Dale Morgan, Writer's Project, and Mormon History as a Regional Study

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AT THE 1968 ANNUAL MEETING of the Utah Historical Society, Juanita Brooks read a paper about the Southern Utah Records Survey of the early and mid-1930s that had been a forerunner to the Federal Writers' Project. She began with a direct and earthy line, "Jest a Copyin— Word f'r Word," and concluded with equal directness that the survey had taught her to see each record and to see it whole (Brooks 1969). They were simple lines and understated, but between them and hidden beyond was an adventure of the mind, a story about the personalities and events of one of the most exciting intellectual endeavors ever to take place in Mormon country. She spoke that evening about Dixie's poverty, about a king's ransom in pioneer diaries, about discovery, collection, and transcription, and about remarkable personal dedication.

Fortunately Brooks spoke also about friends made along the way. Most notably she praised her long-time colleague and advocate, Dale Morgan, whose work with the Writers' Project was the first step in a remarkable career as a historian of regional topics including state history, mountain men and exploration, and the Mormon experience.

This essay will take a look at Dale Morgan in the context of the Utah Records Survey and the Federal Writers' Project, with the intent to know him better and to shed light on regionalism's influence on Mormon history.

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In the years between the two world wars, regionalism loomed large in American thought. Artists, novelists, poets, pundits, historians, social scientists, and the public all made regional perception part of their thinking. The South, the Northeast, the West, and a score of subregions were characterized and commemorated. Nowhere did regionalism loom larger than in the programs and administrative apparatus of the New Deal. In cultural terms, New Deal regionalism expressed itself tentatively at first in the Historical Records Survey, of which Juanita Brooks's Southern Utah project had been an early experiment, and then more confidently after 1935 in the Federal Writers' Project, which was initiated under the Emergency Relief Act along with art, music, and drama projects (Brooks 1969; Brown 1983, 40; Mangione 1983, 39).

"A governmental adventure in cultural collectivism," the Writers' Project undertook to employ the down-and-out and at the same time provide creative opportunity for serious writers and leave a lasting literary mark. Unemployed writers of every description, and some who defied description, flocked to its standards. Before 1936 was over, 6,600 "writers" were enrolled, most of them certified as in need of relief, along with more than 12,000 volunteer consultants (Mangione 1983, 4, 9, 42). Directed nationally by Henry Alsberg of New York, the Project literally sought to rediscover America. In practice its political objectives and its literary dreams often clashed as ideological issues, New Deal politics, radical writers, deep-seated internal conflict, tension with state projects, and congressional investigations contributed to a stormy career. Nevertheless, it gave meaning to regional and national themes, producing a flow of state guides and thousands of regional statements. A surprising number of major figures were launched on distinguished careers by the project, including Morgan and Brooks. Other western regionalists affiliated with it included such figures as Ray A. Billington (the Massachusetts director), novelist Ross Santee (Arizona), historian George P. Hammond (New Mexico), and Montana director Harold G. Merriam, whose "infectious . . . evangelism" and determination not to "lose touch with the people" cast a lasting regional shadow in the Northwest (Mangione 1983, ch. 1-3, pp. 85-87, 92, 95; McDonald 1969; Chittick 1948; Shackle 1989).

No one reflected more honor on the Writers' Project or caused it more heartburn than Morgan's Idaho counterpart, Vardis Fisher. A graduate of the University of Utah, Fisher taught there in the 1920s and early 1930s before moving back to Idaho and a brilliant literary career which included *Children of God* (1939), a prize-winning regional treatment of the Mormons. Poverty-stricken despite several well-received books, the pugnacious Fisher had to subdue a fierce aversion for government bureaucrats when he took over the Idaho project. He battled

with the state WPA director and the Project's Washington office but "took his job with" what one writer termed "herculean seriousness." Determined to make the Idaho guide the first in the series, he worked day and night, ignored orders, arranged publication with Caxton Press, drank meddling Project editors under the table, and in general outmaneuvered all comers. To the dismay of the national office, Fisher's *Idaho Guide* beat the *Washington D.C. Guide* to the bookstands early in 1937 (Mangione 1983, 78–79, 201–9; Fisher 1960, 731–58; 1939). It was a regionalist's performance in the most direct sense. Critics hailed it at once. The Writer's Project was off to a good start. Still dubbed the "bad boy of the project," but now with an edgy fondness, Fisher continued his assault on Idaho history and was upgraded to regional supervisor for the Rocky Mountain States, and as such helped the *Utah Guide* mature (Taber 1968a, 1968b; DeVoto 1937; Bowler 1975).

In Utah the work of the Historical Records Survey initially proceeded with much more vigor than did the Writers' Project. That it did so was related in significant ways to Dale Morgan's development as a historian, a fact which now requires that attention be given to his early background. Born at Salt Lake City in 1914, he early experienced a number of crises. His father died when he was five, and when he was fourteen he suffered a total and permanent hearing loss due to complications from spinal meningitis. The next years were particularly difficult as he regained his general health and tried to adjust socially. Advised that commercial art offered some prospects for a handicapped person, he began specializing in that field while still in high school. But even in his early years, he had more of a way with the pen than with the brush and palette. After a fruitless period hunting advertising work in San Francisco, he abandoned all artistic activity except as an occasional diversion. In his affinity for intellectual activities and in his gift for the written word, he was a worthy descendant of his great-grandfather, Mormon apostle Orson Pratt.[1]

Morgan's mother was a devout woman who started him along conventional Mormon paths. During his early years, he was an active churchgoer, functioning in Aaronic priesthood presidencies and on one occasion receiving spiritual promptings that an older boy whom he had admired was "somehow sanctified and set apart, beautiful and holy"—anointed in fact to be a future president of the Church (in Walker 1986, 86, 97–98). As Morgan matured, he confronted a crisis

[1] Biographical information on Dale Morgan is found in Billington (1973); Walker (1986); Brooks (1969) and throughout his correspondence, including letters written to Juanita Brooks (in Walker 1986, 25–29).

of faith, however, and during college became what he later termed a passive atheist. He made this transition "without bitterness." Later he explained to Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie that he was on the opposite side of the greatest of all intellectual divides from Brooks, whose historical assumptions proceeded from an assurance that God lives. While Brodie's intellectual stance seemed similar to his own, he felt that he was freer of emotional hangups about his Mormon upbringing than she and therefore addressed questions in Mormon history with less pain (Morgan 1945; Brooks 1945; Walker 1986, 84–91).

Helped by his untiring mother, Morgan attended the University of Utah from 1933 to 1937. His academic interests ran to the social sciences and the humanities, although, obedient to his rehabilitation counselors, he continued to study art. In the mid-thirties, he found a number of English professors at the University who took an interest in him. He and other students with a literary flair were especially influenced by the superb teaching of Sydney Angleman, who taught composition and English literature, and Louis Zucker, who in addition to undergraduate courses taught classical literature (Papanikolas 1989; Chamberlin 1960, 380, 478, 520).

Important in Morgan's academic experience was *The Pen*, the University's undergraduate literary magazine, where he associated with an outstanding group of students, some of whom are notable to this day in Utah and Mormon letters. Fawn McKay, later Brodie, contributed a single short story, which addressed larger questions rather than regional or Mormon themes, suggesting she was keenly aware of social and feminist issues. Helen Zeese, later Papanikolas, wrote frequently of Utah's new ethnic immigrants in prose that was deeply moving and elegant. Richard Scowcroft offered poetry and fiction that were western regional in character rather than narrowly Mormon. Ray B. West reflected on the social and generational dilemmas of early twentieth-century Mormons. J. Radcliffe Squires contributed only one short essay but competed aggressively for editorial position.

More than any of the others, Morgan ranged broadly in *The Pen*. Among other things, he addressed the character of the student body, literary criticism, and questions of class and race discrimination. He also wrote fiction only shortly removed from autobiography when he described a blind man making his way in the business world. Interestingly, the leftist or proletarian chords of the era are muted in the writing of all these young people, although there is a kind of protest in McKay's feminist references and in the passion and pathos of Zeese's essays. In an article laced with references to communism and other issues of the day, Morgan lashed out at the senselessness of most thinking and, as one of his student colleagues pointed out, a short story

examining death was "practically Hemingway" (Papanikolas 1989; *The Pen*, Autumn 1933–Spring 1937).

Like Morgan, Papanikolas and Brodie later made enviable reputations in history and biography, the one commenting on the Utah scene from an ethnic perspective, and the other emerging as a national figure after *No Man Knows My History* (1945) won wide praise abroad and created tension in Utah. West established and for years edited the *Rocky Mountain Review*. Giving it an emphasis on Mormon studies that Montana regionalist Harold Merriman thought overbearing, West functioned in the "broad borderlands" of history in works of regionalism which he both wrote and edited during a long career. Richard Scowcroft maintained his literary bent, writing Mormon novels and otherwise distinguishing himself at Stanford. J. Radcliff Squires found his way into the Historic Records Survey. There he and Morgan addressed each other stiffly as Mr. Morgan and Mr. Squires for a time before Squires went on to a Ph.D. and a professorial career at the University of Michigan (Squires 1941; Papanikolas 1989).

After graduating from the University of Utah, Morgan signed on with the Historic Records Survey in the fall of 1937, apparently in a nonrelief position. At the time, the Survey was headquartered in Ogden. During the next two years it was at its high tide, often enrolling as many as ninety employees. Of these about thirty-five were assigned to Ogden. Salt Lake County also had a substantial staff, but many counties employed only one person. A crew of six or eight county specialists traveled regularly out of the Ogden office. As the Survey evolved, Morgan signed himself as "project historian" and did much of the writing. Substituting a flow of memos and notes for the spoken word, he learned to manage various field workers and specialists as a support staff. Together the Survey team collected a rich historical resource, some fifteen million words in all. Morgan, who quickly began to regard history as "the chief value," felt things could hardly have been better.[2]

The county inventories to which he was assigned proved to be a good training ground. At first the emphasis was on issuing inventories of county records, accompanied by thumbnail sketches to introduce the counties historically. Published before mid-1938, the first three inventories show no specific evidence that Morgan contributed. He

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[2] Morgan correspondence 1939 UHS WP-HRS Gen. Corr. May 1938–June 1939. An Ogden *Standard-Examiner* clipping erroneously dated 29 January 1939 (UHS, WPA Clipping File) recounts that the Survey reached a maximum staff of one hundred in October 1939. In June of the same year, eighty workers were employed, sixteen of them women. For information about history's importance in Morgan's life, see Morgan 1942d.

was recognized as a consultant and editor in the Box Elder survey (December 1938) but apparently did not write the historical sketch. Thereafter Survey policymakers called for longer historical sketches but failed to make clear whether they were intended to introduce future historians to county records, or to serve as county histories, themselves useful to general readers. Morgan sought to serve both masters, writing lengthy, meticulously researched introductory histories that were hailed by his peers. As Ray Billington pointed out, Morgan quickly demonstrated that he could "write magnificently, blending the virtues of verse and prose in sentences that combined poetic imagery and word sense with the exactness of expression required by the canons of history" (Billington 1973, vii; Morgan 1939b).

During Morgan's first years, the Survey was headed by Maurice Howe, who with Charles Kelly coauthored *Miles Goodyear* (1937), a biography of one of Utah's first white residents. Howe subscribed wholeheartedly to the Survey's aims and supervised its affairs with sufficient distinction to attract the Washington office. In 1939 he was transferred to San Francisco, to manage the troubled California Writers' Project, and then on to the Washington office where Morgan maintained personal and professional connections with him. Morgan's ultimate opting for the history of mountain men and exploration suggests Howe's influence on him, as do his unrelenting quest for factual accuracy and his preference for narrative regionalism over social or religious history.[3]

Right hand to Howe in the Ogden office was Hugh O'Neil, general editor of the County Records Inventories. O'Neil was a Catholic and had a deep interest in the Catholic experience in Utah and the role of churches generally. In addition to directing the full editorial function of the Inventories, he wrote numerous articles on the churches of the territorial and early statehood era. These were serialized in the *Standard-Examiner* and earmarked as a future Survey publication with the newspaper as a sponsoring institution. They apparently never appeared in book form, and O'Neil left Utah, perhaps following Howe to San Francisco. While O'Neil lacked Morgan's energy and gifts of style, his editorial work undoubtedly contributed to the younger man's literary development (*Standard-Examiner* 13 Dec. 1938, UHS Obit. file; WPA, May–Aug. 1938; Ellsworth 1954).

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[3] Kelly and Howe 1937; Mangione 1983, 68–69. The Writers' Project-Historic Records Survey collection at the Utah Historical Society Library (WP-HRS) contains many items of correspondence between Morgan and Howe from which some feel for Howe's role may be gained. See also Brooks 1936; Howe 1937; Morgan 1945b; Brooks 1945a. Some sense for Howe's role may also be garnered from the press, see for example the Ogden *Standard-Examiner*, 26 June, 8 and 10 July 1936.

In 1939 another individual who was to figure largely in Morgan's life entered the picture. This was Darel McConkey, sent from Washington to push the *Utah Guide*. One of McConkey's main contributions was to get Morgan transferred half time from the Survey to the Writers' Project. In this new job, Morgan wrote the historical elements of the *Guide* and played an important editorial role throughout. Morgan's close friend Dee Bramwell took over Howe's position as director of the Survey in August 1939, and the heavy Ogden bias of the project was diminished by establishing the state office at 59 South State in Salt Lake City. Here Morgan was within easy access of three significant records sources: the State Historical Society, the State Archives on Capitol Hill, and the Church Historian's Office at 47 East South Temple.[4]

In July 1940, Morgan became "supervisor" of what by then was the Utah Writers' Project. Although a staff continued at the Washington office, the Federal Project had been discontinued, and the Utah Project entered into a new close relationship with the State Historical Society and the Fine Arts Institute. It is not clear if Morgan continued half time with HRS or whether he carried tasks underway there with him to the Utah Writers' Project, but it is certain that he was now a figure to be reckoned with in both programs (DMC B1 F14, July 1940-Sept. 1942; WPA, 57–79).

Morgan immediately set off on one of Utah's truly remarkable intellectual odysseys. He finished earlier projects, including county archive inventories for Weber, Carbon, Utah, Uintah, and Emery counties, in which historical sketches bear his byline, and an inventory with an unattributed sketch for Sanpete County. He continued to push the collection and transcription of diaries, two hundred of which had by this time been processed. As he wrote Juanita Brooks 29 July 1942, the Writers' Project was "theoretically" not "supposed to have anything to do with journals, but . . . as you may know, theories are very elastic. . . . It will be a sad day when I cannot find expedients to get something done that I regard as important." This work still helps form the backbone of Mormondom's superb achievement in family history.

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[4] On Darel McConkey see Mangione 1983, 63; McConkey appears frequently after 1940 in Morgan correspondence and in news releases. Bramwell appears as "Acting State Director" for the Historic Records Survey in County Archive Inventories for 1939 and in correspondence for that year; see WP-HRS (B51 F corr 1938–39). The move of the Records Survey to Salt Lake City also suggests Morgan's growing importance in the organization as well as his instinctive need to be where the records were.

In addition, Morgan wrote night and day on projects in process, bootlegged time for research, and outlined and promoted histories on all sides as if he were searching desperately for something to do. Among his promotional efforts were various undertakings that were never finished, including a proposed photographic history of Utah, a history of the Forest Service, and an attempt to rescue the foundering "Grazing History," a cooperative project undertaken by fourteen western states (see DMC correspondence, B1 WPA). More successful were his *State of Deseret*, which appeared as three issues of the *Utah Historical Quarterly* (April, July, and October 1940); *A History of Ogden* (1940); and *Provo: Pioneer Mormon City* (1942). The latter, especially, reflected his growing entrepreneurial skills. First, he sold the idea to Provo sponsors and then to the American Guide Series, which published it.[5] His capacity as something between a literary agent and a resourceful grantsman was also apparent in the regional history proposals that became *The Humboldt: Highroad of the West*, published in 1943 a few months after he left the project, and *The Great Salt Lake*, which did not appear until 1947 (Morgan 1942c).

Behind the promotional ventures, one sees Morgan developing as a regionalist. Into the regional mold he worked an intense interest in Mormon studies and his mastery of the political and folk culture of Utah as well as his growing passion for mountain men and western trails. With respect to the latter, he maintained close contact with Maurice Howe. Even more important was his association with regional writer/publisher Charles Kelly, whose interests, like Morgan's, extended from his location in Utah, and from trails, mountain men, and outlaws to Mormon studies. As a working historian, Kelly had helped Morgan again and again on thorny problems during the Historical Records Survey period. Kelly knew the salt desert trails that fed into the Humboldt, he knew the lake itself that occupied Morgan's time in the mid-forties, and he knew John Wesley Powell and the mountain men. He also operated from an angry conviction that Mormon history was largely the product of dictatorship, conspiracy, murder, and sexual perversion. In all but the fierceness of Kelly's soul Morgan followed him, improving upon him as a trail master, researcher, and stylist, but seeing the Mormon story in shades of moderation rather than the damning conclusiveness of Kelly's views.[6]

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[5] See Morgan's letters to Provo mayor Mark Anderson, BYU president Franklin Harris, and Provo Chamber of Commerce secretary Clayton Jenkins, 20 July to 29 November 1940, DMC B1 WPA Corr.

[6] The flow of correspondence between Morgan and Kelly began at least by 1939 and lasted throughout the period of this study. For a sample of their early relationship,

Of equal importance but pointing Morgan in different directions were Andrew Jenson and Francis Kirkham of the LDS Church Historian's office and RLDS Church Historian, S. A. Burgess. With Burgess and Kirkham, Morgan honed his growing understanding of Joseph Smith. Jenson, until his death midway through the Project, was the masterkey to local data, useful especially when all other sources failed. While Kirkham and Burgess objected to some of the points Morgan made, especially in the *Utah Guide*, his relationship with all three men was friendly and constructive.[7]

Beyond them, people like mountain men enthusiast Roderic Korn and novelist/historian Wallace Stegner found Morgan a useful resource as his command of Western trails and exploration broadened. Morgan respected the redoubtable meteorologist/historian Cecil Alter for keeping the *Utah Historical Quarterly* afloat, as well as for his multi-volume history of Utah and his fur trade work. He also looked to Alter as a sponsor and publisher, but, with the impatience of youth, found little interest in exchanging ideas with Alter, whom he called "an amateur with a professional streak" and "a popularizer . . . misinformed about some things and shallow about others." After moving to Washington late in 1942, Morgan wrote a friend that he avoided Alter because he tended "to flee at shadows," to be, in effect, "more sensitive about some things of anti-Mormon potentiality than Mormons would be" (Morgan 1942).

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see Morgan's letters to Kelly 7 March, 15 March, and 17 April 1939, WP-HRS #B51. Later correspondence topics ranged from the Mountain Meadows Massacre to barroom jokes about Apostle Richard R. Lyman's excommunication but focused primarily on the fur trade and western trails. For a biographical treatment of Kelly see Peterson 1984.

[7] For examples of Morgan's letters to Jenson, see 7 and 10 March 1939, WP-HRS; for typical references in letters to others see Morgan 1942a and 1942b; for evidence suggesting that Jenson had become almost a "public property" of the Records Survey, see Salt Lake *Tribune* items on 6 July 1936, 10 and 11 July 1937. When Maurice Howe became state and regional director of the Records Survey in 1936, Francis W. Kirkham took Howe's position as director of the National Youth Administration and maintained some contact with the Survey and the Writers' Project thereafter; see undated *Standard-Examiner* clippings, HRS-WPA Clippings File, WPA 57-64; also Morgan's letters to Bernard DeVoto, Francis W. Kirkham, and Fawn Brodie, in Walker 1986, 92-101, 145-50, and 174-76. Although Kirkham and Burgess show up together in Morgan's correspondence, Burgess's contribution to Morgan's grasp of RLDS history was similar to Jenson's for LDS history; see S. A. Burgess to Dale Morgan, 5 June, 6 July, and 6 August 1942, WPA 57-59, Ut Guide Corr.; and Morgan to Burgess, 1 July 1942, 26 April 1943, and 13 August 1948, in Walker 1986, 34-40, 41-45, and 160-65.

Utah's academic historians, interestingly enough, are almost totally missing from Writers' Project correspondence. Several of them were working diligently to advance the Mormon story as an essential element of the West's regional history and, by their interest in mountain men and exploration, seemed likely candidates for interaction with Morgan and others at the Writers' Project (see Hansen 1981).

The centennial of the Mormon arrival was approaching, and interest in Utah history was at an all-time high; men like Joel Ricks at the Utah State Agricultural College, Leland Creer, Levi Edgar Young, and before his death, Andrew Love Neff at the University of Utah, and William Snow at Brigham Young University enjoyed enviable public reputations. However, it appears that Morgan and his colleagues at the HRS or FWP received little active help from the professors. Leland Creer reviewed the *Utah Guide* favorably, a fact which itself suggests a certain distance from the project. Later Morgan reserved his most vitriolic criticism for Creer's *Founding of an Empire* (1947), finding it to be "the shoddiest kind of historical workmanship" (Walker 1986, 154–56). Apparently Creer returned the sentiment in kind. When Morgan's name was circulated as a possible recipient of an honorary Ph.D. at the University of Utah, Creer is said to have scornfully put him down as a "dilettante," not a historian (Cooley 1989). Perhaps Creer's view was partially molded by Morgan's reluctance "to formulate theories" or "large views" about history (Walker 1986, 110).

With characteristic appreciation, Morgan regarded his years at the Writers' Project as a grand tutorial in the history of Utah and the Mormons (1942d)—a sound judgment which is evident not only in the kind of people with whom he associated, but also in his response to the records to which he had access. The *Inventory of State Archives* (1940) opened the state to him, and the county inventories opened the counties and localities. An untrained but willing field staff gave him access to the folk in a way that few have enjoyed. Working from the Ogden and Salt Lake offices, he became what he laughingly termed a "one man correspondence bureau," writing dozens of history-related letters each day (Morgan 1939a). Correspondence became a habit that lent itself to Morgan's deafness and enabled him to "network" information, books, and primary sources among a wide circle of coworkers. It led to a vast number of letters that may ultimately prove to be a more lasting contribution to history than even his large list of published works.[8]

[8] Even the relatively limited sampling of Morgan letters reproduced in Walker (1986) may represent a more important commentary than do the unfinished chapters of his Mormon history, although those chapters are without doubt the most concrete product of the work Morgan for years hoped would constitute his greatest achievement.

Morgan's lifelong fascination with libraries and archives was given a great boost with his move to Salt Lake City in 1939. In his three years there, he came to know secrets of the Church archives that escaped even its curators, discovering, among other things, Andrew Jenson's habit of inserting sensitive materials into the relatively open stake histories (Morgan 1942b). Having cleared such items through unsuspecting assistant Church historian Will Lund, he developed a certain confidence, painstakingly copying thousands of typescript pages and carefully working them through Lund's scrutiny. Emboldened, he had Lund read the *State of Deseret* in manuscript, which Lund accepted with one or two inconsequential corrections. Cecil Alter, the other reader, skirted several issues, agreeing to publish *State of Deseret* in the *Utah Historical Quarterly* only when he learned Lund had cleared it (Morgan 1942e).

Feeling almost like an undercover agent, Morgan developed his own code of research ethics. Fundamentally he was open handed with his finds. But he guarded carefully any materials copied from the Church Historian's Office under anything less than open circumstances. His faith in Juanita Brooks was complete, and he gave materials to her with total generosity, telling her only when she should not use his name or use it discreetly. Andrew Jenson's death became something of a screen providing an uncheckable blind for footnoting in case of a showdown as to how a source was acquired, for, as Morgan wrote to Juanita Brooks 16 July 1942, "Andrew is now among the immortals and he had a free hand around the H.O."

On the other hand, as much as he owed Charlie Kelly, Morgan refused to share any Church Archive's record with him that was even remotely restricted. His reticence to foster Kelly's Mormon interests was also apparent in the fact that he supported Brooks's interest in the John D. Lee journals which the Huntington Library had acquired (Walker 1986, 62).

The Church Historian's Office was the first of many libraries that bent Morgan in the direction of its collections. Indeed, the institutional hold of libraries on Morgan was extraordinary. He once described them as a "historian's supply line" without which one could no more subsist "than an army can" (1942b). But there was a deeper dependency for Morgan. Without the power of hearing as a social tool and without the benefit of any academic affiliation, he was more dependent on the recorded word than most, and throughout his life he reflected the influence of libraries and their holdings.

By late 1942, Morgan was "suffering from the malnutrition of" Salt Lake City libraries. Packing his books and research materials, he headed for wartime Washington, D.C., where he revelled in his access

to the National Archives and Library of Congress.[9] Soon his attachment to these rich facilities was such that he wrote Utah New Dealer Dean Brimhall, "I fear I [have become] a man of two countries" (1945a). Having made a preliminary search of the Mormon data in Washington by 1947, he barnstormed the country, visiting libraries, archives, and historic sites from New York to New England, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri. Successive records collections laid their hold upon him, and he maintained contact by letter with many facilities long after leaving them. Finally he returned to Utah, expecting to stay.

But once the materials he carried home were digested, he heard again the siren call of great research libraries in 1949 and began to plan "to clear out of Utah" (Walker 1986, 174). It was a plan he put into effect when he later took a position with the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California. One suspects that its holdings, as much as Director George P. Hammond's purposes, dictated that he concentrate on the fur trade and western maps, never exploiting the Bancroft's collection of Mormon/Utah materials.

If libraries gained a powerful hold on Morgan during the Writers' Project years, so then did history. This was apparent in his determination to follow each fact to its ultimate end, in his satisfaction with the well-turned word, and in his mapping out of enough research projects to last several lifetimes. One may well ask why this quiet man was thus driven. In response to such an inquiry, Morgan once marvelled that some seemed not to know what it was "to be scourged by a driving intellectual curiosity, to have the drive, the urge, and the will to know how something came about." He noted also "the attraction exerted upon an artist by a vacuum in the literature, a craftsman's urge to do a job well," and the need to "interpret" one's "origins." Although he had long since declared his independence, Mormon history clearly continued to be "a kind of catharsis . . . a challenge to . . . tread objectively between warring points of view, to get at the facts, uncover them for facts, and see what the facts have to say to a reasonable intelligence." Morgan concluded that for such reasons he was "neck-deep in the Mormons" (in Walker 1986, 121).

As Morgan left the Writers' Project, his most intense period of Mormon work lay just ahead. During the 1940s he drafted a plan for a comprehensive Mormon history in three or four volumes. Over the years he signed contracts with at least two companies for the series

[9] This is apparent in his correspondence generally for his early months in Washington. For an example of this as well as his frustration with "the way it [the Library of Congress] is hedged around with rules," see Morgan 1943d.

and missed successive dates for delivery of the first volume. His research was continuous, but of necessity he worked around a wide range of other interests and the demands of making a living.

In his correspondence, he appears as a broker and clearing house to workers in Mormon history, passing gossip, research data, and an unceasing flow of advice, help, encouragement, and criticism. Whatever the case, whatever the day, he was ready to mull a point or debate an issue, informing his Mormon-studies associates that wherever they worked, their interests crossed his interests, which were comprehensive. As he put it, "These individual things [research interests] are parts of an infinitely complex organism that I am trying to see whole" (Morgan 1942d; Walker 1986, 46). For Bernard DeVoto's *Year of Decision* (1942), with its treatment of the exodus from Nauvoo and the Mormon Battalion, he was a repeated critic. He read Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* (1945) several times in manuscript, respecting always her historical analysis and the "intellectual experience" of her growing insights. He stood by like a fretful midwife as midwestern regionalist Milo Quaife and BYU psychology professor Wilford Paulson read Brodie's manuscript for Knopf & Co. and took on Bernard DeVoto in bruising letters when a DeVoto review indicted Brodie for not adopting his own "paranoid" theory to account for Joseph Smith's behavior (Morgan 1943b; Walker 1986, 67–73, 92–102, 106–16).

To Juanita Brooks, Morgan made even greater contributions. In his reverence for the pioneer record, he was her soul mate sharing each new find. Moreover, he was a comrade in arms from the old Historical Records Survey. His influence was critical in the evolution and development of Brooks' *Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950) and *Quicksand and Cactus* (1982). Several of her edited works were also called to her attention by Morgan, including the journals of John D. Lee, Hosea Stout, Thomas D. Brown, and Martha Spence Haywood.[10] Morgan was also a promoter of Nels Anderson, who had pulled Washington strings to set up the original southern Utah Historic Records project and broken new ground with his sociological approach to *Desert Saints*. Even Maureen Whipple, who usually came in for brickbats from Morgan, was helped and on occasion commended for her courageous stands.[11] And with shifting emphasis, the circle of his correspondence went on to include Wallace Stegner, Ray B. West, Richard Scowcroft, Jonreid

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[10] The correspondence between Morgan and Brooks about each of her books and her edited journals is extensive and intimate. His high regard for each work is obviously closely related to the fact that she undertook the work.

[11] For criticism see Morgan 1943c and Walker 1986, 84–85. For praise and defense see Walker 1986, 123 and Morgan 1947b.

Lauritzen, Virginia Sorensen, and Harold Schindler in positive ways; and in bitingly negative ways it extended to others like Paul Bailey, whose work he described as "Bailey bilge" (Walker 1986, 49–52).

Partly because of this avalanche of correspondence, his own expected Mormon opus never appeared. The pressure of his mountain man interests and the lack of institutional support for his Mormon studies doubtlessly had much to do with it. The appearance, a decade and a half after his death, of his seven chapters dealing with Joseph Smith and the establishment of the Church may suggest an additional explanation (Walker 1986, 219–339). In evaluating the surviving portion of Morgan's work, one can find reasons for Morgan's hesitation in completing them. Granting these seven chapters had not been finished, the case made by the fragment chapters, of a youthful Joseph proceeding from one thoughtless assertion to another, is not convincing, a reality that a scholar of Morgan's critical capacity must have been keenly aware of. Those chapters and the projected history to which they belonged required a kind of analysis that he had not yet perfected. Again and again Morgan emphasized that historians should find all the evidence and let it present the argument. It seems possible, however, that fuller research will establish that he waited for new evidence or perhaps even for a theoretical superstructure that would allow evidence he did have to speak more convincingly.

In some degree, the failure of Morgan's Mormon history seems to be a natural result of his Writers' Project experience. The approach of the Project was local, or from the bottom up, as Morgan himself called it. It tended also to be narratively oriented and chronologically invested. As his plans for a multivolume Mormon/Utah history showed, he was capable of thinking about "the sociological development" of institutions and events. He considered the Mormon movement to have been both the product and the exemplar of Jacksonian America, and he contemplated a context-setting volume which he planned to call *This Is America*. As spelled out in his correspondence, his concept possessed some of the elements of Klaus Hansen's much later *Mormonism and the American Experience* (1981). It was the product of a wide-ranging and supple mind with advanced analytical capacity.

But in other ways Morgan's work was bound by detail. For example, his burning passion for the last fact led him while still at the Records Survey to write literally scores of letters all over the United States sleuthing out the origins and meaning of Tooele County's name. In this context, as state historian Gary Topping has commented, his conception of the "nature of the historical process" seems "curiously limited" (in Mulder 1986, 3; Topping 1989). One is inclined to view his "passion for minutia" and for "meticulous reconstruction" as a direct

product of his FWP experience and its milieu. Like many regionalists his career was in significant ways outside the realm of professional history but was part of a broader, more native kind of interest in the past. To this day, the advocates of state and local history and the buffs who lavish attention on rare books, detailed costume, and accurate re-enactment provide the great popular market for regional history. Morgan represented the best of this spirit. Ultimately, he was more part of it, more interested in the factual and narrative past than in interpretive theories or arcane argument. So for the moment, until fuller research shows him differently, Dale Morgan stands, product of the Writers' Project and Records Survey, in the company of associates for whom he set and still sets a worthy agenda of Mormon studies within the regional context.[12]

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[12] For Morgan on Tooele see UHS, WP—HRS B51 Corr 38-39 for a dozen or more letters written in 1939. Like so many other issues that Morgan identified, the question of Tooele's name has recently shown up in print. The writer apparently was unacquainted with Morgan's interest in the question and not only failed to cite his extensive correspondence on the topic but does not acknowledge his contributions to the *Tooele County Inventory* from which the article proceeds. See Tripp 1989.

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WPA. UTA Works Progress Administration: Federal Writers' Project, UHS.

WP-HRS. Writers' Project—Historical Records Survey Collection, UHS.