

Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Historian

Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Historian

Louis Reinwand

Andrew Jenson was born on 11 December 1850 in Torslev, Hjørring Amt, Denmark, to Christian and Kiersten (Anderson) Jensen.¹ His parents became converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1854, and he himself was baptized a member of that church in 1859 at the age of eight. His parents were very poor, and though his father was a farmer and craftsman the family remained in a condition of poverty. After building several homes near Andrew's birthplace, Christian was forced through need and an injury to one of his feet to take up clock repairing as a full-time occupation. For this purpose he moved to Saebý in 1863, and after one year sent for his family.

The family's meager condition required that the two oldest boys, Jens and Andrew, fare for themselves at an early age. Andrew was ten and Jens twelve when they assumed their first herding jobs. An illness required Andrew's return the second summer, and because his father was away much of the time there was ample work for Andrew at home for the next two years. After his father moved his mother and younger brother (Joseph) to Saebý in 1864, the older boys were on their own.²

The Jensen boys were ridiculed and treated harshly by the local schoolmaster on account of their new religion, so for a time they were tutored at home by their parents and by the Mormon missionaries. Eventually, though, Andrew and Jens attended the common school where Andrew, excelling in his studies, completed his required state education one year before his brother. Encouraged to stay another year for Jens' benefit, Andrew received an education that was superior to that of his peers.

Rather than work as a farm hand, Andrew began a peddling career. Within five months he had earned eighty dollars while his brother Jens, working for a local farmer, could earn only six dollars. This income enabled Andrew to immigrate to America in 1866 with his parents and his younger brother Joseph. Andrew promised to help his brother Jens emigrate to America with any money he might earn in "Zion."

After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley in October 1866, the family headed south, Andrew's father going to Sanpete Valley while the two boys and their mother stopped in Pleasant Grove. They were soon reunited in Ephraim, and Andrew worked there until March of 1867 taking care of stock. Their residency in Sanpete was short-lived, for Black Hawk, the Indian chief, had resumed hostilities against the Mormons. Because of this

and because of an operation which led to the amputation of Andrew's father's injured foot, the family moved back to Pleasant Grove. During this year and the next Andrew worked as a laborer—plowing, making adobe brick, herding, building a home, and helping to dig the Provo Bench Canal.

Although he preferred “study to hard manual labor,” Andrew was “compelled through circumstances to assist in earning a living for the family.”³ Earning a living did not mean staying at home, and at age eighteen, after seeing his mother settled and provided for, he set out for Echo Canyon to work with Mormon railroad crews. His journal contains one of the finest first-hand accounts of the grading and meeting of the transcontinental railroads. His thorough descriptions emphasize the heavy work, the bitter winter cold, and the raw humor of the railroad camps. Andrew experienced his share of pain and hard work as a “gandy dancer,” at one point suffering a mule kick that broke his jaw.⁴

Andrew's apprenticeship in the Wasatch mountains was rough and lonely. Though he made it home on occasion to help with the harvest or the construction of a new home, he always seemed eager to return to the railroad for the high wages which were offered. By 1869 Andrew was able to send money to allow Jens to immigrate from Denmark. When the two brothers met near the railroad camp where Andrew was working, their greatest thrill was that each had remained loyal to the standards of the Church. Together they returned to Pleasant Grove, where their mother, since her separation from Christian, had been living alone with Joseph.

Jens began to farm immediately; accustomed to farm work, he was a success where Andrew had failed. Andrew, his responsibilities to Jens discharged, set out once again to work as a grader on the “highway of nations.”⁵ But most of the railroad contracts were near completion and so he was soon out of work. Andrew's boss, greatly impressed with him, offered him a free pass to Omaha, Nebraska. But with the gullibility of one so young, Andrew got off in Cheyenne, Wyoming, with an associate who inveigled out of him both his ticket and his money. Andrew managed to obtain employment in a local railroad shop and turntable, however, and soon earned enough money to press on to Omaha.

In Nebraska, Andrew found that the only available work was on local farms. Determined not to work for the low wages being paid, he began to sell pictures, just as he had in Denmark, adding maps of the United States to his collection of wares. He met with little success, and when a chance came to return to Utah, he took it.

On his return trip, made during the summer of 1871, Andrew served as herdsman on a cattle drive. He referred to himself during this period as a cowboy, and in a sense that is what he was. His diary and autobiography provide excellent descriptions of the life of a nineteenth-century cattle

drover. Upon his return to Utah, Andrew worked on a grading crew for the Bingham Canyon and Camp Floyd Railroad, which was constructed in 1872–1873 from the Utah Southern Railroad track near Sandy to Bingham. Then he was offered the chance to work as a grocery clerk in American Fork Canyon at a branch store constructed especially for miners and railroaders in the area. Jensen's rough treatment at the hand of a group of intoxicated and unruly miners who knocked the tent-store down and stole some merchandise upset him; after working on for another week he returned home.

Several days later, Andrew obtained employment helping to grade eight miles of roadbed for the American Fork Railroad from the Utah Southern Railroad track to mines in American Fork Canyon. When this job was completed, he and a friend formed a partnership to fish in Utah Lake. Meeting with little success in this enterprise, he made a trip to Richfield to see his brother and help him with his farm labors. During the winter months he sold lithograph pictures. Jensen was now twenty-two years old, and began "to look upon life in a more serious way than before." He "had herded sheep and cattle, worked on railroads, in mines, in smelters and on farms." He had also "been a store clerk, fisherman and salesman."⁶ Now was the time to begin a career, to change his life, to concern himself with his future.

Andrew's First Historical Labors

In 1873 Andrew became an American citizen. Next, he received a call to serve on a mission to his native land of Denmark. Ordained a Seventy, he was given a cordial send-off by his family and friends, and embarked on an experience that would give new meaning and direction to his labor.

Andrew encountered the usual frustration of the Mormon missionary. At one time, after being insulted at a small meeting in Saebey, he "squared up" to the accuser "with clenched fist, the spirit of my cowboy life asserting itself, ready to strike him." Nevertheless, he adjusted to the work and was "eminently successful in most instances."⁷ Advanced to a position of leadership, he began to travel about the mission. He preached in meeting-houses and public parks, and was moderately successful in converting persons with his honest and open speech.

In 1875, after his return to Utah, Andrew resumed work on a spur line into Cottonwood Canyon—presumably the narrow gauge tramway constructed from Fairfield Flat to Alta, in Little Cottonwood Canyon, during 1875–1876.⁸ After his mission, however, such labor was repugnant to his growing sensibilities. He organized and published a manuscript newspaper, "The Rising Star," for the young people of Pleasant Grove.⁹ Andrew's diary entries suggest that he often wandered into the nearby hills to meditate and

think about the future. While pondering alternative courses of action, he hit upon a bold plan—he would translate the “History of Joseph Smith” (which had appeared serially in the *Latter-day Saint’s Millennial Star*) into the Danish-Norwegian language.

Andrew began work immediately, pausing only long enough to send letters outlining his intentions to the General Authorities of the Church. He was granted permission to begin the work, but was told that he would have to submit the translation to Apostle Erastus Snow for final approval. He was also told that he must expect no remuneration from the Church—he would have to cover his own expenses.

Jenson’s potential reading audience, of course, was limited to the non-English reading Scandinavians in the territory (and in Scandinavia), which meant that he had to contact them personally in order to inform them of his projected work. Since it was financially impossible for him to publish the work all at once, and because of the low incomes of his reading audience, Jenson had to serialize it, distributing it to his subscribers on a weekly basis. Only after the total printing was completed—a period which might extend over several months of weekly mailings—could he at last bind a few of the remaining copies into single volumes. This pattern of finance characterized all of his early publishing work. Later he was able to publish some works in a single printing, but he still underwrote the cost himself. Only late in his life did the Church advance Jenson money to aid with the publication of his books.

Andrew attacked his publication problems with vigor and enthusiasm. Traveling through the various settlements, he conversed with the Scandinavian Saints and often spoke at their weekday and Sunday meeting. There was some adverse comment about these subscription drives, of course, and some thought Andrew a little “pushy” in peddling his own works. His son, Harold H. Jenson, has written the following about this tendency to censure his father’s promotional activities:

Only one criticism can be made of father’s determination, and that is his over-ambition to accomplish what he thought was for the best good of all. Those who are best acquainted with him know that his activities are not based on selfish motives. He never made money on his books, and anyone who has had anything to do with printing and publishing will realize the hard task he has had to raise the necessary funds to pay for printing and binding. His solicitations sometimes may have been misconstrued by some, but his books will live on to benefit future generations and to be appreciated by those who as subscribers contributed a little towards making the publication of them possible.¹⁰

In 1877, while traveling through southern Utah on similar business Andrew seized the opportunity to meet Brigham Young. During the same period he was also in close contact with Apostle Erastus Snow, who, besides

correcting his translations and making suggestions where necessary, gave Andrew friendship and encouragement.

In canvassing the state for subscriptions, mailing the newly printed *Joseph Smith's Levnetslob* (History of Joseph Smith), and working on the Scandinavian newspaper, *Bikuben* (Beehive), Andrew was involved in a labor of love. He enjoyed a certain status and received a modest income, which enabled him to build a home in Pleasant Grove. His skills in writing English and Danish were vastly improved when he was called on a second gospel mission to Denmark in 1879.¹¹ There he studied from distinguished teachers and assisted with the writing and translation of English articles for the Danish Church paper, *Skandinaviens Stjerne* (Scandinavia's Star), and edited a monthly periodical for young people called *Ungdommens Raad-giver* (Counselor of Youth). He was named president of the Copenhagen branch and eventually assistant to the president of the mission. He compiled a reference to the Bible and with President Neils Wilhelmsen, retranslated the Book of Mormon. When President Wilhelmsen died suddenly, Andrew was given temporary charge of the mission.

Andrew's autobiographical notations reveal his concern that Scandinavian converts be accorded greater recognition in Utah. At one point, he mentions that Frederik Samuelsen, a member of the Danish Rigdag (Parliament), who had converted to Mormonism and who had made great efforts to help the cause of the Church in Denmark, was so badly treated in Utah because of language difficulties that he was "broken hearted for the quiet life he was forced to lead."¹² Jenson undertook a one-man crusade to portray Scandinavian immigrants to advantage. The modern researcher will be struck with the heavy sprinkling of Scandinavians in his *Biographical Encyclopedia*.

Upon the completion of his second mission Andrew busied himself with a new periodical for the Scandinavians which he titled *Morgenstjernen* (Morning Star). He had never been satisfied with *Bikuben*, even when he had assisted in its publication. He tried to make his new magazine better, basing its emphasis on history. When Jenson's enthusiastic drive for subscriptions to *Morgenstjernen* made inroads on *Bikuben*, the complaints of his rivals reached the ears of Church leaders, who called both editors into the Church offices in Salt Lake City. Jenson was told that one Scandinavian paper was enough and that he should support *Bikuben*. Still, Church leaders were impressed with Jenson's abilities as a writer and historian. They therefore asked him to continue publishing materials similar to those in the *Morgenstjernen*, but these must be done in English. His *Morgenstjernen* was retitled *The Historical Record*. During this period Andrew also kept busy writing and publishing parts of his *Biographical Encyclopedia* and *Church Chronology*. In addition, he translated the Pearl of Great Price into Scandinavian.

Andrew's wife, Mary, whom he married in 1875, became sick in 1886, with little chance of recovery. He was deeply concerned about her and the future of his four children (Andrew A., Parley P., Mary Minerva, and Eleonore E.). Andrew's solution, with the knowledge and consent of Mary, was to take a second wife—a young Britisher named Emma Howell. Mary died shortly thereafter (3 January 1887), but her children were not left without a mother. Three additional children were born to Emma: Alfred H., who died in infancy, Harold H., and Eva H. In 1888, Andrew entered into a third marriage, this time with Emma's sister, Bertha, bringing her and her mother to live in his home. The Church was now in the midst of the Anti-Polygamy Raid, and to enter plurality was illegal under the Edmunds Act. Consequently, Jenson traveled alone toward Manti, and met Bertha in a clandestine manner on the way. After the marriage he drove his team into Salt Lake City with his new bride.¹³ No children were born to Andrew and Bertha, but they adopted one child, Leo Rulon.

Andrew believed that his children should make their own way as early as possible. Away from home much of the time, his income was modest indeed. His family received \$50 a month in tithing orders from 1888 to 1891, after which it was raised to \$100 per month.¹⁴ Two of his children, Eva and Harold, worked with Andrew in the Church Historian's Office; his oldest son, Andrew, remained a shepherd throughout his life. Clearly, Jenson's family also sacrificed for the cause of Church history.

In 1888 Andrew obtained permission from the first Presidency to make a trip to the east to visit former Mormon sites and to gather historical information. Setting aside work on the first volume of his *Biographical Encyclopedia*, he traveled with Edward Stevenson and Joseph S. Black to Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, New York, and other places of historic interest to the Latter-day Saints. Upon their return, Jenson published a detailed report to the Saints on the status of their former home; he also spoke to capacity crowds in Salt Lake City and other Utah towns.

Assistant Church Historian

This trip established Andrew Jenson as a collector and organizer of Church historical materials. He moved into this area with relish, having tired of his arduous editing and publishing ventures. Apostle Erastus Snow continued to be Jenson's advocate in these labors. After Elder Snow's death, Apostle Franklin D. Richards who was Church Historian, became his advocate, followed by President Joseph F. Smith, to whose daughter Harold Jenson was married and who was one of Andrew's neighbors. Jenson was also on a friendly basis with Anthon H. Lund, Charles Penrose, Francis M. Lyman, and Anthony W. Ivins.¹⁵

In 1889 Erastus Snow hinted to Jenson that he (Andrew) might be called by the Church to serve as Assistant Historian. Being somewhat self-assertive, Jenson wrote a letter to the First Presidency in which he offered his services to the Church at no cost. This offer was forthrightly rejected, as was a similar offer in 1886. These offers were probably designed to secure official sponsorship of his historical labors and publications.

In 1891, however, Jenson was set apart as a historian. He had been traveling for the Church, and because the Historian's Office was in need of his skills, it was decided to give him this status. All along, of course, he had been working full time as a Mormon writer and historian, and although he had been receiving fifty dollars a month from the Church since 1888, most of his income had been from the sale of his books and articles. With his energies now being directed primarily toward the collection of historical data, it was imperative that the Church provide some further financial support. Later, in 1898, he was sustained and set apart as Assistant Church Historian.

The officials of the Church liked the work Jenson had done on the history of the Scandinavian Mission, a project on which he had worked during the mission's jubilee while he was in Denmark on his second mission. The authorities wanted him to prepare similar histories of all the wards, stakes, and missions. This assignment gave him further opportunities to travel. Throughout the remainder of his life, no matter where he went, he always took time to glean pertinent materials from the Church's local records.

The 1890s were exciting years for Jenson. 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. Almost invariably, he was given an opportunity to speak in local wards, and was often called upon to speak in stake conferences. In 1895, the Church called Jenson to visit the foreign missions to gather historical data. Starting from Utah in May 1895, he first made his way through the Pacific Islands. After visiting New Zealand and Australia, he made a leisurely tour of Southeast Asia. By July 1896 he was in the Near East, where he spent many days visiting the Holy Land. After traveling through Italy into France, he crossed the channel to England. There he met Emma, who had come to travel with him. After visiting Emma's birthplace and relatives in England, and after taking her through Denmark and Sweden, Andrew sent her back to Utah while he continued his travels. He went to the Church's missions in Germany, the Netherlands, England, Ireland, and Scotland. Although he took time to do some sightseeing and deliver sermons on Church history, he collected historical information in all the places he visited. In June 1897, after twenty-five months and 60,000 miles,

he finally returned home, followed by a multitude of boxes containing records and other historical materials obtained on his journey.

Back in Salt Lake City, Jenson was given the responsibility of managing the floundering *Bikuben*. Jenson's administrative skills and tireless energy were soon in evidence. The paper regained its footing and never again had to rely on the Church for funding. Jenson's diary comment on this new calling was, "I would rather have gone on another foreign mission than receive this appointment, but being called by the highest authority in the Church, I accepted the task."¹⁶

For a period events seemed to turn against Andrew. At the October conference in 1900, he was not sustained as an Assistant Church Historian. He was also told the new Historian's Office would probably not be built for some time. Stake leaders criticized the vigor with which he sought to dispose of copies of *Church Chronology*. He began making plans to organize the Andrew Jenson History Company, and apparently contemplated leaving the Church Historian's Office. He became so depressed that he took a "lonely" walk into the mountains, where he engaged in "secret prayer and meditations." The result of his experience was the receipt of a personal revelation in which the Lord chided him for being "too ambitious" and caring "too much for the opinion of men." "My son, be of good cheer," he was told; "be patient yet a little while."¹⁷

During the next few years Jenson, now about fifty years of age, reached the height of his career as a historian. He turned the ownership of his *Church Chronology* over to the Church, and was engaged in preparing the *Scandinavian Jubilee Album*. Of more importance was the revision of the Book of Mormon translation he had done while on his second mission, this time in collaboration with Apostle Anthon H. Lund. When the revision was completed he took it to Europe for printing. Then he went to England to meet his wife Bertha, whom he treated to the same whirlwind tour of Europe that he had previously given her sister Emma.

After his return home, he quickly resumed his literary and historical labors. In 1904, he was on the move again—this time as a witness in the Smoot trial in Washington, D.C. He then proceeded overseas to Sweden, where he helped dedicate the new Swedish mission home, a building for which he had helped raise money. He also arranged for the printing of a second edition of Joseph Smith's *Levnetslob*. His return trip was dedicated to the collection of historical materials in Germany, England, and in the eastern United States.

To years later, in 1909, Jenson once again left Utah for Denmark, to serve as president of the Scandinavian Mission. The mission was made enjoyable by the visits of several General Authorities and of his wife Emma and daughter Eva, with whom he did considerable sightseeing. Much of

Jenson's energy on this mission was directed toward establishing the Mormons' legal rights. He also became involved in a series of debates with anti-Mormons who were seeking to nullify the missionaries' efforts. His participation in these heated debates eventually resulted in a libel suit brought against him by the anti-Mormon speaker, Hans Freece. Finally released from his mission in 1912, but with the lawsuit still pending, Jenson left for home. He lost the lawsuit, and because he had already departed, some Church property was seized to pay the fine.¹⁸ Unaware of this development at the time, Jenson was on his second round-the-world tour which took him across Russia to Japan and then home.

The years 1912 to 1920 were spent primarily in the American West. Jenson worked on his histories, published a second and third volume of the *Biographical Encyclopedia*, and made a series of short trips to Idaho, southern Utah, the Grand Canyon, and California. His life was occasionally spiced by such events as the Historian's Office to the new Church Office Building, his son Harold's mission call, and his own celebrated birthday parties.

In 1921 Anthon H. Lund, Church Historian and member of the First Presidency, died. Although tradition dictated that the next Church Historian be chosen from the ranks of the Quorum of the Twelve, many persons regarded Jenson as the prime candidate for the position. President Lund was "the Scandinavian Apostle," and various persons suggested that Andrew might be a logical person to fill the vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve as well as the office of Church Historian. That he might be chosen to fill both positions may have also occurred to Brother Jenson, who wrote in his diary:

He [President Lund] and I had labored together these many years and had been so intimate and bound together in loving friendship. I wonder what effect Bro. Lund's death will have upon my own career and usefulness in the Church in the future? . . . Peculiar reflections passed through my mind regarding the contemplation of my life's career, and before I knew of it I was reasoning and talking with myself and at last prayed in a subdued voice laying my case before the Lord in humility and asking him to guide me aright and give me strength to bear whatsoever might be coming into my life.¹⁹

When he was selected for neither position, Jenson suffered some anguish of spirit:

I ask myself if I have done anything wrong whereby the Lord should be displeased with me, or why with my increased ability and diligence I should lose out instead of gaining with my brethren in the Priesthood. Yet, here I am, sidetracked . . ., after a lifelong struggle, during which I have given my best to Church work and have reserved nothing. . . . Is it wrong in the sight of the Lord for a man to expect reward of recognizance for real merit? Is there no such thing as appreciation when a man puts his whole soul into a work which is aimed at doing good and to benefit the cause of God and mankind generally? I left the library in a solemn mood.²⁰

Much later he wrote, "I am driving no stakes, laying no plans and having no expectations, so I look for no disappointments."²¹

Fearful that the Church would let the Church Historian's Office atrophy, Andrew found the very possibility heart-breaking. In a letter dated 12 July 1921, Jenson asked the First Presidency if his life and devotion had been in vain, and if so would they confirm this so that he could change his course and find a new profession to which he could direct his labors.²² Their reply, which is unavailable, seems to have given him mild encouragement in his historical labors.

In 1923, Jenson set out on a tour of South America. It was an extensive trip, requiring the better part of the year, and was regarded by Jenson as his first vacation from historical labors. His observations and recommendations probably contributed to the ultimate establishment of missions among the people of South America.

Jenson's Historical Labors: Last Phrase

Under the impression that President Heber J. Grant desired to curb (or perhaps not expand) the activities of the Historian's Office, Jenson reduced his history compiling activities.²³ This was partly a matter of necessity because of the shortage of help. His mammoth *Journal History* was cut short, covering the period 1830 to about 1900 instead of the first century of Church history as he had earlier planned. Since the manuscript histories of the stakes and missions were almost completed for the first century, he was given permission to make one last historical trip through the stakes in 1930 to bring this labor to a conclusion.

Aside from the 1930 jaunt, Jenson's travels in the 1920's and '30s were mostly for his own pleasure. In the years from 1926 until his death on 18 November 1941, he visited Canada twice, Alaska, Denmark, Hawaii, many of the western states, and traveled extensively in Utah, visiting as many of the Mormon historical sites as possible. The old Scandinavian had a special interest in driving and hiking along the pioneer trails. He even traveled the entire length of the Mormon Battalion Trail.

His scholarly and publishing activity continued. In 1927 he published the *History of the Scandinavian Mission* and in 1936, by request of the First presidency, he published a fourth volume of the *Biographical Encyclopedia*. He also decided to edit his diaries for publication as an autobiography, which was published in 1938. Three years later, his *Encyclopedic History of the Church* appeared.

In 1930 Jenson gave his private library to the Church on the condition that it be placed in a separate room. His gift was accepted and he surrounded himself at the Church Historian's Office with his private collection. Junius F. Wells, Assistant Church Historian, installed a large sign in

gold print—THE ANDREW JENSON LIBRARY—a life-size photograph of Jenson, and world map which had the routes of his many trips traced upon it. Jenson's collection of books and pamphlets is still retained as a separate entity in the Church Historian's Library and Archives. Subsequent to the donation of his personal library to the Church, Jenson gathered another collection for the Andrew Jenson Memorial Building, which he constructed behind his Seventeenth-Ward home in 1932.²⁴

Jenson need not have feared that his historical efforts would be overlooked, for during the 1930s he received considerable recognition. He was invited by the Salt Lake *Tribune* to submit a series of articles on the Mormons' western movement and the settlement of Utah. He wrote extensively for the *Desert News*. In 1934 he was asked by United Airlines to fly over the route he had walked as an emigrant boy. And in 1935 Governor Henry H. Blood asked Jenson to accompany a pioneer covered wagon to Denmark, to present it as a gift to Rebild National Park, near Alborg. The search for a suitable wagon and the trip to his homeland with his wife Bertha and daughter Eva, who represented the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, were a thrill and an honor—a fitting conclusion for his long and industrious life.

Appraisal of Andrew Jenson, Historian

What judgment can we make of Andrew Jenson—Latter-day Saint, traveler, writer, historian? He arrived in America a poor, uneducated boy who, because of his broken English, was faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Yet he aspired to greater things, and in his lifetime accomplished much. He traveled more than 300,000 miles in his lifetime—this done by train, ship, wagon, and on foot. He traveled twice around the world, crossed the Pacific Ocean four times, and the Atlantic Ocean thirteen times. He visited every continent except Antarctica, and nearly every nation. He visited every Latter-day Saint mission except the one in South Africa.

Jenson served ten missions for the Church, seven on special assignment. Among his three full-time missions was a three-year term as president of the Scandinavian Mission. During those years as mission president (1909–1912) he gave 1,000 speeches and saw his missionaries convert 1,300 persons.

Jenson's career is noteworthy not only for his service to the Church in collecting historical data and serving missions, but also for the number of speeches he delivered. The exact number is unknown, but a rough calculation suggests that he delivered more than 6,000 addresses during a forty-two year period.

Andrew Jenson was a public as well as a religious man. He served as a member of the State Constitutional Convention in 1887. He was also a school trustee and a Justice of the Peace. His public life included his service

as President of the Utah State Historical Society (1917–1921), a member of the Old Folk Central Committee (1883–1941), a member of the executive committee of the Utah Pioneer Trails and Landmarks Association, and a founder and lifetime member of the board of the Genealogical Society of Utah (1894–1941).

Jenson made his greatest contributions through his writing and collecting ability. Besides his translations and Danish newspaper articles, he published twenty-two articles in *The Improvement Era*, a long series of articles for the Salt Lake *Tribune*, and some two thousand historical articles in the *Deseret News*. He indexed the *Deseret Weekly*, and subsequently, all of his own works. He collected the stake and mission histories of the Church for the first 100 years and compiled an immense chronological day-by-day account of the Church's history which became known as the Journal History.²⁵ These two manuscript collections comprised 850 volumes at the time of his death. He collected several thousand biographies of Church officials and others, publishing some of them in four volumes as the *Biographical Encyclopedia*.

In his *Biographical Encyclopedia* and the Journal History, Jenson exhibited an unusual interest in the common man—the ordinary pioneer. He inserted information about the English miner, the New York farmer, and the Scandinavian craftsman alongside information about the highest Church or government official. His works celebrate the dreams, goals, activities, and accomplishments of the ordinary members of the Church. Latter-day Saint history was far more to him than the notable movements of the general and local authorities. In his unremitting effort to help the different nationalities retain pride in their national culture, 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. Jenson was the only person in the Church of his day to translate its history into a foreign language.

Andrew Jenson was acquainted with all of the Church presidents except Joseph Smith. He knew all of the Church Historians and Assistant Church Historians from George A. Smith onward. He worked for four different historians (Wilford Woodruff, Franklin D. Richards, Anthon H. Lund, and Joseph Fielding Smith), and served forty-four years as Assistant Church Historian. This span of years (he lived to be 91) gave him an unbelievable scope and understanding of Latter-day Saint history, enabling him to provide the basis for a continuous and comprehensive narrative of the Church's history up to 1900. Of the twenty-five persons who have served

as Church Historians and Assistant Church Historians since 1830, none has made a greater contribution in the collection of primary materials, the organization of them for research purposes, the indexing and cataloguing of materials and the preparation of volumes of narrative and documentary history.²⁶

Andrew Jenson was not of course a great interpretive historian; he was not concerned with the issues and problems of Latter-day Saint historiography. His primary goal was to produce a factual basis for an accurate narrative history of the Church. His guideline was “to present facts in truth and simplicity. Accuracy as to dates and figures [persons] will be a predominant feature.”²⁷

In pursuing this goal Jenson was honest and open. Whether faith-promoting or faith-questioning, whether significant or trivial, Jenson assembled everything—all the materials he could find bearing upon the history of the Church, its leaders and members. The fact that historical materials regarded by some as adverse to the Church still exist is a tribute to Jenson’s objectivity. He realized that time would provide historians with larger perspective, thus enabling them to intelligently interpret the Church’s first one hundred years. Indeed, without Andrew Jenson’s carefully-written narratives, prodigious compilations, and time-saving indexes, no modern Mormon historian could produce the monographs and interpretive histories which are now being turned out with increasing frequency.

While we might deplore that Jenson did not receive an education equivalent to his intellect—an education that might have permitted him to produce interpretive history—the monumental scope of his documentary compilations cannot be denied. Without the *Journal History*, *Encyclopedic History*, and *Biographical Encyclopedia*, historians today would find their task incomparably more difficult.

Andrew Jenson’s contributions to Latter-day Saint historical literature seem almost incredible, especially in the light of his background. From railroad construction worker to missionary, from translator-editor to traveler-compiler-historian—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.

Louis Reinwand, who completed his Master’s Degree in history at Brigham Young University in May 1971, has served as a research assistant for Church Historian, Leonard Arrington. After completing most of the research for this paper, the writer

learned of the preparation of a Master of Arts thesis at Brigham Young University by Keith W. Perkins, entitled "A Study of the Contributions of Andrew Jensen to the Writing and Preservation of LDS Church History." He recommends this splendid thesis as a more thorough examination of the subject of this essay. The quotations he has taken from the thesis are with Mr. Perkins' permission.

1. With respect to the change in surname spelling from Jensen to Jenson, Andrew wrote: "When I came here [to Utah] at 15 years of age not having done much as a boy I was influenced to change my Danish name Andreas to its equivalent in English, namely Andrew. And in making this change I thought I might as well introduce the *o* in Jensen instead of the *e* as the Icelanders, the English and Scotch spell it to this day." (Jenson to Richard R. Lyman, 22 February 1938, Jenson Papers at Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter referred to as HDC]).

2. Andrew Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson* (Salt Lake City, 1938), pp. 1–8. Unless otherwise noted, all the biographical information found in this essay may be found in the *Autobiography*.

3. *Autobiography*, pp. 28–29.

4. The Mormon contracts to do the grading for the Pacific Railroad are described in Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958) pp. 258–265.

5. Andrew Jenson, Diary, 20 June 1868, MSS., HDC.

6. *Autobiography*, p.65.

7. *Autobiography*, p.69.

8. See Clarence A. Reeder, Jr., "The History of Utah's Railroads, 1869–1883" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1970), p.186.

9. *Autobiography*, p. 93. Andrew had begun some writing of the history while on his mission.

10. *Autobiography*, p. 671; also *ibid.*, p.394.

11. Andrew says of this call: ". . . the authorities of the Church desired that I should obtain a better knowledge of the Danish language, so that I might be used by the Church in the future as a writer and translator." *Autobiography*, p.110.

12. *Autobiography*, pp. 604–605.

13. Jenson wrote of this episode: "On the 'divide' between Fountain Green and Salt Creek Canyon we met some deputy marshals who were searching for polygamists. Had they known what Bertha and I knew they could have made a 'haul' right there and then." *Autobiography*, p.148.

14. *Autobiography*, pp. 187–188, 192.

15. *Autobiography*, pp. 131, 132, 147, 522, 634.

16. *Autobiography*, p.391.

17. This paragraph is based primarily on quotations from Jenson's diary and accompanying discussion in Perkins, pp. 58–60.

18. *Autobiography*, pp. 480–482, 489; Salt Lake *Tribune*, 8 September 1912.

19. Diary, 3 March 1921. Apparently, Jenson was once considered to fill a vacancy in the Council of Seven Presidents of the Seventy. Perkins, pp. 29–30.

20. Diary, 23 March 1921; see also *Autobiography*, p.541. Jenson's innermost thought, as exemplified in this diary notation, were seldom evident to those around him. His family were not aware of any strong feelings he may have had at the time about church position. President Anthon H. Lund assured him that he was "honored in the Church and it is not positions but works that will count." Diary of Anthon H. Lund, 22 October 1912, MSS., HDC.

21. *Autobiography*, p.581.

22. Diary, 12 July 1912; *Autobiography*, pp. 542–543.

23. Diary, October 1921.

24. Jenson expressed the reasons for constructing the Memorial Hall as follows: “I desire the Building to become permanent and represent the life works of Andrew Jenson, hoping that future generations will be benefited by it and cause my name to be held in honorable remembrance on the part of descendants and the general public and especially to the Latter-day Saints.” Diary, 4 September 1941, as cited in Perkins, p.133.

25. The compilation of the Journal History began in January 1896 when Charles W. Penrose was appointed by the First Presidency to write a daily journal of current events. Duplicates of typewritten minutes kept by George F. Gibbs, secretary of the First Presidency, were to be incorporated into the Journal. (Diary of Charles Penrose, 10 January 1896, MSS., HDC). Later, Andrew Jenson was placed in charge of compiling a daily journal for the Church in the nineteenth century and Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., for the Church in the twentieth century. See Anthon H. Lund, *Conference Report*, October 1917, p.12.

26. The only possible rival was B. H. Roberts, who edited the six volumes of Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*. . . (Salt Lake City, 1902–1912), and who wrote *A Comprehensive History of the Church*. . . : *Century I* 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, 1930), and other historical works. See an appreciation and appraisal of his work in Davis Bitton, “B. H. Roberts as Historian,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, III (Winter 1968), 25–44. Professor Bitton suggests that Roberts was a historian, whereas Jenson was essentially a compiler. Letter to the writers, 14 July 1971.

27. Statement with respect to *The Historical Record* in *Deseret Evening News*, 12 November 1885. Jenson continually emphasized to church officers and organizations the importance of keeping full and accurate records. To this end, he prepared forms to be used by stakes, wards, and missions which required accurate historical notations and summaries.