

REVIEWS

A Gift from the Hart

Edward L. Hart, *Mormon in Motion: The Life and Journals of James H. Hart 1825–1906 in England, France and America* (n.p.: Windsor Books, 1978) 300+ pp., Index, illustrated.

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This fine book is a composite: one-third edited diaries and two-thirds biography. It provides readers, Hart descendants and historians with valuable bits of information about James Hart, LDS missionary work, emigration, St. Louis and Bear Lake stakes, and plural marriage not readily available otherwise. The book gives us much, but it also disappoints a little. The editor-author, a BYU professor of English, is no stranger to *Dialogue* readers (see Summer 1980 issue).

James H. Hart, born 1825, was an English convert to Mormonism in 1847 who spent his next six years doing missionary work. He kept an eleven-page diary of his English mission during February and March 1851 and a 175-page diary of his French mission from June 1851 to February 1854 (with a big 1853 gap), most of which time he was a counselor in the French mission presidency. The first diary is short and skimpy, the second more informative, especially when James copied letters into it. The French mission diary is important for Mormon historians because (a) there are very few primary sources for that early mission, and (b) the diary contains important comments about gospel struggles in France and the Isle of Jersey, about such personalities as presidency members Andrew L. Lamoureux and Louis A. Bertrand, and about hardships faced by a missionary with his wife along (James and Emily). One notable

story told in the diary is a case of hurt and bitter feelings between the Harts and President Lamoureux which, unlike too many personality clashes in church history, ended with Christian resolution rather than alienation.

Dr. Hart's primary purpose is to present the reader with an edited version of the two mission diaries. He sought to reproduce the text as accurately as possible while "keeping it readable." He said he did not delete or suppress. He followed up random French language entries with bracketed English translations. He employed some footnotes for citations and for information. He liberally riddled the diary text with bracketed editorial comments set off in smaller type—except when typesetters forgot the pattern (pp. 31, 46, 110–118). His bracketed annotations include many quotations from non-Hart diaries, from letters and from *Millennial Star* excerpts. In places where James' eighteen-page handwritten autobiography or his published "Early Reminiscences" contain more information about a diary matter than the diary does, the inserts sometimes dwarf the actual entries.

For some reason Dr. Hart does not refer to the French Mission Manuscript History in the LDS Archives. About 100 detailed pages of that history discuss James' mission setting and James himself, including such items not mentioned in *Mormon in Motion* as the fact that James was an ex-policeman, that a fellow missionary of James in Jersey talked Mormonism to famous French refugee Victor Hugo and that the mission presidency including James issued a lengthy letter to French saints which summarized mission history for 1853—the period skipped by James' diary.

The diary reader would benefit from a solid summary of the French mission to

place James better in the context of his colleagues and times.

The last two-thirds of the book is an "afterword" to the diaries—a long tail on a medium-sized animal. Dr. Hart, while preparing the diaries for publication, uncovered more and more family documents too valuable to ignore—James' letters and small autobiography, diaries of relatives and associates. "The new materials made it obvious that a simple annotation of the longhand journals would not suffice." Fearing the materials might never be assembled again, he created the lengthy "afterword" to capitalize on them.

The "afterword" covers a half century of James' more important life experiences—St. Louis stake leader 1854–1857, pioneer and stake presidency member in Bear Lake region, delegate to the Idaho legislature 1876–1881, LDS emigration agent in New York City 1881–1887, locator of the Church's only portrait of Oliver Cowdery, interviewer twice of David Whitmer, persecuted polygamist with three wives, poet, and pioneer Idaho newspaperman and attorney. As biography the "afterword" is survey rather than comprehensive, documentary history rather than reflective narration. It is based on readily available secondary sources like Journal History clippings, on a few diaries of Hart associates, some interviews and some Church unit records.

Historians will want more understanding than the book offers about James' emigration agency work—how many emigrants did he process through New York year by year? From what countries? What impact did he have on Church emigration policies and procedures? In the Bear Lake stake presidency, what impact did he have on the region's leadership style? How did Church stakes function at that point in time? In the Idaho legislature what legislation did James introduce, favor and oppose, and why? Making readers want more is a criticism

but also a compliment for whetting the appetite. A James Hart time-line in the front of the volume would be helpful, and so would a conclusion and summing up instead of an abrupt ending.

Proper citations are lacking, something we would not expect from an English professor. Too many statements stand without documentation—the summary history of cholera, a letter in the "Church Historian's Office" (what collection?), Sabina's obituary, James' obituary, Maud Osmond Cook's quote, Emily's detailed New Year's menu, and the Osmond and Paterson diaries, to name a few. Some citations (Chard thesis and Pratt article) should be footnotes rather than editorial insertions. And a bibliography is needed.

The book is packaged nicely—good layout, binding, illustrations and indexing. Typesetting of inserted materials in smaller type is not always consistent. Pictures are well chosen and useful, but for some reason, no picture is included of the Hart diaries or of a diary entry in James' handwriting. Maps too are needed to help general readers and relatives not familiar with Huntingdonshire and St. Heliers and the Bear Lake region.

Despite the above, *Mormon in Motion* is a cut above most published family history books. It is an ambitious project generally well done. While not great or definitive Mormon biography, it does provide badly needed information. As an edited diary it is faithfully transcribed and carefully annotated, although a cut below the editing standards of Juanita Brooks or Dean Jessee. Overall Dr. Hart has given us a solid contribution to Mormon history sources for which he deserves professional credit. Library shelves devoted to Utah, Idaho or Mormon history need this book.

It is hoped the James Hart descendants will be sensitive enough to obtain and appreciate the fine family history gift Dr. Hart has painstakingly produced for them and for the scholarly world.