



Juanita Brooks was a Professor at Dixie College for many years and is a well-known author.

She is recognized, by scholarly concent, to be one of Utah's and Mormondom's most eminent historians. Her total honesty, unwavering courage, and perceptive interpretation of fact set her fellow historians more stringent standards of scholarship to emulate. Dr. Obert C. and Grace Tanner have been lifelong friends of Mrs. Brooks and it is their wish to perpetuate her name through this series. Dixie College and the Brooks family express their thanks to the Tanners.

## **Juanita Brooks Lecture**

### **“A Utah Moon”: Perceptions of Southern Utah**

A year or so ago I was driving with my mother from Logan toward Ogden before daybreak. A half moon, the size of which was accentuated by its place low in the sky, hung over the cliffs and crags of Willard Peak. Chipper and pert at ninety, my mother, who has lived most of her life in the foothill country of Arizona's Little Colorado, looked skyward and said, "That's a Utah Moon." It had a nice poetic ring and I sensed a meaning beyond what I heard. I asked why she called it that. She responded that it called to mind a predawn drive on the Cedar City to St. George stage when she was fleeing with her two infant daughters from an estranged husband in 1915. It was a time of deep emotion, things and events were fixed deeply in her consciousness. So more than sixty-five years later memory lingered, sense of place asserted itself to give our experience there at the foot of Willard Peak meaning and dimension.<sup>1</sup>

Growing out of this experience is an impulse to talk this evening about how southern Utah has been perceived. Although Utahns generally have responded to southern Utah scenery, my interest in it grows ultimately out of my own feeling that perceptions of southern Utah are vivid and strong, playing a role in our attitudes and awareness that is out of all proportion to the region's population or its political and economic clout. In part this is due to the reality of southern Utah's scenery itself. Its forms are extravagant, its colors both subtle and dramatic, its distances sweeping and panoramic, and its moods shifting. Certainly perception begins with what we see, and were it not for the variety and complexity of response we could perhaps leave it at that.

But, not surprisingly in a landscape so grand, the response has been various. Carried by the great unities of geology as well as by the way both prehistory and history have overlapped state boundaries, the romantic literature of the Old Southwest (at least one detractor has called it "New Mexico Baroque") has extended into the plateaus and canyon lands of southern Utah from New Mexico and Arizona.<sup>2</sup> For example, the 130 million copies of Zane Grey's novels carried views of southern Utah's scenic wonders and Mormon culture that were neither profound nor totally satisfying to Mormons but which with the 113 movies they spawned may well have done more to fix images of southern Utah in the popular mind than anything but polygamy.<sup>3</sup> The scientific literature that grew from federal explorations during the last half of the nineteenth century represents another major response to southern Utah. On the one hand it described the country in technical terms and on the other it portrayed southern Utah romantically as scientists responded aesthetically.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, images produced by Zane Grey and other southwestern regionalists and by John Wesley Powell and other scientists have influenced the outlook of Utahns as well as Americans generally. As they have portrayed southern Utah we have come to see it.

Yet there is a third way of seeing, which for many Utahns underlies regionalist and federalist views. That, of course, is the Mormon mode. While not an island of perception unto itself, Mormon vision adds different elements to the Mosaic that each of us sees when we travel through southern Utah or contemplate it. To Mormons, Utah was Zion, gathering place and halfway house to perfection, before it was either Utah or color country, and southern Utah remains Mormon country in its fullest sense.<sup>5</sup>

For our purposes here tonight I would like to look at how a selected group of writers, have been influenced by the scenic surroundings of southern Utah. To further organize our approach let me consider my topic under three general headings: first, pioneer diaries; second, the writings of scientists and colorful promoters; and third, and in some ways the most important, southern Utah writers of the mid-twentieth century. This adds up to a regional approach to seeing nature and scenery that in its

way is distinct from other ways of seeing. While it has not been devoid of contrivance, this local approach to nature and scenery has not been as involved with literary or artistic conventions as has the regional literature of the southwest, and of course, it has also lacked the full discipline of scientific writing. Yet happily it partakes of both as well as rests on pioneer views giving distinct regional qualities to the southern Utah experience that all of us sense but which we rarely take time to understand.

I am convinced that pioneer Mormons were as likely as the run of the mill frontiersman to see striking scenery, but pioneer diaries provide undeniable evidence that they were not trained to see it in terms of the romantic conventions that were so strong in the minds of many educated Americans during the nineteenth century. Mormon pioneers were not interested in attracting tourists or in producing a body of romantic literature. They rarely reached for superlatives as they defined what they saw. The minds of most were full of images drawn from the Bible and the writings of Joseph Smith rather than from romantic literature. When they undertook to describe their surroundings, they either did it perfunctorily or in terms of their own vision and the region's natural hostility. The result is a paucity of reference in early Mormon writings that suggests that pioneers rarely saw southern Utah as it is seen today.

The pioneer Mormon's failure to see in romantic terms can be illustrated by a comparison of the 1847 trails diaries of two prominent Mormon pioneers, Wilford Woodruff and William Clayton and the 1834 journal of mountain man William Marshall Anderson. Traveling with a party of trappers, but for the moment at least more an "observer than a doer," Anderson responded to his first view of the Rocky Mountains "in a state of romantic excitement." Among other things he wrote that "nothing could more nearly resemble the glories of sun-set clouds than the metallic splendor of the mountains. . . . Tis a scene for neither the pencil, pen or chisel, but far beyond the power of all to describe." The North Platte, he wrote, burst "through the black hills," its perpendicular walls rising four hundred and fifty feet above its channel. "How it got throug(h) I can no more tell than could Mr. Jefferson account for the Potomac's release from

its rocky prison. . . . Tis grand & beautiful." A few miles beyond Anderson killed an antelope, which in romantic terms he described as "that most active and graceful of animals. The silvery footed antelope, as Moore calls them. Mine was ebon footed."<sup>6</sup>

As University of Utah professor Don B. Walker has explained, young Anderson, "carried a good bit of literary baggage in his head. . . . He was conditioned by the culture of his time to expect and see in special ways. . . . Again and again he would put what was new and strange in the West over against what in a sense he was looking for—the romantic ideal." As Anderson strained for new superlatives to express his rapture, his mentors were Thomas Jefferson, probably America's most influential romantic, and Thomas Moore, an extremely popular Irish romantic who among other things wrote "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms."<sup>7</sup>

Wilford Woodruff and William Clayton also saw the country. It was as new and strange to them in 1847 as it had been to Anderson and doubtlessly as exciting. They looked at it, talked about it, measured it, and recorded it. But when it filled them with rapture they invoked God instead of Jefferson and Moore. Instead of reaching for literary superlatives they gave thanks. At approximately the same spot that provoked Anderson's outpouring, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball mounted a bluff from which they caught their first glimpse of the mountains. As Clayton puts it, they "bowed before the Lord and offered up their prayers together."<sup>8</sup>

Three weeks later Wilford Woodruff and Clayton both described two of the greatest landmarks of the entire trail, Independence Rock and Devils Gate. Clayton made as close an approach to the lyrical as one sees in the pioneer party's journals. He even used the word romantic, but it is clear that unlike William Marshall Anderson he was not at home in the romantic idiom. "There are" he wrote, "many high hills and ridges of the granite rock in the neighborhood, especially in the east and west, all entirely destitute of vegetation and which present a very wild and desolate as well as romantic aspect." Without Jefferson to guide his words he continued, "I can describe their appearance

only by saying that it seems as though giants had in by-gone days taken them in wheelbarrows of tremendous size and wheeled up in large heaps, masses of heavy clay which has consolidated and become solid, hard rock.”<sup>9</sup> Woodruff was even more prosaic in the direct thrust of his descriptions but makes it clear that the great monument produced deep feelings in him as well. Again he rose to the occasion by climbing to its highest point and there offering the first prayer “according to the order of the Priesthood.” Significantly, he prayed that God would “hasten the time of the fulfillment of his promises. . . concerning the building up of Zions in the last days” and “avenging the blood of the Prophets,” petitions which partook of a romantic response not unlike the national mood of Manifest Destiny but tempered by Biblical and Book of Mormon values.<sup>10</sup>

As was the case with Woodruff and Clayton, southern Utah’s pioneer diarists were not versed in the romantic idiom and rarely paused to describe the rich scenery through which they passed. One suspects this in some measure reflected the fact that life was subject to immediate and distinct challenges. The first exploration into the far south, for example, was made in 1850 by Parley P. Pratt in the dead of winter. Although Pratt was something of a romantic himself, he saw little color under the snow through which he waded both going and coming and was often so hard pressed to keep body and soul together that all he had thought of were the difficulties and the cold monotony of the trip. Interestingly enough Pratt foreshadowed St. George’s advertising of the hard winter of 1983-84 when he composed a song “O come, come away, from northern blasts retiring.” The song became, he recorded, a camp favorite, as “it seemed to beguile the tedious winter evenings around our camp fires.”<sup>11</sup>

To a surprising degree the failure of southern Utah’s pioneer diarists to see the scenery around them was a product of their pre-occupation with village and church life. Even when they did rouse themselves to see the country, it was often in negative terms. Typical was the reaction of Charles Walker of St. George who makes what is almost the only entry on the environment in the 950 pages of his diary when he first arrived at St. George in 1862:

St. George is a barren looking place. The soil is red and sandy. On the north ranges a long high red rocky bluff. On the East is a long black ridge of volcanic production. On the west the same. On the south runs the Virgen river, a shallow, rapid stream from which a great portion of the land is irrigated. To look on the country it is a dry, parched, barren waste with here and there a spot on the margin of the streams. Very windy, dusty, blowing nearly all the time. The water is not good and far from being palatable. And this is the country we have to live in and make it blossom as the Rose. Well its all right; we shall know how to appreciate a good country when we get to it. <sup>12</sup>

Indicating that the order and form that village life imposed on the wilderness comforted Walker as well as suggesting that a sense of humor helped, was a folksong he later wrote. Its first verse ran:

Oh, what a desert place was this  
When first the Mormons found it;  
They said no white men here could live  
And Indians prowled around it.  
They said the land it was no good,  
And the water was no gooder,  
And the bare idea of living here,  
Was enough to make men shudder. <sup>13</sup>

That men did indeed shudder is apparent from other diaries. George Washington Brimhall, for example, indicated he would rather spend "three years among the Trafalgar Turks" than make

a trip into the canyons of the Colorado.<sup>14</sup> William J. Flake thought a seven year mission to England would be easier.<sup>15</sup> At the time of an exploration southeast of St. George a few months before he moved with several of his wives to Lee's Ferry, John D. Lee responded to a suggestion that the country would be "of Much benefit to us" with the comment that he "would want no greater punishment than to be Sent" there. In what shortly proved to be a particularly ironic postscript for his wives Emma and Rachael who followed him into the region's wastes, he added "I would . . . take no woman to such a place."<sup>16</sup>

For Lee, who was executed for his involvement in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the canyon wilderness was not only a Mormon withdrawal but a refuge from the law. He journalized freely about all manner of experiences there, but was terse and brief when it came to scenery. In typical entries he noted, "Roling, cedar Ridges covered occasionally with Petrified wood" and "I scaled the high & Rugged Mountains & descended the Gulches & steep canyons." Even a "Boat ride by the Silver light of the moon" stirred little more than satisfaction in him. As he put it "All felt well. Went to rest about Midnight, all Satisfied."<sup>17</sup> Not only did the canyons hide Lee, but contact with river running scientists and adventurers notwithstanding, his life placed him well beyond intellectual currents that might have led him to view his environment differently.

However, one does see in pioneer diaries evidences of biblical and miraculous idiom that reflects favorably on the country. For example Lee commented once that a steer fattened on the Arizona Strip was a "Beef fatted on the Plains of Caanan." On another occasion what seemed to him the miracle of the Mormon adaptation to the country was reaffirmed in a mishap in the rough country through which he and others were guiding federal explorer John Wesley Powell towards the Paria River. "A Maracculous accident," he wrote, "occured with Bishop L. W. Roundy" who was thrown out of his buggy as it and his team fell over a precipice. Powell, who witnessed the event told Lee "if he had been in the States, he would have expected to have seen a Man's Neck broke, a Pair of Horses killed & a carriage stove to attums at least. But with you Mormons, in a moment all is up again & no body hurt."<sup>18</sup>

In order to make the point that for many Mormon pioneers southern Utah was both a refuge and an experience that rarely permitted the luxury of seeing in romantic terms we may contrast Lee whose experience was perhaps most desperate of all, to Frederick Dellenbaugh and Clarence N. Dutton. Aptly called the "poet laureate of the high adventure of American. . . exploration," Dellenbaugh brought together the romance of stupendous scenery, sustained adventure, exploration, scientific discovery, and the enthusiasm of well connected youth in one of the great American adventure stories, *A Canyon Voyage: The Narrative of the Second Powell Expedition down the Green-Colorado River . . . in 1871 and 1872*.<sup>19</sup> Dellenbaugh was followed by an entire fraternity of adventurers whose writings and endless debates have filled the pages of *Desert Magazine*, *Touring Tropics*, *Sunset* and state and regional historical journals as well as books that undoubtedly molded perceptions about Utah for hundreds of thousands of readers. Similarly Dutton, a nineteenth century geologist who was what Wallace Stegner has called the extension of Powell's romantic self, divided his time for several years between Washington D.C. and the plateaus and canyons of the Colorado River preparing his monumental *Tertiary History of the Grand Canyon*. Like Dellenbaugh's book, it is replete with map work, illustrations, and romantic descriptions that certainly qualify it as both a great artistic work and a superb piece of promotion.<sup>20</sup>

The significant contrast is that Lee, unlike Dellenbaugh and Dutton, had no community outside the canyons. Unlike them he was unschooled in the romantic conventions, and unlike them he knew nothing of the luxuries of youth or of good connections. In short he lacked distance to give him perspective. His experience was no staged adventure but the last act of a long fight. It is more to wonder that he saw the Utah moon at all than to be surprised that he lacked romance as he contemplated his surroundings.

Other pioneers, of course, had greater latitude in which to move, but by periods at least, many saw southern Utah in terms of tragedy. A good example is found in the diary of Aaron Johnson, one of the missionaries who settled Arizona's Little Colorado in 1876. Returning to Utah some years later, Johnson's

little daughter, Winnifred, died a day or two out from Lee's Ferry along the desert front of the Echo Cliffs. With the help of Emma Lee she was buried at the Ferry. Johnson closes his diary entry in sorrow deepened by the mood cast by the wilderness setting:

Closed, but for a time are Winnifred's eyes!  
Night and day, it seems, for me she cries!  
I seem to hear her voice, above the River's roar!  
Pleading with me, to visit her resting place once more!  
At the Ferry of John D. Lee,  
Where the Muddy Colorado,  
Rushes toward the Sea!<sup>21</sup>

Words of deep sorrow there can be no question. But these are also the words of a romantic whose sensibilities are heightened and given dimension by the setting.

A few, thrust into the scenic vistas of southern Utah for the first time, describe it in diary accounts, but even in these cases they generate little feeling that what they saw seemed beautiful. An example was Edwin G. Wooley, of St. George, who kept the diary of a military expedition in 1869. More given than most to description, he was certainly not enamored of the country's visual qualities. Of scenery near the Paria River he wrote, "If the deserts of Arabia or Africa are any worse than this place we don't think we would like traveling in those countries." Pushing on toward the Colorado River they passed "down a steep rock into an opening or valley in rocks." Far from the beauties the modern eye is trained to see at Lake Powell, Wooley felt repelled and hedged in. "It is rocks around, rocks above, rocks beneath, rocks in chasms, rocks in towers, rocks in ridges, rocks everywhere." Even the dirt that held it together was "decomposed rocks."<sup>22</sup>

The years around 1900 are a key time as far as changing perceptions of southern Utah go. Indeed, it was an era during which Utah underwent a marked process of Americanization. As southern Utah scholar Gustive Larson so ably showed in his *The Americanization of Utah for Statehood*, this was in part a process of Mormon concessions in terms of polygamy and the involvement of the church in government. But it was much more

than shifts in theology and politics. Opportunity and prospects also underwent important changes. Although the process took more than two decades, the frontier began to close. Not only was the sacrifice involved in the Mormon withdrawal into desert refuges no longer necessary, it was less possible, as the last remote spots were taken up. Education and business more than new land became the new frontiers.

As a primary tool of desert conquest, the Mormon village came increasingly into focus as part of the changing image of Utah. Imbued with a strong agrarian sense of visual and communal rightness, Mormon pioneers were from the first deeply aware of the village as an aesthetic as well as functional form, locating it appropriately in relationship to the terrain and laying it out in ordered four square grids.<sup>23</sup> Always the object of interest and often of admiration, the village was seen increasingly by observers as an integral part of the Utah environment. Scientists like Powell worked it into their literature as an ideal form of settlement during the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>24</sup> Later social scientists, poets, novelists, and film producers gave it a mythic form that in the popular mind reached far beyond the actual experience of people with it.

Thus the village became an enduring feature of popular conception both at home and abroad. As we have seen, other things changed. And so, of course, did the village, but in significant ways it remained, becoming a monument to pioneer commitment, a physical expression of community, a harking back to a simpler better past, and an overtone of quaintness and charm. As a landscape form, the village marked Mormon Country generally, but in combination with desert wilderness and scenic wonders it became a special insignia of southern Utah, a form on the land that highlighted the already luminous landscape. It was in effect a human verification of a land naturally unique but now doubly set apart to become a scenic and cultural resource to the nation. But more to the point here, the village as part of the landscape plays a continuing role in molding our images of southern Utah.

Perhaps more directly part of the changing context of the turn of the century were changing attitudes toward scenic wonders

themselves. As we have seen, Mormon pioneers were not well equipped to see the region in romantic terms, nor did their roles as desert conquerers fit them well to appreciate it aesthetically. But by 1900 others with more appreciative eyes had been in the country for at least two decades. Inevitably attitudes were modified. In addition to scientists and adventurers who ran the canyon rivers, surveyed the plateaus, dug the ruins and took up temporary residence; railroads, highways and parks became part of the scene bringing barrages of publicity and ultimately crowds of tourists. Seeds of romantic awareness quickly sprouted.<sup>25</sup>

A prime example of how seeds of changing perception were planted is found in the short diary of Mary Elizabeth Lee. Born in southern Utah, she married into polygamy in 1882. Thereafter she went underground, living with no apparent husband and out of the way. Told in the second person, her narrative is one of the best treatises I have seen anywhere on the "body English" by which a lone polygamist woman with children undertook to lose herself in the village society as well as a useful suggestion of how scenic wonders entered the consciousness of some.

Taking a stagecoach from Modena about 1900, she listened to two fellow passengers laud the scenery. As she related,

this was the first time in Mary's life that she had looked upon this passing scenery with any thought about its beauty . . . . Now when the grandure of the colorful and varied formations of the passing landscape came into view, these strangers exclaimed in their delighted manner at each scene. Mary, too, caught their spirit of appreciation, and it was as if she, too, was beholding the splendor of the scenic wonderland for the first time. How in the world had she been so unseeing and unfeeling all her past life!<sup>26</sup>

During this period of change a number of Utah artists, photographers, and writers made signal contributions to the developing consciousness of Utah's scenic wonders for commercial and artistic reasons. Among these were photographers Charles Savage and George Eddy Anderson and artists H. L. A. Culmer and Alfred Lambourne, both of whom wrote as well as painted, and

Frederick Dellenbaugh, who as we have seen gave his heart to southern Utah although he lived in Utah for less than two years. To suggest what their impact was I may write briefly about an additional contribution of Dellenbaugh's and about Alfred Lambourne.<sup>27</sup>

After an absence of twenty-seven years Dellenbaugh returned to southern Utah in 1903 and immediately turned his pen and his paint brush to the promotion of what became Zion National Park. Making a trip through the "mellow beauty" of village fields that "rival the Garden of Eden" along the Virgin River he revelled in an early spring exploration of the river's canyons. Writing of it in the popular *Scribner's Magazine*, his always facile pen reached new heights, this time reflecting evolutionary values as well as romantic:

Away below, sage-covered slopes extend to the distant green of Virgin City, overshadowed by the towering magnificence of the Great Temple, standing unique, sublime, adamantine . . . . There is almost nothing to compare to it. Niagara has the beauty of energy; the Grand Canyon, of immensity; the Yellowstone, of singularity; the Yosemite, of altitude; the ocean of power; this Great Temple, of eternity. . . We are at last face to face with the Unattainable. . . . There comes a feeling that it ought to speak, to roar, to belch forth fire and brimstone, to give some sign of the throes of world-birth it has witnessed since these rocks were dyed in the antediluvian seas. But only the silence of the outer spheres encircles it; in all that wondrous expanse of magnificent precipices we hear no sound save our own voices and the whisper of the wind that comes and goes, breathing with the round of centuries.

During this same trip Dellenbaugh apparently refreshed his mind and drew sketches from which he rendered paintings that became the heart of a Utah exhibit at the St. Louis world's fair which highlighted the beauties of Zion Canyon and did much to forward the establishment of a national monument there a few years later.<sup>28</sup>

Much more a product of Utah was Alfred Lambourne, who

was a particularly interesting figure as far as an emerging scenic consciousness goes. Born in England, and perhaps more fully exposed to romantic influences than some, he came to Utah in 1866 when he was sixteen years old. For years he was associated with the Salt Lake Theater where he painted scenery. After 1890 he devoted himself to landscape painting and writing, publishing in all, fourteen richly illustrated and sensitively written books.<sup>29</sup> He lived for fourteen months on Gunnison Island on Great Salt Lake, traveled widely throughout the scenic wonders of the west penning and sketching his own reaction to them; he tramped the Wasatch, finding and naming its lakes, and scaled the peaks of the Uintas.

Above all, Lambourne is an example of a mind that responded to its surroundings. In few was the sense of place more strongly developed. What was near was dear. As he poignantly put it, "That is best which lieth nearest." There he found himself. As he explained, "Under certain conditions, a place becomes a part of us; we own it. We absorb it into our lives. It cannot be taken from us. It is ours, and without title or deed. We are associated with a certain spot of earth, we have our lives shaped by it, or, if that be not the case, we stamp the place with our individuality." Of a Gunnison Island homestead which slipped out of his grasp legally he wrote "This Place Is Mine."<sup>30</sup> He was a bit of a Don Quixote, but he came near speaking for all when he penned these lines and I think got especially near the heart of things for those for whom southern Utah looms large.

Whatever the cultural baggage its people have carried into it, southern Utah as a place has laid an extraordinary hold on them. Whether it threatened them or charmed them, many have said "This Place is Mine." Here the sense of territoriality has been strong. That was true of the pioneer diarist who took time to record events as it was of the geologist that made it a laboratory for great scientific discovery or the archaeologist who in the name of scholarship manipulated the law protecting his dig from puthunters. It has also been true of a remarkable group of writers whose sense of place focused there in the decades after 1920 to add significantly to the disproportionate visibility of the southern Utah image. Indeed, what may rightly be termed a Dixie School

of Utah writers emerged, directing the Utah gaze as it were from its firm fix on Salt Lake City and creating an awareness of southern Utah that is as saleable as the Dixie sun and good Pine Valley building lots.

One is tempted to talk of each of these writers briefly. To tell of old Joseph Fish's pioneer trek to Arizona, his development as a major regional historian who laid the foundation Arizona history has built on ever since, and then returned home to southern Utah's Enterprise, for which, in the last days of life, he pounded out a model local history that like his eight or ten manuscript volumes of Arizona and Rocky Mountain history have never been published. It would be good too to tell of LeRoy and Ann Woodbury Hafen's monumental contributions to state history and fur trade history. I long too to tell of Nels Anderson, the teenage hobo who dropped off the rods in a southern Utah railroad town, to be taken in by a hospitable family. In 1942 he wrote *Desert Saints*, perhaps the first really modern Utah history and one that using your region's superb diaries began to fix the eyes of all who would understand Utah, on Dixie. And then there was quiet humble Karl Larson, local historian par excellence, who cries out for recognition, as does Maureen Whipple, author of *Giant Joshua*, a novel still widely acclaimed as the best ever written on Utah. The list could go on-folklorists, park historians, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers writers and perhaps most of all my own mentors, C. Gregory Crampton, who enhanced southern Utah perceptions by bringing word and image together brilliantly in *Standing Up Country*, and David E. Miller, whose *Hole-in-the-Rock*, has been one of Utah history's all-time best-sellers.

Time, however, admits us to consider only two southern Utah writers. Both were prominent. Both had a keen sense for southern Utah and both did much to influence the way Americans see the southern Utah image. One comes from a romantic regional mold and one from a local mold. One you will anticipate, the other I think you will not. They are Charlie Kelly and your own Juanita Brooks.

More influential in fixing southern Utah's image in the mind of the nation than most know are the romantic writings of Charlie

Kelly. A fierce curmudgeon of a man who loved as well as he hated, Kelly came to Salt Lake City in the early 1920s and somewhat surprisingly, in view of his prejudices, remained in Utah until his death in 1971. Trails, mountain men, outlaws, and Mormon baiting became his life. In the late 1930s he followed this interest in Wayne County, where he became superintendent of the Capitol Reef National Park and pursued a consuming interest in the history of the Colorado River and the Colorado Plateau. In such works as *Holy Murder: The Story of Porter Rockwell*, Kelly attacked Mormons so intemperately that many Utahns found it difficult to appreciate either the excellence of his trails work which attracted the best writers and historians in the West to him, or the sound scholarship of his respected works on mountain men Miles Goodyear and Caleb Greenwood.<sup>31</sup>

But offended and nonreaders alike have been profoundly influenced by Kelly's *The Outlaw Trail: A History of Butch Cassidy and His Wild Bunch*. A work couched squarely in the outlaw tradition of the Southwest and located in the color country of its Colorado Plateau extensions. *The Outlaw Trail* not only gave our perceptions of southern Utah a southwestern bent but, even more than the life of Butch Cassidy itself, is probably responsible for a full blown Utah badman mythology. Including movies, TV specials, pulp articles, resident movie stars and arguments about where Butch was last seen, the spin-offs of this mythology influence us all.

Juanita Brooks, for whom this lecture series is appropriately inaugurated, occupies a uniquely eminent position among southern Utah's image makers. In significant ways she has become the voice of southern Utah. She has written scores of articles and fifteen books including *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, which has gone into multiple printings and won wide acclaim nationally.<sup>32</sup> More than any other Utah historian she has emerged as a realist in these works. Like other realists she has been attracted to common people and in their doings finds her themes. Indeed she is almost narrowly realistic in style, and in description of setting and treatment of events she adheres to a demanding code of honesty. Her characters are plainly and accurately drawn, yet their ultimate worth is never in question.

In these qualities as well as in her recognition of the human costs of the frontier experience, she was willing to forego the conventions of romantic and institutional history that prevailed in many quarters during her early years. Indeed, up to her time, Utah and Mormon history had been cast largely in one or more of three stereotypes. These may be referred to as divine interventionism, devilish subversivism, and the history of romantic nationalism.

Mormon historians had been influenced by the thought of divine intervention and for many of them the history of the church was essentially the history of God's doings on earth. Since beginning and outcome were fixed, there was a tendency to regard the agent as well as the program to be infallible. Devilish subversivism was the reverse side of this same coin. By its conventions Brigham Young was a monster of evil, the Saints dupes, and the Mormon movement a conspiracy.

With the appearance of Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of Utah* in 1888, the Mormon experience began to be worked into the literature of romantic nationalism, by which the conquest of the American West was celebrated. Responding in part to nationalism, in part to the West's bigger-than-life landscape, and in part to nostalgic regret at the passing of the frontier, romantic nationalists created heroes - men to match their mountains - as they wrote of conquistadores, mountain men, explorers, rail-roaders, cowboys, miners, and pioneers. It was, as intellectual historian Vernon Parrington explained in an introduction to a reprint of O.E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, "The poetry of America in the silent march of a race toward the far-off Pacific, hewing its way triumphantly through forests and mountains."<sup>33</sup>

In the hands of the romantic nationalists, the Mormon story became part of a larger mosaic, an element in a grand national adventure, which, if not actually orchestrated by Providence, represented some sort of great and inevitable continental dynamic.<sup>34</sup> For the larger national story to be effective, it became necessary for the Mormon story to be a success. And so it was couched. Mormon pioneers were heroic figures redeeming desert and canyon in elemental confrontation. And so, in the main, it has remained. The Mormon experience is one of the

great epoch themes of western history. True, echoes of the conspiratorial may still be heard, but Brigham and the southern Utah pioneer stand in every history text and, in our general historical treatment, secure in the pantheon of western greats, but like others of their hero company not quite believable.<sup>35</sup>

None of these three approaches to the past appealed to realist Juanita Brooks. In *Mountain Meadows Massacre* and her other southern Utah works she substituted the realism of the commonplace and an affinity for the unadorned truth. Her writing reveals no wish to adopt values of other cultures nor any secret hankering for New York, Cambridge nor yet the power marts of the national capital. To the contrary, she accepted what she was with finality. First, last, and always she was practical and down to earth - a product of the folk culture of Mormon Country's Dixie.

Fundamentally, her affinity for what was essentially her own reflects a sense for the underdog that is itself an extension of the experience of her life. From the beginning she came in every back door there was to come in. She was born a scrawny, disadvantaged child in the blistered desolation of southern Nevada, suffered more than her share of setbacks in her youth and local schooling, met immediate tragedy in her first marriage, and underwent all the disadvantages of a woman and a country hick in her higher education. She was employed outside her discipline at a little known college and picked up a forgotten function of history in her Public Works Collection of the 1930s. Later she wrote about forbidden topics and scapegoats and found it necessary to go underground, virtually leaving only back doors open to her. An underdog herself, it is little wonder that she wrote about the Mountain Meadows Massacre and John D. and Emma Lee.

Brooks' writing reveals much about the workings of place in her own life and in the lives of the people about whom she writes. From experiences unfolding from birth she developed a keen sense of place and of the interdependencies between self, community, and environment. Because she knew the country's limits and understood that bounds within it as well as around it changed and varied with time and shifting contexts, there was a

practical quality in her approach to place. Place was something you lived in with which you coped. You took its measure and found it to be manageable. Its austerity could be adjusted too, its heat, winds, dust and distances borne. Its beauty and grandeur were so much in surfeit, so near at hand, and so mixed with monotony that romantic response was subordinated to the matter-of-fact and the realistic.

One searches in vain in her writing for the grandiloquent and mystical language with which so many writers have responded to the southern Utah landscapes. She was, after all, too close to it - too distant from the promotional and from the romantic impulses that teach us to rhapsodize about the beauties of the West to understand that a less practical view was possible.

Nevertheless, her sense of place did go beyond the practical to the intuitive, to moods and to inuendoes that belonged in the realm of feeling rather than to the empirical. Understanding her attachment to specific places may help explain this. With respect to moods of well-being, of intimacy, of order and belonging, and of adaptation to desert rhythms, Bunkerville and St. George best symbolize her spirit. In terms of anguish, of failed dreams, and of tragedy Mountain Meadows was central. With topography and plant life transformed from the verdure of high country meadow to the harshness of eroded sagebrush plateau, its very presence seemed a reminder of failed dreams and sorrow. In the hands of Juanita Brooks the place and event of Mountain Meadows work together in the same way that Lee's Ferry worked on the mind of Aaron Johnson after he buried his infant daughter there, sharpening and strengthening perceptions of southern Utah.

Finally, one sees a related strain of melancholy in Brook's southern Utah writings. Less central than the tragic mood, melancholy seems a feminine response to the country and comes to focus on the places associated with Emma Lee, wife of John D. Lee, about whom Brooks wrote.<sup>36</sup> At New Harmony, at the oasis points beyond the Colorado River, at Winslow in northern Arizona, and most indelibly at Lee's Ferry's Lonely Dell, melancholy casts lingering shadows. But ultimately there was in the relationship between Emma Lee and the places she lived, the practical quality of coping and surviving that so characterized

Juanita Brooks' entire perception of reality.

At last what can we say of Juanita Brooks that brings us closer to an understanding of perceptions of southern Utah? In part she is squarely in the tradition of the pioneer diarists. Like them, she was not at home in the romantic idiom. But pioneer values took a turn for unadorned realism in her. Not only did she not strain for superlatives to describe the country but she found superlatives wanting in describing its men and women. Her books people the country with real figures and in the process let us see the country as it both was and is.

Thus perceptions grow. They grow from a multitude of influences. From scenery itself, from the Southwest, from Washington D.C., from Mormon pioneer, from parks promoter, romantic, naturalist, explorer, river runner, and scientist. They grow too from village life, railroad and highway, from novel and movie. Perception is a composite differing by time, place and person. Perhaps most important, perceptions of southern Utah play useful roles for all of us. Wayne Owens, defeated gubernatorial candidate, stands lonely and wind blown in his last chance T.V. ads, single-handed, as it were, waging his campaign for unpolluted canyon lands. Real estate promoters traffic in sun and color. And potential retirees like myself look for prospective spots to live. There is threat that borne on the wings of perception created by our image makers we will love southern Utah too well, or through imprudent use recreate both the imagery and the reality of the hostile nature that loomed so large to pioneer observers. But more important in subtle enriching ways each of us will make our own use of southern Utah scenery. Aided by our own Utah Moon, wherever and however we find it, each of us, like my mother, find ourselves in relation to place, time, community, and experience through the images that touch our souls.



## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Conversation with Lydia Peterson, June 13, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Among the critics of the romantic writing that came out of New Mexico was Stanley Walker, a bookreviewer for the New Yorker who wrote of Paul Horgan's *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1954), "One either thinks New Mexico baroque is great or one doesn't. An odd thing happens to writers who live in the high country, especially in the mystical stretches along the Rio Grande above El Paso. It happened to poor old D.H. Lawrence, to Mabel Luhan, and to many others - to a lesser degree to such a sound citizen as Miss Erna Fergusson. They see the mountains, the sand, the stars, the cactus, the wrinkled Indians, and they begin to babble about 'time' and 'space'." See "Long River, Long Book," *The New Yorker*, vol. 30 (December 4, 1954) p. 229.

<sup>3</sup> Candace C. Kant, Zane Grey's Arizona (Flagstaff Northland Press, 1984) pp. 1 and 137.

<sup>4</sup> Scientific reports on Utah began with the 1843 tour of John C. Fremont through northern Utah and continue to the present. Among early explorers Howard Stansbury, John Macomb and James Simpson wrote important reports that described various parts of Utah. It was the great surveys of the post Civil War era, however, that really focused attention on southern Utah. George M. Wheeler's *Geographical Surveys of the Territories of the United States*, and F.V. Hayden's *United States Geological Survey of the Territories* made important contributions while John Wesley Powell made the Colorado River and southern Utah the special focus of his study. Out of Powell's surveys came his own *Exploration of the Colorado River of the West* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875) and *Report on the Lands of the Arid West with a more Detailed Account of the*

*Lands of Utah* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1879). Also doing much to attract both scholarly and popular attention to Utah were publications by geologists under his direction like G.K. Gilbert's *Report on the Geology of the Henry Mountains* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1877) and especially the brilliant work of Clarence Dutton in *Tertiary History of the Grand Canyon District* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1882). In the years that followed, archeologists, engineers, hydrologists, and other scientists produced a continuing flow of publications reporting discoveries of pre-history, ethnology, and natural characteristics that made southern Utah one of the best known regions scientifically in the United States.

<sup>5</sup> The literature on Mormon Utah is large. Giving perspective on early Mormon ideas about Utah as Zion from different perspectives are Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967); Nels Anderson, *Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942); and Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from D. D. Walker, "The Mountain Man Journal: Its Significance in a Literary History of the Fur Trade," *Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. V (July 1974) pp. 313-316. Anderson cites Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* and Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*.

<sup>7</sup> Biographical information on Thomas Moore is from Russell Noyes, *English Romantic Poetry and Prose* (London: Oxford Press, 1957) pp. 751-756.

<sup>8</sup> *William Clayton's Journal: A Daily Record of the Journey of the Original Company of "Mormon" Pioneers from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1921) p. 205.

- <sup>9</sup> *William Clayton's Journal* p 252.
- <sup>10</sup> *Wilford Woodruff's Journal 1833-1898*, edited by Scott G. Kenney, vol. 3, (Midvale: Signature Books, 1983) pp. 211-213.
- <sup>11</sup> *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, edited by Parley P. Pratt, Jr., (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1938) p. 167.
- <sup>12</sup> *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, edited by A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson, vol. 1, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980) pp. 240-241.
- <sup>13</sup> From "St. George and the Dragon," by Charles L. Walker as quoted in "Cotton Mission," an unsigned article probably written by Juanita Brooks in *Utah Historical Quarterly* vol. XXIX (July 1961) p. 222.
- <sup>14</sup> Brimhall, George Washington, *The Workers of Utah* (Provo: 1889) p. 41.
- <sup>15</sup> "Autobiography and Diary of Lucy Hannah White Flake," pp. 16-17. Typescript at Brigham Young University Library.
- <sup>16</sup> Juanita Brooks and Robert Glass Cleland, ed., *A Mormon Chronicle; the Diaries of John D. Lee 1848-1876*, vol. II (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1955) p. 138.
- <sup>17</sup> Brooks and Cleland, *A Mormon Chronicle* p 138.
- <sup>18</sup> Brooks and Cleland, *A Mormon Chronicle* pp 138-139.
- <sup>19</sup> Dellenbaugh's book which was first published in 1908 has often been regarded as the best account of the second Powell expedition down the Colorado River and the exploration and surveying that followed it in southern Utah and northern Arizona. He was one of the foremost of the "romantic nationalist"

writers of the West. Full of vivid descriptions of the West and heroic events and figures are his *The North Americans of Yesterday*, (1900); *The Romance of the Colorado River* (1902); *The Breaking of the Wilderness* (1905); *Fremont and '49*, (1914); and *George Armstrong Custer* (1916). In addition he wrote uncounted essays and short stories, a number of manuscript novels, and he was working on an Indian opera and a motion picture about the West when he died. See William Goetzman, "Foreward," in *A Canyon Voyage*, paper edition (New Haven; Yale University, 1962) pp. xvi-xxvi.

<sup>20</sup> Dutton's beautifully illustrated and descriptively written work first appeared in 1882. A magnificently done new edition with an introduction by Wallace Stegner, was published in 1977 by Peregrine Smith, Inc., of Salt Lake City.

<sup>21</sup> "Autobiography and Life Sketch of A. Jay Johnson," pp. 84-85. Photocopy of handwritten original, Utah State Historical Society.

<sup>22</sup> C. Gregory Crampton and David E. Miller, eds., "Journal of Two Campaigns by the Utah Territorial Militia Against the Navajo Indians, 1869" *Utah Historical Quarterly* vol. xxix (April 1961) pp. 159-160.

<sup>23</sup> The most important work on the Mormon village is still G. Lowry Nelson, *The Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952); for treatments that consider the role of the landscape more directly see Wayne Wahlquist, "The Settlement Process in the Mormon Core Area, 1847-1890," (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1974); Richard V. Frankaviglia, "The Mormon Landscape: Definition of an Image in the American West," *Proceedings of the Association of American Geographers* vol. 2 (1970) pp. 59-61; and Charles S. Peterson, "Imprint of Agricultural Systems on the Utah Landscape," in Richard H. Jackson, ed., *The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West*, Charles Redd Monographs in Western History # 9 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978) pp. 91-106.

<sup>24</sup> This was particularly true of Powell, *Report on the Lands of the Arid Regions of the United States, With a More Detailed Account of the Land of Utah*, which proposed a new system for the development of irrigation he had observed at Kanab and elsewhere in Mormon villages.

<sup>25</sup> During the first decade of the twentieth century the Salt Lake and Los Angeles Railway extended its line through southwestern Utah. Not only did it contribute significantly to the awakening tourist industry but it energetically promoted agricultural settlement all along its southern line. Notable land projects were in the Delta and Milford districts.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Elizabeth (Cox) Lee, "An Inspired Principle and a Remarkable Lady," facsimile copy, Huntington Library.

<sup>27</sup> Utah photographers have attracted a little more attention than have early painters, at least in the published sense of the word. See for example Nelson B. Wadsworth, *Through Camera Eyes* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975); Rell G. Francis, *The Utah Photographs of George Edward Anderson* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); and Don D. Fowler, ed., "*Photographed all the Best Scenery*" *Jack Hiller's Diary of the Powell Expeditions 1871-1875* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1972). For a brief description of H. L. A. Culmer, who like Lambourne was born in England and emigrated to Utah while a teenager see Charlie R. Steen, "The Natural Bridges of White Canyon: A Diary of H. L. A. Culmer, 1905," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, vol. 40 (Winter 1972) pp. 55-87.

<sup>28</sup> F.S. Dellenbaugh, *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. XXXV (January 1904) pp. 1-18, recounts the 1903 tour. See Angus M. Woodbury, *The History of Southern Utah and Its National Parks* (Salt Lake City: Utah Historical Society, 1950) pp. 186-187, for information on Dellenbaugh's painting and the St. Louis World's Fair. pp. 186-187.

<sup>29</sup>Dale L. Morgan, *The Great Salt Lake*, paper edition, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1973) pp. 337-347, provides a brief characterization of Alfred Lambourne referring to him as "this strange and rather charming person." But, as sure as Morgan usually is in his representations, I see more in Lambourne. He lived for fourteen months on Gunnison Island in hermit-like isolation, traveled widely throughout the scenic wonders of the West, penning and sketching his reactions; tramped the Wasatch, finding and naming its lakes, and scaled the peaks of the Uintas long before it became popular. Strange he probably was and certainly charming. But he was a good deal more. Indeed he was something of a mix of David Henry Thoreau, Thomas Moran and John Muir, and in deference to Morgan's assessment, perhaps too, a bit of a Don Quixote. Perhaps Morgan's restraint is the product of a realization that Lambourne too consciously aped each of the first named three. His island experience was strikingly like Walden Pond. As Moran was to Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon so was Lambourne to the Great Salt Lake and the Wasatch. And like Muir he applied geology and other sciences to an effort to popularize wilderness. Unlike Muir, he slides easily from the scientific to the eccentric, producing now and again something of the bemused but romantically hopeful confusion of a Quixote. See especially his *Our Inland Sea: The Story of a Homestead* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Publishers, 1909).

<sup>30</sup> Lambourne, *Our Inland Sea* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1915) pp. 7 and 233.

<sup>31</sup> Kelly's works include *Salt Desert Trails* (1930); *Holy Murder: The Story of Porter Rockwell* (in conjunction with Hoffman Birney, 1934); *Old Greenwood: the Story of Caleb Greenwood* (1936); Miles Goodgear (1937); *The Outlaw Trail: A History of Butch Cassidy and His Wild Bunch* (1938); and *Journals of John D. Lee 1846-47 & 1859* (1938). A new edition of the last named was published in 1984 by the University of Utah Press, with a foreward by Charles Peterson, which may be referred to if additional information on Kelly is needed.

<sup>32</sup> During her long career Brooks wrote: *Dudley Leavitt, Pioneer to Southern Utah* (1942); *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950); *John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat* (1961); *George Brooks, Artist in Stone* (1955); *Uncle Will Tells His Own Story* (1970); *The Christmas Tree* (1970); *Frontier Tales: True Stories of Real People* (1972); *History of the Jews in Utah and Idaho* (1973); *On the Ragged Edge: The Life and Times of Dudley Leavitt* (1973); *Emma Lee* (1975); *Jacob Hamblin: Mormon Apostle to the Indians* (1980); and *Quicksand and Cactus: a Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* (1982). In addition Brooks edited *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876* (with Robert Glass Cleland, 1955); *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout* (1964); *Journal of the Southern Indian Mission; Diary of Thomas D. Brown* (1972); and *Not by Bread Alone: The Journal of Martha Spence Heywood, 1850-56* (1978). For a more complete consideration of Juanita Brooks' genesis as a writer see Charles Peterson, "Introduction," in Brooks, *Quicksand and Cactus: and Peterson*, and "Introduction," in Brooks, *Emma Lee*, new printing, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1984). The views in this essay draw particularly from the latter introduction. Also see Levi S. Peterson, "Juanita Brooks: Historian as Tragedian," *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 3 (1976).

<sup>33</sup> Vernon L. Parrington, "Editor's Introduction," in O. E. Rolvaag, *Giants in the Earth*, Harper's Modern Classics edition, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1927) pp. ix-xx.

<sup>34</sup> Few have embraced the idea of a "continental dynamic" working on the character and experience of Americans more fully than did Utah raised writer and historian Bernard DeVoto. See his great trilogy *The Year of Decision 1846* (1942; *Across the Wide Missouri* (1947); and *The Course of Empire* (1952). Wallace Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair: A Biography of Bernard DeVoto* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1974) treats this aspect of DeVoto's writing effectively and calls attention to the romantic impulse generally.

<sup>35</sup> The inclusion of the Mormon colonization of Utah as one of the great epochs of western conquest is apparent in virtually all frontier and western America textbooks and has shown up clearly in a historiographical treatment of the West as recently as Michael P. Malone, ed., *Historians and the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, (1983).

<sup>36</sup> See Brooks, *Emma Lee*, new printing, . (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1984).