



# JAN SHIPPS

A Social and Intellectual Portrait

Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd

How a  
Methodist Girl  
from  
Hueytown,  
Alabama,  
Became an  
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Mormon Studies  
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Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd

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## For Jan

Sometimes we ask people if they pray, and they say different things.

It's the different things they say that tells us something about who they are.

We asked a ninety-year-old woman historian of religious studies fame if she prayed.

She said yes.

She prays out loud every night before bed, because her ninety-year-old skeptic, librarian husband wants to hear her words of comfort and say amen.

Why doesn't he pray?

He believes in his wife's prayers, that she can say for him what he can't say for himself.

It makes him sleep better at night.

She prays for protection.

She prays that their home will be protected from fire, because his childhood memories of smoke and flame in his bedroom have never been extinguished.

She prays for immigrants, because she fears for their safety in a calloused country that no longer welcomes their aspirations.

She prays for her born-again son, who prays for her redemption; and she prays for her grandchildren's children and their generations to come.

She prays for her country.

She prays for the protection of many but not for herself.

More forbearing than fearful, her faith is simple.

She believes in a just God and in herself.

She sleeps at night without her husband's prayers in her ears.

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

How did Jo Ann Barnett—a Methodist girl born and raised in Hueytown, Alabama, during the Great Depression and World War II—come to be Jan Shipps, a renowned non-Mormon historian and scholar of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Our objective in writing this book is threefold. First, we want readers and scholars of Mormon Studies to understand and appreciate the improbable story of how Shipps not only became an important and trusted authority in a field that was at the time predominantly made up of Mormon men, but also the crucial role she played in legitimizing Mormon Studies as a credible academic field of study. We tell this story in Chapters 1 through 5. In Chapter 6 we pull together, summarize, and analyze the biographical strands narrated in the previous chapters.

As part of our second objective, we pose an arbitrary but interesting question: What are the three most important books to date written about Mormon history? That is, what three books have had the greatest impact on the way key aspects of Mormon history are viewed, studied, and written about? Consensus among qualified scholars undoubtedly would be difficult to achieve. Over the years an increasing number of very good books on important Mormon topics, essential to our understanding of Mormon history and institutional development, have been published.<sup>1</sup> Of these, many stand out as truly consequential works that have altered the way other scholars in the field think and write about their subject matter.

Nevertheless, a strong case can be made that the three most consequential books to date about Mormon history are Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My*

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1. A comprehensive bibliography of scholarly works on Mormonism and the LDS church published in the twentieth-century is provided by James B. Allen, Ronald B. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Studies in Mormon History: An Indexed Bibliography*. For more recent books on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its history, see the catalogue listings of the University of Illinois Press, Oxford University Press, The University of Utah Press, The University of North Carolina Press, Harvard University Press, and Yale University Press, all of which have published important books on Mormon topics. For brevity and clarity this volume regularly employs “LDS Church,” “LDS,” and “the Church” in lieu of the full name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “RLDS” is used occasionally when referencing persons or themes affiliated with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints before it was renamed Community of Christ.

*History: The Life of Joseph Smith*; Juanita Brooks's *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*; and Jan Shipps's *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. We attempt to make this case in Chapter 7. Both Brodie and Brooks have had well-deserved biographies written about them and their work. As of yet, Jan Shipps has not.<sup>2</sup> While not in any true sense attempting to write a full-fledged biography, we focus on the shaping social and intellectual influences in Shipps's life that led her, a non-Mormon woman, to become a distinguished scholar of Mormon history and Mormon studies generally. In the process, we compare and contrast Shipps's scholarly contributions with those of Brodie and Brooks, both to substantiate our judgment of their preeminent standing and to understand how and why they were able to accomplish what they did.

Finally, our third objective in writing this book is a further outgrowth of the first two. As Shipps's reputation and active prominence in scholarly circles grew, so also did her thoughts and actions regarding issues ancillary to Mormonism come into clearer focus. Her response to these issues is important for understanding her approach to studying Mormonism. Two ancillary issues we find most pertinent to explore are the evolution of her personal religious orientation, as well as her attitudes toward modern feminism. We lay out the way in which both of these concerns have helped shape her work and professional identity in Chapter 8.

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In a 2016 interview with us, Shipps reflected on her improbable emergence as an important figure who helped bring Mormon Studies into mainstream academia. She modestly concluded that the most important factor was serendipitous change taking place in the LDS Church and Mormon culture at the time of her graduate training in the mid-1960s. Her subsequent academic career moved in parallel fashion with Mormonism's transformation from a relatively provincial faith and insular culture to a worldwide, institutional church. She was in the right place at the right time. Her graduate research on nineteenth-century Mormon politics dovetailed with her participation in a rapidly expanding LDS intellectual community, supported by the inauguration of Mormon professional associations (the Mormon History Association and John Whitmer History Association) and their respective journals, as well as the

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2. As of this date, Philip Barlow, Professor of History and Arrington Director of Mormon Studies at Utah State University, is cataloging Jan Shipps's personal papers with the intent of writing a full-scale biography of her life. In the meantime, both Barlow and Klaus Hansen have published essays that summarize significant aspects of Shipps's life and scholarly career. See Phillip Barlow, "Jan Shipps and the Mainstreaming of Mormon Studies," 412–26, and Klaus J. Hansen, "The Long Honeymoon: Jan Shipps among the Mormons," 1–28.

emergence of other, scholarly-oriented periodicals like *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and *Sunstone* that had no official ties with the LDS Church.<sup>3</sup>

All of this is pertinent to understanding how Shippis established her role in Mormon Studies. However, this is not a role she simply stepped into; she had to exercise great personal initiative in order to take advantage of the opportunities the times afforded. If Shippis was in the right place at the right time, she was also the *right person* at the right place and time. *How* Jan Shippis became the right person is the overarching question we attempt to address in this book.

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A brief comment on our documentary sources is in order. In part we have relied on previously published information, such as Shippis's 1982 "Personal Voices" essay in *Dialogue*;<sup>4</sup> her introspective and semi-autobiographical book, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons*, published in 2000; and two unpublished oral history interviews conducted for the LDS Historical Department in 1983 and 1986 by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Gordon Irving, respectively.<sup>5</sup> However, our primary source of information—especially for the first three chapters dealing with Jan's childhood and marital years prior to commencing her academic career at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis—comes from personal interviews we conducted with Shippis at her home in September and October of 2016 and subsequent Skype conversations with her from November 2016 through the fall of 2017. Neither our personal interviews nor Skype conversations followed a formal protocol. We formulated a set of open-ended questions to frame our conversations but allowed discussion to emerge spontaneously as

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3. The Mormon History Association was founded in December 1965; its biennial journal, the *Journal of Mormon History*, began publication in 1974. The John Whitmer Historical Association was organized by scholars of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (subsequently the Community of Christ) in September 1972; its official journal, the *John Whitmer Association Journal*, was inaugurated in 1981. Preceding either of these two publications as outlets for the New Mormon History, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, commenced publication in the spring of 1966. *Sunstone* magazine was launched in 1974 by Mormon graduate students, and its first issue was printed in November 1975. In 1979, *Sunstone* began sponsoring an annual symposium in Salt Lake City and subsequently has conducted regional symposia in other cities throughout the United States. All these events helped fuel the New Mormon History movement and coincided with Jan Shippis's early interest in the study of Mormon history and her scholarly development as an authoritative exponent of Mormon Studies.

4. Jan Shippis, "An 'Inside-Outsider' in Zion," 138–161.

5. Shippis was interviewed first by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (October 15–16, 1983) and subsequently by Gordon Irving (May 6, 1986).



we engaged in follow-up queries. Often our follow-up probes would stimulate fresh recollection of events and anecdotes, further fleshing out Shipps's social and intellectual development. When drafting our biographical sketches for the first three chapters, we sent Shipps copies to double-check for the factual accuracy of names and dates or any topical items that we might have misconstrued based on our interview notes.

Those chapters in which we describe some of the foundational and turning point events in Shipps's life, both personal and professional, are, of course, narrated from her point of view. Other individuals participating in the same events, such as family members and colleagues, might very well remember things differently. This is an inherent problem in any oral history or study that relies on recollections provided by the subject. We assume that all individuals, including Jan Shipps, are self-interested in the interpretation of their own experience—that they routinely provide accounts of themselves that are biased and self-vindicating.<sup>6</sup> The problem of objectivity in studies of this kind can only be ultimately remedied by the accretion of numerous other documentary sources that are weighed and balanced in the conscientious and unbiased construction of a complete biography—something that we trust other scholars will attempt in the future with regard to the noteworthy life of Jan Shipps.

We have not talked extensively with Shipps merely to draw an idealized or self-aggrandized portrait. We are not interested in writing a hagiography. In our interviews we asked focused questions and follow-up questions to spotlight what, in our professional judgment, represented the things in Shipps's life that would help explain her intellectual development and scholarly achievements. The chapters following the biographical sketch are all based on comparative, conceptual, and interpretive analysis of her scholarly contributions, for which we alone are responsible. In addition to these chapters, we also have included Jan Shipps's curriculum vitae as an appendix, which will reinforce and broaden readers' appreciation of her work and scholarly career.

From this point forward, we identify Jan more informally by her first name (which is actually a contraction of her given name, Jo Ann) rather than continually referring impersonally to her as Shipps, her married name as the wife of retired Indiana University librarian, Dr. Anthony W. Shipps.

A final comment on our sources and quotations taken from them. Unreferenced quotations by Jan are all from our oral interviews with her. All other quotations obtained from sources other than our interviews are refer-

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6. The self-vindicating character of memoir and autobiographies is explored at length by Erich Goode in *Justifiable Conduct: Self-Vindication in Memoir* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013). See also Gordon Shepherd, "Memoir Construction," 44–65.

enced in the notes. In Chapter 4 in particular we rely heavily on Beecher's oral history interview recorded for the LDS History Department in 1983, which focuses on Jan's personal history in becoming an active member and leader of the Mormon History Association. For our narration of Jan's childhood and early adult years in Chapters 1 through 5, however, we relied primarily on our own interviews. Any readers who would like to see our 2016–17 interview notes with Jan are welcome to contact us for copies.

### Acknowledgements

We are most indebted to Jan for her remarkable hospitality and candid openness to our oral interviews over the course of many conversations—some conducted in person at her Bloomington home and many more on Skype. We are also indebted to Jan's husband, Tony, who complemented her interviews with snippets of information that eluded Jan and otherwise enlivened our visits with his inimitable sense of humor. Jan and Tony's son, Stephen, provided additional helpful support for our project, as did close family friends Liane Johnson, and Linda and Ed Stevenson.

Philip Barlow has been particularly helpful to us since the very inception of our idea to write this book. As a mentee of Jan's and a subsequent collaborator of hers in various scholarly activities, Phil has been generous with his insights, suggestions, provisioning of documents, and overall encouragement. Sarah Barringer Gordon, Jan's longtime friend and collaborator, has likewise encouraged and facilitated our work. We also have received helpful critical comments and suggestions from Elbert Peck, Armand Mauss, Nancy Ross, and Paul Edwards, which have improved the clarity of our writing and strengthened our analysis. Finally, both Liz Dulaney and Kathleen Daynes contributed helpful insights derived from their longtime friendship and scholarly collaboration with Jan.

Holly Hansen Rogers took on the task of creating an index within a constricted time frame and, as she has done for us in the past, produced a tool that serious readers will find quite useful in squeezing the most out of our book.

Lastly, we are indebted to Loyd Isao Ericson, our editor, who has been a virtual one-man band in meticulously pushing this book through every step of the publication process.

None of the people singled out above for our thanks have, at this point in time, ultimate responsibility for whatever errors of fact or interpretation may remain unwinnowed from our text. We alone are responsible for these, if any there be.

## CHAPTER 3

# Discovering the Mormons and Acquiring Academic Credentials, 1960–1966

After eleven years of marriage, Jan and Tony Shipp were not a conventional, bourgeois couple. They both hailed from relatively small communities in the American South where their families had faced their share of dysfunctional problems during the Great Depression and war years of the 1930s and 40s. Breaking away from family entanglements, they migrated north to the booming, post-war urban centers of Chicago and Detroit in pursuit of higher education for Tony and a bookish career for him as an academician. During this time they had either lived in student housing or secured room and board as house parents for court-designated “at-risk” girls. Thus, they had never paid a mortgage or owned any real property, and their tangible and intangible possessions were negligible. Tony by interest and education was an intellectual, but so too was Jan. Or, perhaps better said, Jan had *quietly become a latent intellectual*, whose commitment to Tony’s academic career as his informal research assistant—along with her own long-established, inveterate reading habits—had helped to discipline and inform a curious mind. Despite Jan’s budding interests, Tony’s career took precedence in their decision-making as they sought to fulfill the dream of a home-owning, traditional nuclear family.

It was in Logan, Utah, where Tony’s budding career as an academic librarian took them next, that Jan found a suitable subject for her curiosity and belatedly commenced her own career as a serious student of Mormon history.

## Logan, Utah, 1960–1961

Tony visited Logan before accepting Utah State University’s (USU) offer to be assistant head librarian. The USU hiring committee was impressed by Tony’s Northwestern PhD, especially when many of their faculty at the time did not have doctoral degrees and had received their educations from local institutions in the Mormon cultural regions of Utah and Idaho. According to Jan, one of the hiring committee members remarked to Tony during his interview that he would discover there were “lots of sons-of-bishops” in Mormon Logan, a quip that Tony initially wasn’t sure how to interpret. But the mountain scenery surrounding the picturesque town of Logan was stun-

ning, the well-groomed campus of Utah State University was beautiful, and the welcoming friendliness of his hosts was highly appealing.

In preparation for their westward trip to Cache Valley, Utah, Tony and Jan had to purchase their first car (a Nash Rambler, which they decided on—in predictably studious fashion—after consulting *Consumer Reports*). At the time, neither one of them knew how to drive; for the first ten years of their marriage they had relied on public transportation. They both took driving lessons in Detroit, but subsequently Tony did all the driving, first to visit Jan's family in Georgia and then throughout the cross-country trip to distant Utah, while Jan navigated their journey using service station roadmaps.<sup>1</sup> Along the way, Stephen gradually stopped compulsively identifying the John Deere highway signs they passed traversing the Midwest and instead began announcing the “Watch for Deer” signs that started to appear on the sides of the road when they reached the Rocky Mountains.

Jan describes the last leg of their journey from Bear Lake on the Utah-Idaho border to Logan in rapturous, literary language:

The beauty is breathtaking. . . . Having never seen elevations of this magnitude before and having never viewed a natural spectacle of such magnificence, I was awestruck. . . . We had managed the heights and were descending past mountain meadows into a canyon from which, in places, the mountains stand virtually perpendicular to the road and to the Logan river that, for many miles, runs alongside. . . . It seem[ed] that we were negotiating a passage through a chasm that was separating us from everywhere we had been and everything we had done before we entered it. . . . [W]hen we reached the mouth of the canyon and the narrow passage through which we had traveled opened out onto an amazing vista, I gazed transfixed. The scene revealed a valley dappled in light and shadow, with the sun's rays reflecting off the stone of Utah State's Old Main tower and the pristine whiteness of the Logan temple. It was enclosed by mountains standing afar, and it seemed to be another world.<sup>2</sup>

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1. According to Jan, Tony loved driving and liked to call himself Jan's “male chaufferist.” He wouldn't allow Jan to drive when they traveled together until later in life when his doctor told him he couldn't drive. Tony didn't like Jan to sleep while he was driving. She had to stay awake to read road signs and books (usually mysteries) for Tony, or they would listen to the radio together. In this respect and in many others, Tony assumed a traditional male role in their marriage, which Jan readily consented to, even though she also quietly asserted her own marital prerogatives when she felt strongly about an issue.

2. Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons*, 366. Completed in 1884 and constructed of limestone and quartzite, the Logan temple's weathered surface actually displays a greyish hue. What probably struck Jan's eyes upon emerging from Logan Canyon were the large, white weathervane towers that anchor the temple's east and west center towers.

When Jan, Tony, and Stephen arrived in Logan in early August 1960, they moved into a modest rental home near the USU campus. They had no furniture and spent their first few nights sleeping on cots. Their new neighbors were friendly and generous in aiding them to get settled. This neighborliness soon included a set of “ward missionaries” who made visits practically every Wednesday night. (Unlike the full-time LDS missionaries, ward missionaries are members of the local LDS congregation or “ward” who assist the former with service and evangelizing.) Jan had heard of Brigham Young and polygamy (from a school history textbook) but had no idea who Mormon founder Joseph Smith was. She knew virtually nothing about Mormons or Mormon history and assumed the Mormons were just another denominational group in Protestant Christianity. Prior to arriving in Utah, Jan had been interested in Southern history and also had done some reading about Judaism, both topics broadening her interest in and appreciation for cultural differences in American society. Her curiosity now piqued by the almost exclusively Mormon community in which she and Tony found themselves, she quickly discovered that the neighborly ward missionaries were more than willing to talk about Mormonism and Mormon history. Tony was always welcoming to their visitors but, unlike her, had virtually no interest in finding out more about their religion. “In retrospect and in some ways,” Jan recalls, “Tony has rued the day ever since.” Occasionally Jan would be absent when the missionaries dropped by to visit, and Tony would tell them, “Oh, don’t worry about Jan, you’ll baptize her in the afterlife.”

Jan also quickly learned about the peculiar social divisions in Logan and the local religious labels commonly employed to reference them. Jan and Tony became friends with a couple by the auspicious name of Smith, who were actually non-Mormons and lived on their cul-de-sac. The husband was a member of the USU English department and shared literary interests with Tony. Invited to supper, Jan and Tony were informed by the Smiths that in Logan they were considered “gentiles” (non-Mormons) and, for that matter, so were Jan and Tony. The Smiths also carefully explained that they were not “Jack Mormons” either (members or former Church members who no longer believed or practiced Mormonism’s religious mandates, but who retained certain cultural connections to their heritage). However, they learned that several of Tony’s library and English associates were, in fact, Jack Mormons.

By this time in her life, Jan had become a thoughtful self-learner with an ingrained habit of exploring library holdings and consulting books to teach herself about new subjects in her expanding universe of interests. Her curiosity was now heightened to discover more about this odd community where she and Tony had unexpectedly landed, and she began a crash-course reading spree on books about and by Mormons, including, and especially,

USU Professor Leonard Arrington's recently published *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830—1900*.<sup>3</sup>

Once classes began in the fall, Jan and Tony became part of a gentile and Jack Mormon social network in Logan while simultaneously having regular contact with Mormon neighbors, especially including Everett Cooley (a Mormon historian, later to become Jan's academic mentor) and his wife and two children, who were living on the same cul-de-sac. The USU head librarian and Tony's boss, Milton (Milt) Abrams, was a Jack Mormon whose wife had divorced him after he stopped wearing his temple garments.<sup>4</sup> Through this latter acquaintanceship, Jan learned for the first time about Mormon temples and how mysteriously different they were from ordinary church meeting places or chapels with which she was familiar. The Jack Mormons with whom Jan and Tony socialized liked to critically discuss religious and historical books, including Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom*, which they regarded as genuine scholarship rather than Church propaganda.

At the same time, Jan and Tony could hardly avoid regular contacts with neighbors and colleagues who were faithful Mormons. One of their next-door LDS neighbors was a USU football coach who enjoyed playing catch with Stephen, who in turn was becoming intensely interested in sports. Some of their other Mormon neighbors also had been inquiring about Stephen's interest in attending LDS primary (children's) classes. Jan experienced a dawning realization that Logan, and the tightly knit Mormon community that dominated the town, was very different than any place she had ever been before: it was "a little like entering the Twilight Zone."<sup>5</sup> She was both perplexed and fascinated by this difference. She says it was superficially like other American towns, but beneath the surface it proved to be alien to any of her previous experience. As an overwhelmingly Mormon community, every local institution, including the university, was shaped and affected by LDS culture.

Alternative places of worship were scarce in Logan; in particular there was no nearby Methodist congregation. Jan and Tony sporadically attended

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3. Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900*.

4. Temple garments are a type of underwear manufactured by the LDS Church for its members who have gone through the LDS temple endowment ritual, where worthy members covenant fealty to the church and its doctrines. The garments signify those religious commitments. Obtaining ecclesiastical clearance to enter an LDS temple and participate in its covenantal rites is based on periodic worthiness interviews and is a prime indicator of one's good standing in the Church. Conversely, subsequent failure to wear one's temple garments may be taken as an indicator of loss of faith or religious standing.

5. Shipps, *Sojourner*, 22.

a Presbyterian church (which, at the time, was the only Protestant denomination in town) ostensibly to “inoculate” their son Stephen from constant exposure to Mormonism as the only valid religion and to provide him some non-Mormon playmates. (Steven had, in fact, begun attending—with neighborhood kids—weekly LDS primary classes for children under the age of twelve.) During their stay in Logan, however, Jan and Tony never attended a single LDS religious service. This may seem surprising, given Jan’s ripening curiosity about all things Mormon, but it also signals her ultimate attachment to her own Protestant faith tradition as a Methodist.

Demonstrating from the beginning the detached, cultural inquisitiveness of a social scientist did not mean that Jan was a religious seeker looking for a new faith to embrace—a fact that later in her career as a Mormon Studies scholar often flummoxed Mormon colleagues who thought that her deep study of Mormonism might naturally lead her to join the LDS Church. Puzzled by her refusal to do so, a frequently reiterated question by LDS friends to Jan over the years has been, “How can you know so much and not believe?” Jan, like many believing Mormon intellectuals and scholars, ultimately remains attached to the religious tradition in which she was brought up. She takes pride in her own religious tradition in the same way many Mormon intellectuals take pride in theirs. This is important in understanding Jan’s scholarly work on Mormonism but should not be regarded as a stunning revelation.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Logan’s religious homogeneity, Jan says that she and Tony enjoyed their social life in Logan, though it mostly centered in the company of academic Jack Mormons. Jan appreciated these friends, who offered a refreshing contrast to both the pious and renegade religious stereotypes perpetrated in the local culture. She turned to them to better understand the cultural distinctions between devout Mormons and Jack Mormons that intrigued her—questions that would mark the beginning of her own intellectual study of Mormonism: What was it like growing up Mormon? What was it like disavowing belief in Mormon theology and dropping out from active LDS lay involvement while still maintaining certain attachments to one’s Mormon heritage, especially in such a devoutly Mormon community as Logan?

Now that Tony had successfully recast his academic career as a university librarian, it seemed like a propitious time for Jan to resume her own college

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6. In Jan’s words, “Despite the fascination with Mormonism . . . I have somehow managed to keep truth questions ‘bracketed’ through all my years of study. To a significant degree, this has been a conscious scholarly strategy adopted to provide me with enough distance to be analytical. But it is not only that. In all honesty, the matter of whether, in some ultimate sense, Latter-day Saints are or are not correct when they bare their formulaic testimonies that ‘Mormonism is true’ is simply not on my agenda of things to try to find out.” Jan Shipp, “An Inside Outsider in Zion,” 143.



education. Encouraged by Tony, Jan registered for classes at Utah State for the Fall 1960 term. At the time Tony and Jan's main concern was for her to finish a bachelors' degree as quickly as possible and obtain a certificate to teach in public schools, so she could contribute to the family's income. She had no thoughts of going on to graduate school or pursuing an academic career.

Virtually all of Jan's undergraduate classes at USU reinforced her sense of cultural differences between Mormons, Jack Mormons, and "gentiles" on campus and their importance to local people in the community. She took a European history class in which her non-LDS, Protestant professor kept unfavorably comparing the modern LDS church to Roman Catholicism during the Protestant Reformation, while all the Mormon male students (Jan was the only female in the class) vehemently challenged what they considered to be an unjust analogy. According to Jan, an American history class on the Civil War consumed most of the academic quarter talking about the 1857–58 "Utah War" and very little about the actual war between the North and the South over issues of union and slavery.<sup>7</sup> Other USU classes Jan took, regardless of subject matter (including a sociology class and education courses), made constant references or allusions to Mormonism in both course lectures and class discussion, unapologetically emphasizing Mormon perspectives and beliefs. All seemed to assume familiarity with Mormon culture and history, which sent Jan to the library in search of more relevant reading material. When she looked for controversial Mormon classics like Fawn Brodie's scathing biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, and Juanita Brooks' silence-breaking *Mountain Meadows Massacre* in the Logan public library, she was astonished to discover they were kept behind the front desk along with the sex manuals.

With a keen eye for social distinctions and cultural variations, Jan quickly became attuned to the multidimensional diversity of Mormon society. Her early encounters with local culture (including the sharp divisions between Mormons, Jack Mormons, and gentiles, and variegated reading material on LDS history and religion, both apologetic and polemical) produced an ambiguous, "kaleidoscopic" view of the Mormons.<sup>8</sup> Jan wanted to understand her new environment in insular Cache Valley more than criticize it. Rather than simply

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7. The Utah War (variously known as the Utah Expedition, the Mormon War, or the Mormon Rebellion) refers to the political and military conflict between the Mormons and the United States government in 1857–58 over the issue of theocratic rule in the Utah Territory under the administration of church president Brigham Young. Consequently, Young was deposed as territorial governor and replaced by a non-Mormon appointee, and Salt Lake City was placed under military surveillance until the outbreak of the American Civil War. See William P. MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point, Part 1: A Documentary History of the Utah War to 1858*.

8. Shipps, "An 'Inside Outsider' in Zion," 149.



dismissing Mormons as misguided fanatics and their religion as a pious hoax, “I realized that a persuasive explanation for the differences would have to be at once more subtle and more fundamental.”<sup>9</sup> This detached kind of intellectual curiosity about Mormon institutions and culture was not shared by Tony.

At USU, Jan determined to change her music major for mostly practical reasons: she realized how difficult it would be returning to music after such a long time away from both music theory and practice of classical pieces. Other than part-time gigs playing popular tunes at piano bars in Florida and Chicago for extra income, she had not continued serious piano-playing since her marriage to Tony. At the same time, her “paraprofessional social work” with orphaned and semi-delinquent girls in Chicago and Detroit had proven to be a satisfying experience. She had found human beings “in the midst of life” more interesting than piano, and she “wanted to learn about people.”<sup>10</sup> Her decision to major in history rather than sociology or psychology was also pragmatic: through previous college work she had more credit hours in history than anything else. With a history major, Jan calculated it would be possible to graduate in one academic year by carrying course overloads every quarter, taking correspondence courses, and earning course credits through examination.

Jan confesses that initially she was anxious about returning to college after an eleven-year hiatus. Older, nontraditional students—especially women—were rare on college campuses in 1960, and Jan worried that she wouldn’t fit in, that she wasn’t “book smart,” and that, most certainly, she would never be as smart or successful scholastically as Tony. Even though she had done well for one semester at the Georgia College for Women in Milledgeville after marrying Tony, earlier she had failed to make exceptional grades at the Alabama College for Women (having a greater interest than in playing dance music than studying), and she still didn’t think of herself as a real student. At the beginning of her first academic term at Utah State, Tony endeavored to give Jan reassurance. Putting his arm around her as he walked her to her first class, he said, “Don’t worry, honey, it doesn’t matter how well you do. All you have to do is pass.” At this transitional point in their lives, neither Tony nor Jan were aware of Jan’s tremendous intellectual promise and capability for doing highly original work as a scholar.

Despite concerns about her abilities in school, Jan surprised herself by excelling in her classes. “At first I was shocked at how well I did,” she recalls, describing the success she found in not only her lower division, general education courses but in her upper division history classes as well, achieving perfect grades in every course. This surprise stands in contrast to her

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9. Shipps, 145.

10. Shipps, 145.

childhood self-conception of being a smart and outstanding student growing up in Hueytown. However, as an adult in Chicago and Detroit she had assumed the role of a doting mother to an only child and wife to a highly educated academic. In this new arrangement, Tony was designated the smart one with Jan as his dutiful helper. Her unexpected achievements as a non-traditional student, however, began to slowly change her understanding of their reciprocal roles. At the same time, her academic accomplishments at USU tended to be depreciated by Tony (and Jan herself)—“Oh, well, it’s just Utah”—in comparison to the presumably more rigorous academic standards at Northwestern University, Wayne State, and the University of Michigan. After leaving Logan it would take a year of unmitigated graduate school success at the University of Colorado before both Jan and Tony were obliged to fully appreciate her exceptional academic capabilities.

As a history major, Jan did *not* take any courses from Leonard Arrington (future LDS Church Historian), who was on sabbatical leave, or George Ellsworth (a founder of *Western Political Quarterly*), the two most eminent Mormon scholars on the USU faculty. (Jan would not meet Arrington, for whom she developed profound respect, until after the Shipps left Logan.) The only *Mormon* history class Jan took at USU was taught by Joel Ricks, a kindly, well-known local historian and traditional Mormon apologist whose grandfather had been one of the early pioneers that helped establish Logan in 1859.<sup>11</sup>

During her second quarter, Jan took a teaching practicum course through Logan High School to obtain a teaching certificate. Ironically, she was assigned to teach nineteenth-century Utah/Mormon history, about which, at the outset, she knew virtually nothing. This required some motivation to learn all she could about the subject matter through a self-directed, crash-reading course on her own initiative. The self-study paid off, and Jan fondly recalls teaching a lesson that included her reference to the considerable number of plural wives acquired by a certain nineteenth-century Mormon patriarch when a student interjected to say, “That’s my grandpa!”

The most critically important history class Jan took at USU was a required historiography methods course for history majors that was being taught that year by visiting professor Everett L. Cooley, the Shipps’s close neighbor. Cooley had been the Utah state archivist in Salt Lake City but had accepted an appointment as an associate professor of history for the 1960–61 school year to temporarily cover for Leonard Arrington, who was on sabbatical leave. Given the limited USU library holdings at the time, Cooley’s insistence that students work with primary source materials meant that his

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11. For a brief overview of the Mormon pioneer history of Logan, Utah, see Audrey M. Godfrey, “Logan.”

students' research papers would mostly be on LDS topics. Jan chose to write on the nineteenth-century construction of the LDS temple in Logan. The primary source materials for this project came from the Charles O. Card papers, which had recently been donated by the Card family to the USU library. Card was an early Mormon stalwart in the pioneer development of Logan as a commercial and educational center in Northern Utah. He subsequently became the patriarchal founder of the Mormon colony of Cardston, Alberta, Canada, which was established in 1887 as a sanctuary for Mormon polygamist families fleeing from US federal prosecution under the Edmunds-Tucker Act (that mandated harsh penalties for unlawful co-habitation.)<sup>12</sup> Cooley, who had been impressed by Jan as a student in his History of the US Constitution class the previous term (and, no doubt, was also favorably disposed toward her as his neighbor), alerted her to the existence of the Card materials and encouraged her to use them for her project. Consequently, Jan, as an undergraduate student, became the first person to research this collection of historical pioneer documents.

Jan not only studied Card's papers in the USU library but also visited the Cache County Court House to obtain more material on him (where she discovered that the Mormon patriarch had a divorced wife whom local history seemed to have forgotten) and to the Genealogical Society in Salt Lake City—eighty-five miles south of Logan—for additional materials. In recalling this early student exercise in historiography, Jan says that she was motivated by Cooley's encouragement to "pursue a historical task" and not "just write a paper like most students for a grade." Jan's work earned high praise from Cooley, who thought her paper could easily be refined and published. He even wanted Jan to consider editing the Card collection, but at the time she was still primarily focused on getting a teaching certificate rather than pursuing an academic career in history.

More than anything, Jan's outlook on the future was being redirected by Tony's rapidly developing dissatisfaction with his work at Utah State. According to Jan, Tony discovered there were "no books" in the USU library "except about Mormons," and he found it necessary to travel on weekends to the larger library at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City for the books he wanted on old English sources. After living only six weeks in Logan, Tony told Jan, "We have to go," and began communicating with the University of Colorado about a library position in Boulder. By January 1961, Jan knew they would be leaving Logan. She was not eager to move—her own blossom-

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12. For a biographical sketch of Charles Ora Card, see "Canada's Brigham Young: The Life of Charles O. Card."

ing as a student at USU had been exhilarating—but, for the higher good of Tony's career, she did not oppose a move to Colorado.

In a hurry to finish her degree at USU, Jan increased her efforts and finished two years of requirements for a bachelor's degree in only nine months with perfect grades. Her grades and exhilarating success in Cooley's historiography course did not completely change her self-image as a student, as they were tempered somewhat by her low opinion of the scholarly standards at USU (which was reinforced by Tony's criticism of the school as a provincial backwater). Nonetheless, Jan acknowledges that the positive feedback and encouragement from Cooley were crucial in laying the foundation for her later identity as a scholar, capable of doing original research. The sincerity of the encouragement was further bolstered when Leonard Arrington, who had just returned to campus before the Shipp's's departure, was made aware of Jan's success as a student (probably by Cooley) and offered her a position as a student assistant, mistakenly assuming she was going to be back on campus for the next academic year. Although unable to take the position, the offer portended a later and important collaborative relationship between the two.

### **Boulder, Colorado, 1961–1966**

After one academic year at Utah State, with Jan having enrolled as a full-time student, the Shipp's's finances were precarious when they arrived in Boulder for Tony to assume his new position as head of the circulation department at the University of Colorado library. They had no home equity, few possessions, and scant savings. Jan was determined to do her part to help but, unfortunately, Colorado would not recognize her Utah teaching certificate, so she was unable to apply for any public school teaching positions. To get a Colorado teaching certification would require her to take approximately thirty hours of required education courses—a depressing prospect for Jan, who had worked so conscientiously to get her degree at Utah State. An alternative was for Jan to bypass taking more undergraduate credits by enrolling in the history department's master's degree program, which consequently would make her more eligible and competitive in the local high school teaching market.

In the meantime, Thalia (Jan's mother) loaned Tony and Jan enough money to make a down payment on a house—their first after twelve years of marriage. Thalia had unexpectedly gained a fair amount of income through dividends from her one-hundred-dollar investment in an oil well venture that belatedly paid off following the end of World War II, providing her with quarterly checks of three thousand dollars that furnished her with financial security for the rest of her life. Jan stayed in touch with her mother primarily through Saturday phone calls, and Tony (who by then had developed a close relationship with Thalia) began writing her a letter every month, along with

a check for one hundred dollars to repay the mortgage loan. (Thalia would later say that she was sorry when the loan was paid off, because that ended her monthly letters from Tony.)

Thalia eventually visited the small family in Colorado, and she and Tony got along famously. During the visit, everyone was watching a TV program together in which a white woman moved to Africa to marry a black man. Thalia disapprovingly said she couldn't understand why a woman would do such a thing. Tony's ingratiatingly sardonic rejoinder was "I don't know, it's not any worse than a nonsmoker being married to a smoker." Upon hearing this remark, Jan resolved to quit smoking cold-turkey and never touched another cigarette. Preoccupied with their own concerns, neither Tony nor Stephen noticed, and to their surprise, Jan had to inform them—over a month after the fact—that she had given up the habit.

After her admission to the University of Colorado, Jan's primary motivation continued to be practical and pecuniary: getting a credential for teaching high school with a master's degree in history remained her chief preoccupation. She and Tony had new house payments to make, and Stephen (now eight years old and in the third grade) was showing signs of musical precocity. The school music director informed Jan that her son seemed gifted and, because he was tall for his age, wanted him to try playing the cello (or, if he got tired of that, the tuba). Stephen, however, refused these blandishments. He was drawn instead to the violin and insisted on only playing that.

As a newly enrolled master's student in history, Jan belatedly discovered that there were no courses on the Mormons in the department's Western American history curriculum. This was a disappointment, since Jan's curiosity and interest in Mormon history had been keenly whetted by her undergraduate experience at Utah State, and she had hoped to parlay her initial exposure to Mormon sources into a project for her MA thesis at the University of Colorado. The department faculty knew "little or nothing at all about the Mormons," with the lone exception of Hal Bridges, who was assigned as Jan's advisor. Bridges, a specialist in American thought and society, had particular interests in the Civil War and American mysticism, and was, according to Jan, "a profoundly religious person, a mystic," who was interested in Joseph Smith's prophetic biography. Accordingly, he supported Jan's intention to do her thesis on nineteenth-century Mormonism.<sup>13</sup>

Although both interested in and supportive of Jan's thesis project, Bridges did not function as Jan's primary research mentor. From Bridges Jan acquired rudimentary skill in handling analytical tools for making sense out of history,

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13. Bridges's books include *American Mysticism: From William James to Zen* and *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill*.

but it was Everett Cooley to whom she turned for his expertise in Mormon historiography. Cooley had returned to Salt Lake City to become director of the Utah State Historical Society. Through phone calls and letters, Jan stayed in touch with Everett the entire year.

Once again in a hurry to finish so she could become gainfully employed, Jan completed the requirements for her master's degree in nine months. She expeditiously decided to write her master's thesis about Mormons and politics in Illinois during the final years of Joseph Smith's tumultuous public life. This choice of topic was dictated by Jan's preliminary experience researching Mormon subjects at Utah State and her discovery, through Tony, that the University of Colorado Library had a complete set of nineteenth-century Illinois newspapers on microfilm, along with pertinent state legislature reports of that era. Jan had become accustomed to utilizing microfilmed documents while assisting Tony as he worked on his dissertation. This meant that she had ready access to primary source materials for her thesis, which would be based almost entirely on newspaper accounts of the increasingly intractable "Mormon problem" in Illinois state politics during the 1840s. After collecting pertinent data, Jan finished writing her thesis, "The Mormons in Politics, 1839-1844," which she says was written in just "two to three weeks" at the end of the 1962 spring term "in order to avoid paying summer tuition."

Jan's intention of finding a teaching job in the public schools, bolstered by her newly earned master's degree, had not yet changed. Once commencing her graduate course work, however, Jan began to realize the intrinsic satisfaction she derived from historical study, and, perhaps for the first time, she was beginning to see the faint prospects of becoming an academic historian. It was only after Jan successfully commenced doing graduate work at the University of Colorado that both she and Tony began to acknowledge the fact that she had become a truly outstanding student. "We both were surprised by my academic success at Colorado," she recalls. But the impetus for continuing in the graduate program at Colorado as a PhD student did not come from Tony or Jan's own insistence. It came in the form of an unanticipated university fellowship of \$2,500, the bestowal of which had been urged by the Colorado history faculty who were anxious to retain Jan as a highly-promising student in their program.

Following the completion of her thesis, University of Colorado policies required Jan to march at the commencement ceremonies to obtain her degree. Jan, who felt she couldn't afford the extra cost of renting graduation regalia, wrote the graduate school asking for an exemption. The dean (who was the former chair of the history department) told Jan that the school possessed a master's cap and gown for "a deserving, indigent graduate scholar." He also advised Jan to apply for the available university fellowship. Before accepting,

Jan asked Tony for his approval, and he responded with a gratifying, “You go ahead.” Years later, when she had become an established scholar, Jan says Tony loved to tell the story of how “Jan had to ask her husband to go to graduate school.” Tony, however, did have some reservations, and even though he had initially consented, he had second thoughts and asked Jan to decline the university’s offer and instead try to have another child. Jan refused, saying she wanted to continue her graduate school education and pursue an academic career. Tony respected Jan’s wish and did not demur, even though this decision dashed any remaining thoughts of enlarging their family.

With Tony’s support, Jan abandoned her plans to seek a high school teaching position and, at the age of 33, enrolled as a PhD student in history at the University of Colorado for the Fall 1962 term. Already on a fast track, it would take her only three years to complete all the requirements—including her dissertation—for a doctoral degree, awarded in the spring of 1965. When she began, Jan was one of only three female graduate students in the department, and all of the history faculty were men. In those years relatively few women in the country were pursuing advanced degrees in history. By and large, American history was a male preserve in which the subfields of political and military history received priority emphasis. As a student, Jan had to deflect her share of unwanted personal attention and advances made by both male students and a few members of the faculty. To some degree, she still harbored her adolescent conception of self as a homely girl who compensated for her perceived lack of sex appeal by being the smartest one in class. As a married adult woman with a growing seriousness about pursuing a genuine scholarly career, she was unaccustomed to being sexually solicited by colleagues, and she experienced awkward discomfort when it happened. Unfortunately, occasional womanizing attempts directed at Jan as a female academic did not end for her in graduate school. In later years, she was frequently propositioned by male academics at professional meetings; “I had to deal with it a lot,” she dryly recalls. The defense line that Jan quickly learned to employ was simply: “No thanks, I’m happily married.”<sup>14</sup>

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14. Jan never told Tony about any of her experiences of sexual harassment by male academics or colleagues. She says this was just part of what it was like for female graduate students and women academics at the time—a taken-for-granted part of the culture, in which men felt free to take liberties with women, who in turn perceived they had little recourse. At the same time, in our interviews with her, Jan didn’t seem personally scarred or angry about what she observed and experienced (primarily sexually inappropriate comments or propositions, but never sexual assault). She shrugs it off as something she simply took in stride and was able to cope with, while remaining faithful to Tony. It did not occur to her at the time to reveal or publicly challenge individuals or the sexist culture that sustained such exploitive behavior.



In spite of the fact that nobody at Colorado taught a course on Mormon history, Jan had found it both expeditiously convenient and personally interesting to continue focusing on the Mormons for her master's degree. Now, as a PhD student, she wanted to put her growing understanding of Mormonism into a larger context. Influenced by Lee Scamehorn (another history faculty member who ended up serving as her dissertation advisor), Jan "became committed to the virtues of comparative history" and expanded her reading focus beyond Mormons to include Puritans, Anglicans, and Quakers in the American colonies; the Methodist revolution in England and Methodism's apotheosis in America; the American Civil War; and the politics of Progressivism. At the same time, she never took any survey courses at Colorado on the history of the American West. Recognizing that Mormon history was part and parcel of US Western history (and increasingly puzzled that this fact seemed to be largely ignored by most American history texts at the time, not to mention history faculty at Colorado), Jan took the initiative to find and read relevant sources to better educate herself.

Just as most of Jan's growing knowledge of Mormonism came from her own reading, so too did her comprehension of materials on the American West. Aside from one undergraduate historiography class at Utah State, she had no formal training in Mormon Studies, nor did she receive any in Western Americana as a graduate student at the University of Colorado. Instead, her prideful attitudes of personal competence and self-sufficiency—inculcated while growing up in Hueytown and reinforced while building a life with Tony Shipp's—predictably prompted her to synthesize these two literatures on her own.<sup>15</sup>

In the meantime, Tony was preoccupied with his new job at the University of Colorado Library. He had been hired originally to head the circulation department, was quickly moved to the reference department, and within a few years became the head reference librarian. When at home, Tony decreed that evenings were for family time and peaceful relaxation, instructing Stephen to practice his violin and telling Jan she was to study only when he was working at the library. Jan agreed to this stricture, but after Tony fell asleep she would sneak into the bathroom and resume her studying late into the night.

Although Jan had spent considerable time and energy assisting Tony with his graduate writing, Tony was typically too busy with his new work at the library to return the favor. Clearly, Jan's increasingly avid pursuit of becoming a scholar and academic was still seen by Tony as a secondary avocation in the economy of the Shipp's marriage and family life. Superficially, it might also

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15. Years later as a tenured historian, Jan became an active member of the Western History Association, chairing both its annual conference program and book prize committees in 1982 and 1984 respectively.



appear that Jan's commitment to maintaining a traditional marriage reflected a fundamental docility on her part; however, such a view ignores the resolve, determination, and perseverance that better describe Jan's approach to living life, especially regarding study, learning, and her scholarly work, which were beginning to assume an increasingly larger portion of her adult identity. Even though she embraced her role as a loyal wife, Jan applied her resolve and determination to secure that which was becoming important to her own wellbeing. As she recalls, "So many of our decisions have been made because I went to Tony and said: *We* need to make a decision" (on issues that Jan had staked out a clear preference of her own).

Tony and Jan's relationship grew along with her developing academic interests. As a tightly knit family unit, Tony, Stephen, and Jan all practiced a highly focused work ethic that was mutually reinforcing. Jan remembers Boulder as an intellectually exciting time: "Tony and I were both doing scholarly work; we were both increasing our knowledge." Once she commenced her PhD studies, Tony began enrolling in Latin and Greek language courses taught by the university's classics department. Tony liked learning languages, even though he initially had struggled to learn German as a PhD student at Northwestern. It was also in Boulder when he actively began pursuing his academic interest in validating the historical provenance of literary quotations for publication and subsequently began publishing answers to quotation queries in a column for the *New York Times* and later for an Oxford University Press periodical, *Notes and Queries*.<sup>16</sup> According to Jan, Tony was fastidiously dedicated to accuracy and would read an entire book to track down a single quotation. Because of this, their house was "getting phone calls day and night for Tony," requesting authentication for a quote. A typical call would go something like: "I'm so and so from Australia calling for Anthony Shippis. My book goes to press tomorrow, and I absolutely have to identify this source."

At the same time, Stephen (who was becoming increasingly knowledgeable about music and music history) began memorizing liner notes from classical music albums to learn about musicians and their work. His precocious ability on violin quickly had achieved local notoriety, and he frequently was asked to play at school events, churches, and women's club meetings.<sup>17</sup> By the time Stephen reached the seventh grade, the school music teacher in-

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16. Published since 1849, *Notes and Queries* ("devoted principally to English language and literature, lexicography, history, and scholarly antiquarianism") can now be accessed online at <https://academic.oup.com/nq>.

17. Jan relates a story about Stephen at this time that is reminiscent of Tony's unique brand of punning wit: On one occasion, Stephen was asked by an acquaintance of Jan and Tony's, "Are you pretty good at stringed instruments?" Steven's sardonic reply was, "Oh, I'm pretty good with the yo-yo."

formed Jan and Tony that he had taught Stephen everything he knew and recommended that he take private lessons from a well-known member of the Colorado music faculty. This recommended professor strongly encouraged parents to attend and observe their children's lessons. However, when Jan drove Stephen to his first lesson, he told his mother, "If you're going in, I'm not." Jan happily obliged, since it would give her time to study in the car for her pending PhD comprehensive exams while waiting for Stephen to finish.

While she was working on her PhD, a paper about black Mormons that Jan had written during her first year as a master's student unexpectedly emerged as a significant milestone in Jan's academic development. The paper, "Second Class Saints," was initially inspired by discussions she and Tony had had with their Jack Mormon acquaintances in Logan at a time when the national civil rights movement was attracting headline news.<sup>18</sup> White-Black relationships had become a particularly controversial issue on the USU campus, because recruited black athletes were starting to date white girls in Logan—a situation that no doubt reminded Jan of her experiences of racial tensions in the segregated deep South during her growing up years. Hal Bridges, who was on the editorial board of the *Colorado Quarterly*, was impressed with Jan's paper and urged her to submit it for review. She did, and in October 1962 it became her first scholarly publication.<sup>19</sup> Jan was both surprised and pleased. Few if any of her fellow graduate students at Colorado were publishing their work in academic journals at that stage of their professional development. Leonard Arrington (who was interested in the development of young Mormon scholars and made a point of being informed of their work) obtained a copy of Jan's article and congratulated her on publishing the first academic essay dealing with the issue of priesthood and race in the LDS Church.<sup>20</sup>

Bridges, who was still Jan's advisor, had been made acting chair of the history