

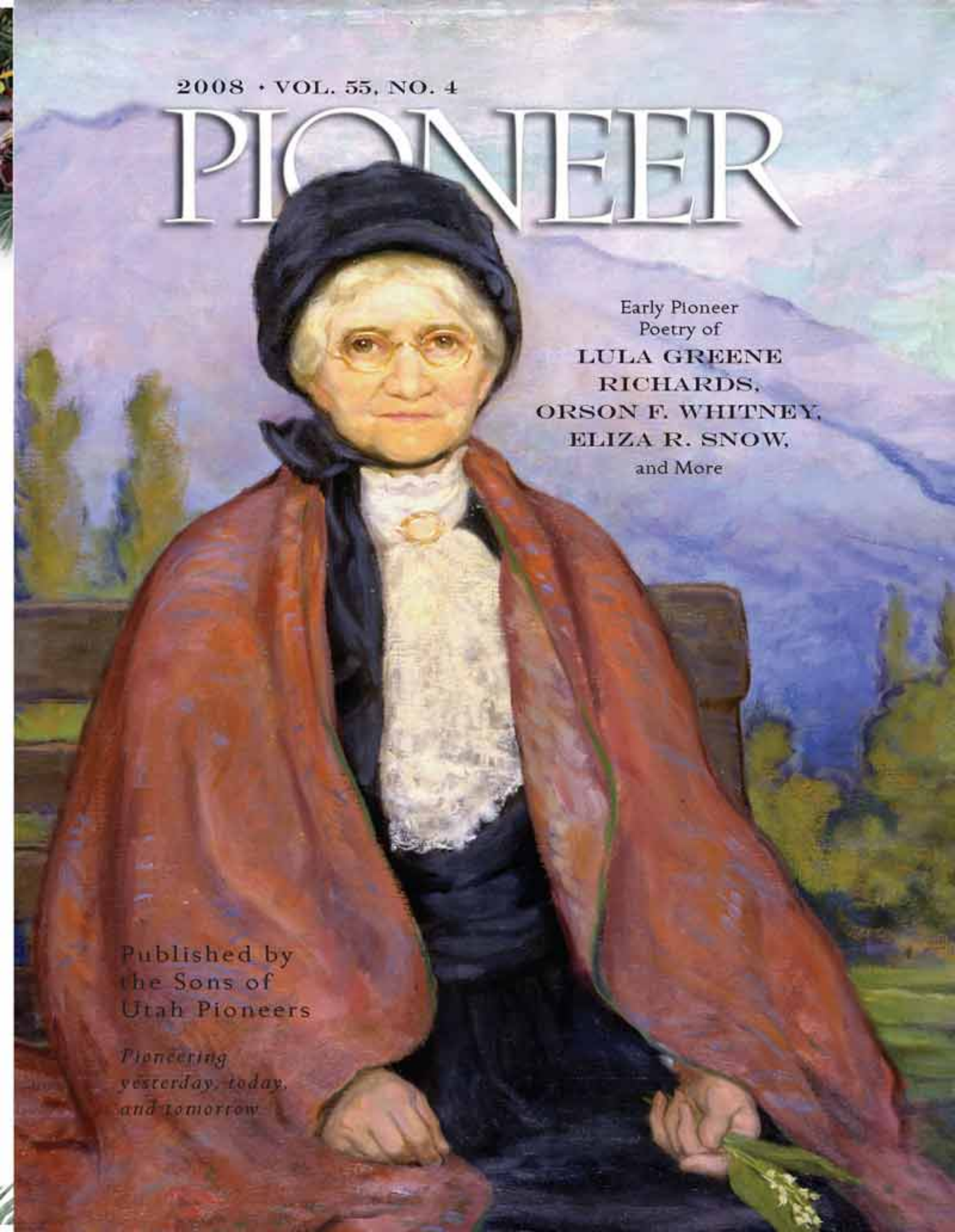
2008 • VOL. 55, NO. 4

# PIONEER

Early Pioneer  
Poetry of  
**LULA GREENE  
RICHARDS,  
ORSON F. WHITNEY,  
ELIZA R. SNOW,**  
and More

Published by  
the Sons of  
Utah Pioneers

*Pioneering  
yesterday, today,  
and tomorrow*



# PIONEER

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**COVER ART:** Portrait of Louisa Lula Greene Richards, first editor of the *Woman's Exponent* (see page 24). Painting by her son, Utah artist Lee Greene Richards. ©Courtesy Brigham Young University Museum of Art.



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*The mission of the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers is to preserve the memory and heritage of the early pioneers of the Utah Territory. We honor the pioneers for their faith in God, devotion to family, loyalty to church and country, hard work and service to others, courage in adversity, personal integrity, and unyielding determination.*  
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**“A GREAT WORK OF MORMON LITERATURE** *will be like all great works of literature; it will be one that makes me wrestle with my beliefs and which stimulates me by the example of the author’s own effort to re-create my own life on surer grounds of belief.”*

*—Karl Keller, 1969*

Almost from its inception, the philosophy of Mormonism has encouraged an enjoyment of good literature. In July 1830 the Prophet Joseph Smith announced a revelation to his wife Emma, in which the Lord commanded her to make a selection of sacred hymns, saying, “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me . . .” (D&C 25:11, 12). Since the meaning of the word “song” included poetry adaptable to music, this revelation served as an encouragement for the writing and appreciation of poetry. In December 1832 another revelation urged the Saints to seek knowledge of all things pertaining to heaven and earth and to seek wisdom out of the best books available (D&C 88:78–79, 118). Ten years later the Prophet Joseph Smith expressed this sentiment in the more familiar article of faith, “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

Manifestations of the creativity implicit in Latter-day Saint philosophy have been as diverse as the eloquent letters of Joseph Smith from Liberty Jail celebrating the majesty of God; the plaintive diary entries of Mary Goble Pay which evoke an awareness of the courage, determination, and the pathos of the handcart pioneers; the salty anecdotes of J. Golden Kimball; [and] the elegant artistry by which Orson Pratt captures the essential elements in the Plan of Salvation. . . .

All of this suggests that in our striving for spiritual alignment with God it is important that we cultivate our minds and feelings by involvement in literature and the arts. That this has been understood by loyal Latter-day Saints is evidenced by both their writings and their actions. . . .<sup>1</sup> ▣

*—Leonard J. Arrington*

CHURCH HISTORIAN FROM 1972–1982 AND AUTHOR

<sup>1</sup> Qtd. in Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), forward.

# Mormon Literature:

## PROGRESS & PROSPECTS

*by Eugene England*

FORMER BYU PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

Mormon literature [includes]: (1) an initial outpouring in the first fifty years, 1830–80, of largely unsophisticated writing, expressive of the new converts' dramatic symbolic as well as literal journeys to Zion and their fierce rejection of Babylon, and often intended to meet the immediate and practical needs of the Church for hymns, sermons, and tracts; [and] (2) the creation, in the next fifty years, 1880–1930, of a "home literature" in Utah, highly didactic fiction and poetry designed to defend and improve the Saints but of little lasting worth—and also the refining of Mormon theological and historical writing into excellent and lasting forms. . . .

It seems very important, when discussing Mormon literature, to remember that Mormonism begins with a book. The Book of Mormon has been vilified and laughed at by other Christians and ignored by literary scholars and critics. . . . Most of these people do not think of it as literature, but it has the verbal and narrative power, linguistic and historical complexity, ethical and philosophical weight, and mythic structure of a great epic.

It was a non-Mormon, Douglas Wilson, who . . . years ago pointed out the scandal of the neglect of the Book of Mormon by the American literary establishment, and that neglect still continues, even in our post-modern age of canon expansion and theoretical attempts to value all writing. But Mormon scholars have made important strides both in explicating the historical and cultural substance of this rich work and in applying various forms of literary analysis to the text itself. . . .

Joseph Smith was involved, as author or translator, in much besides the Book of Mormon, and much of that other work is also of high literary merit. Sections of the





## *Fruitionless*

*AH! little flower, upspringing, azure-eyed,  
The meadow-brook beside,  
Dropping delicious balms  
Into the tender palms  
Of lover-winds, that woo with light caress,  
In still contentedness,  
Living and blooming thy brief summer-day:—  
So, wiser far than I,  
That only dream and sigh,  
And, sighing, dream my listless life away.*

*Ab! sweetheart birds, a-building your wee house  
In the broad-leavèd boughs,  
Pausing with merry trill  
To praise each other's skill,  
And nod your pretty heads with pretty pride;  
Serenely satisfied  
To trill and twitter love's sweet roundelay:—  
So, happier than I,  
That, lonely, dream and sigh,  
And, sighing, dream my lonely life away.*

*Brown-bodied bees, that scent with nostrils fine  
The odorous blossom-wine,  
Sipping, with heads half thrust  
Into the pollen dust  
Of rose and hyacinth and daffodil,  
To hive, in amber cell,  
A honey feasting for the winter-day:—  
So, better far than I,  
Self-wrapt, that dream and sigh,  
And, sighing, dream my useless life away.*

— *Ina Coolbrith*

POET LAUREATE OF CALIFORNIA.  
SEE PP. 36–37.

*Left: "Lovenia, Glendale," photo by George Beard,  
© BYU Harold B. Lee Library Special Collections.*

Affectionately Addressed to  
Mrs. Zina D. Young (pictured in oval)

*A mother in Israel, in the fullest sense —  
All unassuming and without pretence;  
A woman, womanly — though firm, yet mild,  
And meek, and gentle as a little child;  
To tend the sick, how watchful thou hast been,  
Diffusing light and peace through every scene,  
For God is with thee, and his angels' care,  
Endorsing all thy words and granting prayer;  
His spirit was the fount from which you drew  
Rich aspirations, blessing them and you;  
And e'en thy presence brought them sweet relief,  
The mind made happy that was bowed with grief.  
To pour the "oil and wine" has been thy gift;  
The soul bowed down in sorrow, to uplift,  
Causing the clouds of darkness to depart,  
By the sweet spirit which your words impart.*

*Well hast thou stood life's battle, rear and front,  
And like a well trained soldier faced the brunt  
With eye unquailing, and with cheek unblanched,  
Thy bark upon the sea of life was launched!  
And knowing Father's self was at the helm,  
Felt sure no sea had strength to overwhelm;  
So on you rode, as childhood in repose —  
May such continue till this life shall close!  
Lady, sister, handmaid of the Lord,  
Grand is thy future! Great is thy reward!*

—Hannah Tapfield King (ca. 1901)



Doctrine and Covenants, such as 19, 76, 88, and 121, and his accounts of his first vision have been appreciated as fine literature as well as scripture. His literate and very forthcoming letters and diaries have been definitively edited, as have reports of his sermons. The sermons, recorded from memory or in longhand, are quite fragmentary and unrevealing of his literary power, except for the truly remarkable "King Follett Discourse." . . .

Early Mormons, like their mainly Puritan forebears, were both anxious about their salvation and moved to record evidence of their joy and success in finding it. . . . They were encouraged by Church practice and frontier American culture to bear witness both publicly and privately about their hardships, feelings, and spiritual experiences and to take interest in their individual selves and sense of creation of those selves—so they produced, at great effort and in amazing detail, diaries and personal reminiscences. Good examples of the journals, showing a wide range of sophistication and experiences, are Wilford Woodruff's nearly daily record of over sixty years, which provides both a rich source of ecclesiastical and cultural history and also intimate insight into the development of an Apostle and Church President; Eliza R. Snow's "Trail Diary," our best source for the horrendous crossing from Nauvoo to Council Bluffs after the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and of the unique spiritual outpourings to the women there during the winter and spring of 1847; George Laub's down-to-earth record of the momentous events of Nauvoo and the costs of discipleship for ordinary members; Mary Goble Pay's

*Eternal Science! who would fathom thee  
Must launch his bark upon a shoreless sea.  
Thy knowledge yet shall overwhelm the earth,  
Thy truth to immortality  
    give birth,  
Thy dawn shall kindle  
    to eternal day,  
And man, immortal,  
    still shall own thy sway.*

—Parley P. Pratt, *Key to Theology*  
(Salt Lake City: Deseret News  
Steam Printing, 1874), 1.

Left still-life: iStock photo #6340140.

reminiscence of the 1856 handcart tragedy, uniquely moving in its understated purity, which demonstrates how the character of an untrained narrator and powerful events honestly recorded can combine to produce great writing; and the witty, detailed, and poignant diary of Joseph Millett, covering both his 1853 mission as a teenager to Nova Scotia and his later life as a settler in Southern Utah and Nevada.

Such qualities often come through in the letters as well. Like diaries, letters provide the revealing ethical context of spontaneous, unrevised thought and day-by-day decision-making and living with consequences, as well as unequalled directness. Such directness often makes diaries and letters "truer" than the usual histories, which can be falsified by generalization and are valuable, even understandable, only when we see in them what Stephen Vincent Benet called people's "daily living and dying beneath the sun."

There were also some significant achievements in traditional literary forms in the first period. Eliza R. Snow was an accomplished versifier before she converted to Mormonism and turned her talent to long, didactic poems about Mormon history, leaders, and beliefs. She also produced some fine short lyrics and a number of hymns. The poems were published in two volumes, 1856 and 1877, and the hymns are still a highly valued part of the Mormon hymnal, especially "O My Father," which states the unique Mormon doctrine of a Heavenly Mother. One other book of poetry was published during this period, John Lyon's *The Harp of Zion: A Collection of Poems, Etc.* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), and other fine hymns were written by W. W. Phelps and Parley P. Pratt.

The first Mormon fiction, as well as some of the most important and

literate early tracts, was also written by Pratt. His "Dialogue between Joseph Smith and the Devil," first published in the *New York Herald* in 1844, is, though

KEY TO THEOLOGY  
PARLEY P. PRATT



PERFECT  
*for the*

*Holidays!*

## Santa Claus

Remember your time honor'd laws,  
Kind master of the merry glee;  
Prepare your gifts, good Santa Claus,  
And hang them on the Christmas tree.  
And where no Christmas trees are found,  
With liberal hand your gifts distill,  
The bags and stockings hanging 'round,  
Great Santa Claus, be sure to fill.  
Untie your purse—enlarge your heart  
O, do not pass one single door;  
And in your gen'rous walk impart  
Your comforts to the sick and poor.  
When eyes are watching for the morn,  
In humble hut and cottage too;  
Now disappointed and forlorn,  
If missed, dear Santa Claus, by you,  
Go all the rounds of baby-hood,  
And bless and cheer the hearts of all  
The "little folks," and please be good  
To those who're not so very small.

—Eliza R. Snow

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