impossible—and quite irresponsible—to write on nearly any aspect of the LDS past without first reviewing and referencing the historical spade work of Jenson. Had Church leaders not called Jenson to labor full-time as Assistant Church Historian following his world tour there is no way that he could have collected, drafted, and published his corpus of research.

The eventual publication of the *Encyclopedic History of the Church* was a second major legacy of Jenson’s global fact-finding mission. The *Encyclopedic History* is a condensed form of Jenson’s mission, district, stake, ward, and branch manuscript histories. Having visited nearly every local unit and historical site of the church, Jenson was uniquely qualified to compile such a reference work. He gathered much of the material that comprised the many non-North American entries during his 1895–1897 world tour. “On my extensive travels I have collected a vast amount of historical information, by perusing the records and documents, which have accumulated in the various stakes of Zion and the respective missionary fields. And also by culling from private journals and interviewing many persons of note and long experience in the Church,” Jenson reported to Richards upon his return in 1897.

I have also sent and brought to the Historian’s Office hundreds of records from foreign missionary fields, which were not needed abroad anymore, and many more such records which I packed for shipment in different places can be ex-

---

<sup>20</sup> Bitton and Arrington, *Mormons and their Historians*, 41.

pected here soon with returning elders. My notes being gathered under many difficulties—often hurriedly—need careful compilation and arrangements before they can be used for history. They, however, constitute the foundation and outline for histories of nearly every stake, ward, branch, quorum, association, etc. of the Church, in its gathered state, and of every mission, conference, branch, etc., abroad, from the organization of the Church to the present time.

At the same time, Jenson admitted to Richards that it would “require years of patient toil and labor” to shape these primary source materials into accessible narratives.<sup>21</sup> (While Jenson’s record gathering efforts would bear much fruit in subsequent years, it would also make it nearly impossible for Latter-day Saints to write their own ecclesiastical histories without traveling to Salt Lake City, where their primary sources are archived.)

Over the next several decades Jenson would personally shoulder that load. He dreamed and labored to chronicle the rise and spread of Mormonism around the globe. When finished, the content of the *Encyclopedic History* was first serialized in the *Deseret News*. Officially endorsed by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it was published in 1941, his first work copyrighted by the Church. “With the publication of the *Encyclopedic History of the Church* I feel that my life’s work is nearly done, so far as the writing of books and historical articles are concerned,” Jenson wrote in the volume’s preface in March 1941. “I shall soon pass on to the great beyond, leaving behind a great work yet to be done and plenty of able men and women to do it. I have done my best to contribute to the history of the Church, covering the first century of its existence, but a greater work will be done by future historians as the Church grows.”<sup>22</sup> Jenson died that November just months after his final book came off the *Deseret News* Publishing Company press in Salt Lake City.

---

<sup>21</sup> Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson*, 388.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), iv, italics added.

A third major legacy of Jenson's world tour was the subsequent improvement and standardization of Mormon record keeping. Recall that in April 1895, while the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were still debating whether or not to send him abroad, Jenson reported to Elder Franklin Richards on his North American history gathering efforts thus far and pointed out the sorry state of domestic Church documentation. "I find that a thorough reform in records-keeping throughout the stakes of Zion is necessary; the public Church records, in almost every instance, are kept in a very imperfect manner; hundreds of the original records kept in older wards years ago have been lost entirely, and others are found in the hands of private individuals and parties who have no right to them whatsoever," Jenson lamented. "I have made an extraordinary effort in all of my visits and intercourse with leading men, and the people generally, to emphasize the importance of not only making records, but also preserving them after they are made; and I have given suggestions to clerks, recorders and others as to what ought to be written and what might be left unwritten."<sup>23</sup> His disheartening report may have been the catalyst that prodded Church leaders to send him around the world to gather and preserve the Mormonism's global past.

Jenson's worst fears concerning the state of local records abroad were realized as he toured the Church's non-North American missions and witnessed first-hand the deplorable state of their preservation. In June 1897 he again reported to Richards, this time on his findings in the Pacific Islands, Australasia, the Middle East, and Europe. "In some of my previous reports I have referred to the very imperfect state of our records as kept of late years throughout the Church. I would earnestly recommend a thorough reformation in regard to record keeping," Jenson wrote. "There is a lack of system and uniformity throughout the Church, and in the recording of ordinance work, and in the making of minutes and rolls, statistical reports, annual reports, etc., etc. Each mission, stake and ward seems to have its own peculiar system, or no system at all; and until regular forms and blanks are furnished from

---

<sup>23</sup> Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson*, 227.

headquarters for use throughout the entire Church, this irregularity must necessarily continue.”<sup>24</sup> As Assistant Church Historian, Jenson oversaw the creation, dissemination, and collection of standardized forms and reports used by all Church missions and local units. During much of the twentieth century, all of the Church’s missions were responsible for sending in annual historical reports, including detailed statistics to the Church Historian’s Office, where Jenson toiled.

### Postscript

Through his own hard work and the seeming hand of Providence, LDS historian Andrew Jenson found his niche as a laborer in the cause of Mormonism. He pursued the goal of collecting and writing the most comprehensive, accurate, and useful histories of the Church with a rare passion. Jenson spent the balance of his life compiling massive histories that he suspected few Latter-day Saints would read in their entirety. It is impossible to understand or appreciate Jenson’s drive and historical contributions except through a spiritual perspective. Acquiring, documenting, and publishing church history was not purely a scholarly or historical pursuit for the untiring Danish American. Jenson believed his was a spiritual labor with eternal ramifications. While visiting early LDS Church history sites with Edward Stevenson and Joseph S. Black in 1888, Jenson and his companions encountered a number of Mormon schismatic groups. Stevenson shared with Jenson a principle that Joseph Smith had taught him in Nauvoo: “Where the true Church is, there will always be a majority of the saints, and the records and history of the Church also.”<sup>25</sup> Jenson apparently took this counsel to heart and thereafter viewed the possession of the physical history of Mormonism as defining marks of the legitimate Restoration movement. He devoted his adult life to protecting what he considered to be the sacred records of the final dispensation and to enlarge the memory of Mormonism.

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 153.

Jenson preached the importance of record keeping in his many sermons and general conference addresses. “If it had not been for the writers . . . who belonged to the original Church, what would the doings of Christ mean to us?” Jenson challenged the Latter-day Saints on one occasion. “And if somebody had not recorded them and other beautiful sayings of Christ and his apostles, what would we have known of the ministry of Christ and of his apostles? We would merely have had some vague ideas handed down by tradition that would lead astray more than lead aright.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, if not for the writers and historians of past dispensations, there would be no sacred history in the form of Hebrew and Christian scripture. The same would hold true in this dispensation, he often taught, if church members failed to keep contemporary ecclesiastical and personal histories. Jenson had his own sense of cosmic foreordination as a latter-day historian. Reflecting on the idea of “noble and great ones” chosen in the premortal life to perform specific tasks he mused on his own fortune as follows:

For 4000 years I had perhaps been keeping a record of what had taken place in the spirit world. The Lord having chosen me to become a historian kept me waiting these many years from the time Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden. Then about 86 years ago (earth time) the Father of my spirit came to me and said: My son you have kept a faithful record of your brothers and sisters (my sons and daughters) who have been sent down to earth from time to time and now it is your turn to go and tabernacle in mortality. . . . At length I found myself as the Danish-born Andreas Jensen who later became universally known as the Americanized Dane Andrew Jenson the historian. Lo here I am on hand to do the work unto which I was appointed.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Jenson, in *Ninety-Seventh Semiannual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1926), 54–59, as cited in Paul H. Peterson, “Andrew Jenson Chides the Saints,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2000), 198.

<sup>27</sup> As cited in Perkins, “Andrew Jenson: Zealous Chronologist,” 248.

This spiritual sense of destiny, coupled with an unmatched work ethic and passion for history, shaped Jenson's life and work. One merely needs to search the Church History Library catalog for works by Jenson to get a glimpse of his labors.

I have argued elsewhere that global LDS history is Church history. Latter-day Saints need to realize that much of our most interesting history occurred abroad. We must remember that the "restoration" of the gospel continues to occur every time a new country is dedicated by apostolic authority for proselyting. In other words, the original New York restoration of 1830 was in many ways replicated in Great Britain in 1837, Japan in 1901, Brazil in 1935, Ghana in 1970, Russia in 1989, and Mongolia in 1992. Mormon historians need to refocus their scholarly gaze from Palmyra, Kirtland, Nauvoo, and Salt Lake City to Tokyo, Santiago, Warsaw, Johannesburg, and Nairobi. These international cities and their histories will become increasingly important to our sacred history. These non-North American stories need to be told with greater frequency and with better skill.<sup>28</sup> In this sense Jenson was a man ahead of his times. In the final years of the nineteenth century the yeoman workhorse of the Church Historian's Office had the foresight and willingness to dedicate two years of his life to documenting the global church and its membership. As Louis Reinwand points out, "Jenson played a vital role in keeping alive the ideal of a universal Church. He was the first to insist that Mormon history include Germans, Britons, Scandinavians, Tongans, Tahitians, and other national and cultural groups, and that Latter-day Saint history should be written in various languages for the benefit of those to whom English was not the native tongue."<sup>29</sup> Back in 1895, when Jenson completed his passport application in anticipation for his two-year world tour, he likely had little inkling of the far reaching effects his fact-finding mission would have on his life and on Mormon history.

---

<sup>28</sup> Reid L. Neilson, "Introduction," in Reid L. Neilson, ed., *Global Mormonism in the Twenty-first Century* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2008), xv.

<sup>29</sup> Reinwand, "Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Historian," 45.