

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Vancouver Island: The Establishment and Growth of the Mormon Community

ROBERT J. McCUE

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, better known as the "Mormon" Church, was organized in 1830 at Fayette, New York, with Joseph Smith, Jr., as its first president. Almost immediately those who accepted this young man for what he claimed to be — a prophet of God — found themselves subjected to severe persecution and, in an effort to find refuge from intolerance, moved in a body first to Ohio, then to Missouri, and then to Illinois. It was in this latter state that a frontier mob murdered Joseph Smith on 27 June 1844, apparently believing that if they killed the Prophet his church would also die.

At this critical point, Brigham Young, the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, took the reins of leadership and, in the face of an ultimatum to leave Illinois, began searching for a haven for his persecuted followers. One of the locations which he considered was Vancouver Island, but as is well known he ultimately led his people elsewhere: to the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains.

A hundred years after the death of Brigham Young there are over 2,600 members of the church which he led living in the various communities of Vancouver Island. This paper seeks to sketch the history of the establishment of this Mormon community on Vancouver Island; to suggest reasons for the scarcity of converts in the first thirty-five years of this activity; to determine from where and when Mormon immigrants to Vancouver Island came; and to determine why they came, and specifically what part, if any, Brigham Young's idea of a refuge on Vancouver Island played in their migration.

It was in the 1 November 1845 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, the Mormon publication in Nauvoo, that Brigham Young published a letter inviting the Latter-day Saints throughout the world to gather at Nauvoo, the Mormon metropolis in Illinois, in preparation for a migration to a yet undesignated spot in the uninhabited vastness of western North America. A postscript to the letter adds: "There are said to be many good locations for settlement on the Pacific, especially Vancouver's Island near the mouth

of the Columbia.”¹ With this statement as a basis, rumours were soon widespread in Illinois that the Mormons “had chosen Vancouver Island as their future home, the metropolis to be situated at Nootka.”²

Brigham Young’s followers in Britain took special note of the postscript to his letter. They liked the idea of a haven, an American “Zion,” under the British flag, and they quickly sought to promote the idea. The Mormon publication in England, *The Millennial Star*, in its 28 November 1846 issue, carried a petition to Queen Victoria and the members of the British Parliament requesting a grant of land and assisted passage for 20,000 British settlers who would be taken to “Vancouver’s Island.” The petitioners advanced their scheme as a “poor relief” measure, since it would remove from Britain large numbers of destitute people who could make a new start in the new world. But the project died when the petition was apparently ignored by the government, and in January 1849 a royal charter turned Vancouver Island over to the Hudson’s Bay Company, thus determining that any organized colonization of the island would be under the auspices and regulation of that company.³ For the time being at least, there would be no official or organized Mormon colonization on the island.

Meanwhile Brigham Young had led his people across the Great Plains, and upon their arrival in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in the summer of 1847 he pronounced that area to be “the right place” for “the gathering of the Saints,” claiming it to be the place he had previously seen in a vision. In the following decade their isolation, coupled with the struggle to wrest an existence from the arid soil of the Great American Desert, allowed the Mormons to forget about other possible havens, including Vancouver Island. Then in 1857, with the outbreak of the “Utah War” as a consequence of the attempt of the U.S. government to wipe out polygamy in Utah, Mormon leaders considered the possibility of having to move once more into an isolated wilderness area. Renewed rumours of Mormon interest in a Pacific coast location began to spread and soon reached the British government as well as the governor and directors of the Hudson’s Bay Company. These gentlemen were averse to any large-scale Mormon migration to Vancouver Island, and Sir James Douglas,

¹ *Times and Seasons*, VI (1 November 1845), p. 1019, as cited by Melvin S. Tagg, “A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Canada, 1830-1963,” unpublished Brigham Young University Ph.D. dissertation, 1963, pp. 59-60.

² Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah*, San Francisco, 1889, p. 238, fn. 6.

³ J. B. Munro, “Mormon Colonization Scheme for Vancouver Island,” *Washington Historical Quarterly*, XXV (1934), p. 278.

governor of the island, received instruction from the imperial government early in 1858 that “no rights of occupation whatever” were to be granted to any group of Mormons. “If however individuals or families . . . should peacefully apply for admission into Vancouver’s Island the case is different.” Such immigrants were to be received provided they agreed to “submit themselves entirely to the laws of England, as retained in the Colonial community. . . .”⁴ However, extant records do not show that any Mormon immigrants to the island materialized at this time, either singly or in groups.

When the first identifiable Mormon immigrants arrived on Vancouver Island they were unheralded, unobserved, and apparently not identified as Mormons. There was no official organized movement, only a single family: William Francis Copley, his wife, Maria Judson Copley, and their three small children. Anyone who may have known that they were Mormons apparently did not care enough to draw attention to the fact. Nor is the motive for the Copleys’ immigration known with any certainty — one son (born after the family was settled on the island) thought that it was a tardy quest for gold, Victoria being an outfitting centre for those seeking quick fortunes in the interior of British Columbia. Another son thought that Brigham Young’s interest in Vancouver Island had prompted his parents’ migration.⁵ Whether it was one of these motives or something else entirely that inspired the move remains a matter for speculation.

The Copleys arrived in Victoria from San Francisco sometime in 1875. They initially took up residence in the Cowichan area, but shortly settled at Shawnigan. They had come from Fillmore, Utah, with sojourns in both Nevada and California along the way.⁶ They appear to have been the first Mormons to live on the island, but they were certainly not the harbingers of any great Mormon influx. It was apparently an additional fifteen years before another Mormon came to the island, and then it was one of their own relatives: Sarah Jackson, a niece of Maria Copley. She arrived about 1890 for a visit, but when she met and married John Raymond the “visit” stretched into a lifetime.⁷

⁴ Labouchere to Douglas, Great Britain, Public Record Office, CO 410/1, pp. 120-23. I am indebted to Dr. James E. Hendrickson of the Department of History, University of Victoria, for this reference.

⁵ Interview with Elda Mason, granddaughter of William and Maria Copley, November 1973; also George V. Copley, “Narrative of Father’s and Mother’s life with that of my own,” unpublished manuscript, p. 5, copy in possession of the author.

⁶ George V. Copley, *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁷ George V. Copley, *Ibid.*, p. 8.

In the meantime the first conversion to Mormonism to take place on the island had occurred. How it happened remains a mystery. There is no evidence that the convert had any contact with the Copleys, and no Mormon missionaries had been sent to the island. But in the autumn of 1887 Anthony Maitland Stenhouse, Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia for Comox, announced his intention to join the Mormons. He accordingly resigned his seat in the legislature⁸ and shortly took up residence in the infant Mormon colony of Cardston in the Northwest Territories, where he was baptized into the Mormon faith by Charles Ora Card, founder of the settlement.⁹ There Stenhouse was a prominent citizen until 1891 when he returned to Great Britain, his original home. The conversion of Stenhouse and his vigorous defence of polygamy gave considerable notoriety to Mormonism in the Victoria newspapers, but had no apparent effect in attracting any new adherents to the Mormon faith. The Mormon population of Vancouver Island continued to consist of a single family which had little or no contact with its church. The children grew up knowing so little about the faith of their parents that they could hardly be termed Mormons.¹⁰

Only in 1902 did the Mormon church again show interest in Vancouver Island, and this time the nature of the interest was changed. Henceforth the island was not viewed as a possible place of refuge, but as a possible source of converts. Consequently on 15 March of that year all of British Columbia was added to the Northwestern States Mission of the Mormon Church, with headquarters at Portland, Oregon.¹¹

Three months later the second group of Mormons known to have set foot on the island arrived, but they came neither to seek haven nor to find converts. The Utah Press Association, fifty-four members strong, visited Victoria and adjacent points, and received the red-carpet treatment from the Victoria Tourist Association.¹² The *Victoria Daily Times*

⁸ *Daily Colonist*, Sunday, 16 October 1887, p. 4.

⁹ "Record of Members, 1887-1890, Cardston Ward, Cache Stake," p. 39, Church Archives, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, reveals that Anthony Maitland Stenhouse was baptized into the Mormon Church on 10 June 1888. He was living in Britain in 1912, but apparently no longer claimed membership in the Mormon Church. See Henry James Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time, a Handbook of Canadian Biography of Living Characters* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), p. 1058.

¹⁰ George V. Copley, *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹ "Northwestern States Mission Manuscript History," vol. I, 15 March 1902, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹² *Victoria Daily Times*, Tuesday, 17 June 1902, p. 3; see also Monday, 16 June 1902, p. 2; Wednesday, 18 June 1902, p. 5; Thursday, 19 June 1902, p. 3.

reported that half of this delegation was Mormon; however, there is no indication that any of them had any contact with the Copleys, and the departure of the Utah journalists on 18 June left the Mormon population of Vancouver Island precisely where it had been prior to their arrival.

Nearly a year later the first known attempt to convert residents of the island to Mormonism began. On Wednesday, 13 May 1903, the first seven of the hundreds of Mormon missionaries that visited the island in the ensuing three-quarters of a century arrived on the steamer *Majestic* from Seattle.¹³ They were led by Nephi Pratt, president of the Northwestern States Mission. On 14 May he organized the "Victoria Conference," with Elder W. M. Swan of Salt Lake City as the conference president.¹⁴ The missionaries were very shortly holding open-air meetings on the corner of Yates and Government Streets in Victoria. The local press reported that

Elders B. H. Telford and W. M. Swan of the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" of Utah and Idaho . . . are addressing meetings . . . on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings each week. . . They preach the Mormon faith, and this is their first visit to the city.¹⁵

This announcement was followed by a comment in the 12 June issue of the *Colonist* that

quite a number of Victorians have . . . expressed keen disapproval of the presence in the city of a number of preachers of the Mormon faith, who . . . [are] spreading doctrines of a sort few in the city would like to see generally followed.¹⁶

The Mormon Elders thus began what turned out to be a long and arduous struggle to gain adherents to the Mormon faith in Victoria.

It is now difficult to ascertain what success these early missionaries had, but it would appear to have been minimal. One person who is known to have stopped to listen to their street corner preaching was George Vancouver Copley, a son of William and Maria, and his encounter with these preachers was to have an interesting result. He apparently did not enquire who they were, nor did he make himself known to them, but from what little he knew of Mormon beliefs he quietly concluded that they were probably Mormon missionaries, the first he had ever seen. On his next visit to Shawnigan he told his mother what he had witnessed. The effect on her

¹³ *Ibid.*, Wednesday, 13 May 1903, p. 3.

¹⁴ "Northwestern States . . .," vol. I, 14 May 1903.

¹⁵ *Victoria Daily Times*, Wednesday, 10 June 1903, p. 5; *Daily Colonist*, Thursday, 11 June 1903, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Daily Colonist*, Friday, 12 June 1903, p. 5.

was dramatic: if there were Mormon Elders in Victoria then she must immediately go there to meet her co-religionists.

Her son's concise description of her subsequent actions paints a vivid picture of her feelings: "She went back with me that night and fell on them with rapture."¹⁷ It was like a reunion of long-lost friends, although she had never before set eyes on even one of these missionaries. The Mormon Elders became regular visitors in Maria Copley's home, and this led to the first Mormon baptisms known to have taken place on Vancouver Island. During the summer of 1904, Maria Judson Copley and her eldest daughter, Clara, were baptized at Shawnigan Lake; then Merian, the seventh son; and perhaps William Francis, the father. Mary Graham Copley, wife of the eldest son, may also have been baptized that summer.¹⁸ The elder Copleys, of course, were Mormons before moving to the island, but Clara, Merian and Mary, not having previously been baptized, rank as the first Mormon convert baptisms on Vancouver Island. The available records do not reveal what other successes the missionaries may have had, but these appear to have been minimal, with the result that the missionaries were withdrawn, probably early in 1905,¹⁹ to devote their energies to more productive portions of the mission.

In February 1910 a renewed proselyting effort was initiated with the arrival of Elders Charlie Roper and David Gerrard, who set up their headquarters at 1511 Pandora Avenue in Victoria.²⁰ Success at making converts was discouragingly slow, and these two missionaries were replaced several times before more baptisms took place — in 1917. Three of the five baptized at that time were children of Sarah Jackson Raymond,²¹ the Copley niece who by this time had resided on the island for about twenty-seven years. At year's end the missionaries reported that

after years of almost discouraging opposition, it seems that the Gospel is finally making an impression in Victoria. A few good investigators have been

¹⁷ George V. Copley, *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁸ Interview with George V. Copley, 25 February 1974.

¹⁹ Mason to McCue, 20 January 1975. Maria J. Copley kept an autograph album which contains signatures of twenty-one L.D.S. missionaries with whom she had contact either in her home at Shawnigan or in Victoria. The last of these signatures appears under date of 5 April 1905. Maria Copley left British Columbia apparently shortly after that date, for she was in Utah before 25 May 1905. The missionaries may have been withdrawn at about this time, for there is no further trace of them until February 1910.

²⁰ "Northwestern States . . .," vol. I, 19 February 1910.

²¹ Personal records of David W. Evans, Salt Lake City, Utah, who was present as a missionary at these baptisms.

found, and already a number have signified their intention of accepting the Gospel.²²

During the next few months additional conversions took place, including that of George Vancouver Copley, who had first stopped to listen fifteen years earlier. By the summer of 1918 the missionaries reported a membership of five families composed of twenty-one souls. On this basis the first Latter-day Saints Sunday school on Vancouver Island was organized,²³ with the freshly baptized G. V. Copley as superintendent.²⁴

After this spurt of success, the conversions ceased once again. As a result the missionaries were withdrawn in 1923, returned briefly in 1924, and then withdrawn semi-permanently.²⁵ This left the Victoria Sunday school to its own resources, which proved to be inadequate for survival when several strong families moved away without replacements. The Sunday school dissolved, and the few Mormons left on the island lost contact with their church except for brief and infrequent visits from travelling missionaries. As the Roaring Twenties waned, the effort to establish a Mormon congregation appeared to have died a slow but natural death.

The depression years brought a severe curtailment in the number of missionaries sent out by the Mormon Church. No missionaries were assigned to Vancouver Island for most of the period from 1930 to 1937. In 1933, however, several persons in another Mormon family moved to Victoria when one member joined the navy. Alice Mann and her sons, Reg and Clem, were Mormons, and in 1934 Reg's wife and a Mr. Terry were baptized by a pair of itinerant missionaries. The following year Alice Mann's daughter, Una Mann Hillier, and her husband, Stanley, moved to Victoria with their children to be near Mrs. Hillier's mother.²⁶

The nucleus for a revived Sunday school thus existed, and the catalyst which was to bring such an organization into existence was Melvin Oxspring, who, until his employment with a flour milling company necessitated his move to Victoria, was the president of the Vancouver branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With him came a household of five, including three other adults. He soon made contact with the survivors of the earlier Sunday school, plus the more recent arrivals,

²² "Northwestern States . . .," vol. II, 25 December 1917.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1918.

²⁴ George V. Copley to McCue, 1 March 1918.

²⁵ "Northwestern States . . .," vol. III, 25 March 1923; 16 August 1924.

²⁶ Una K. Hillier, "History of the Victoria Branch Sunday School of the Northwestern States Mission," p. 1, unpublished manuscript notes in possession of the author; interview with Reg Mann, February 1975.

and ascertained that they were anxious to have a Mormon Sunday school organized. This was done on 17 October 1937 at the Oxspring residence at 54 Government Street. Present were ten adults, including two missionaries sent by the president of the Northwestern States Mission, and seven children.²⁷ This Sunday school proved to be more durable than its predecessor, for when Oxspring left Victoria a few months later others took his place. This time Mormonism had taken sufficient root in Victoria to survive whether or not there were missionaries present.

The Second World War was a period of increased growth for the Mormon congregation as the armed forces and war-related industries drew Mormon families to Victoria, particularly from southern Alberta. While on the island these people gave the struggling Mormon community a strength, both in numbers and experience, that it had not previously possessed. By 1946 there was a self-sustaining congregation in Victoria.²⁸ In Nanaimo that same year a Sunday school was organized with a charter membership of twenty-three,²⁹ the nucleus of the congregation that would build the first Mormon chapel on the island between 1951 and 1953.³⁰

With the end of the war other important developments took place. Some families that had moved to the island for war-related reasons remained at the end of the war; others returned as opportunity permitted. Still other arrived as tourists, liked what they saw, and determined to make the island their home. With the decreased demand for military personnel in the United States young Mormons who would otherwise have been serving in the armed forces responded in large numbers to the call for a greatly expanded missionary program. Mormon missionaries were assigned to Vancouver Island in ever-increasing numbers. Communities previously untouched found themselves canvassed by the Mormons. The result was a slow but steady growth of Latter-day Saints congregations in some of these communities, with congregations being organized in Port Alberni in 1953 and in Duncan in 1959 (the same year that the island congregations were placed under the immediate supervision of island

²⁷ Oxspring to McCue, 30 January 1975; Una K. Hillier, "History . . .," p. 1. It is a peculiarity of Mormon Sunday schools to have classes for adults as well as for children.

²⁸ "Northwestern States . . .," vol. V, 11 August 1946; Hillier, "History . . .," p. 13.

²⁹ Millie Dyson, miscellaneous minutes and notes, copies in the possession of the author.

³⁰ Millie Dyson, "A Brief History of the Nanaimo Branch — Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," unpublished manuscript, copy in possession of the author (n.d.), p. 3; "First L.D.S. Chapel on Vancouver Island Dedicated," unpublished manuscript, copy in possession of the author (n.d., n.p.); *Nanaimo Free Press*, [3] June 1951.

residents rather than being supervised from Vancouver.)³¹ Additional branches followed in Comox in 1962, Sidney in 1972, Campbell River in 1976 and Port McNeill in 1977.³² This growth came to fruition in 1975 when a Victoria, British Columbia, "Stake of Zion" was organized, a recognition by church leaders in Salt Lake City that the Mormon Church organized on Vancouver Island had come of age. By coincidence this new ecclesiastical entity was organized just one hundred years after the Copley family arrived on Vancouver Island.³³

In view of the strong missionary effort over a long period of time one is led to wonder why Mormon missionaries were not able to attract more converts, especially in the years preceding World War II. Part of the answer lies in the fact that in the first thirty-five years of Mormon missionary activity on Vancouver Island there were in fact no missionaries assigned to the island for half of the time. The missionaries seemed to be impatient of success (as measured by convert baptisms), leaving the island as an "unproductive area" if they went a year without baptizing someone. It took as little as two months to reach that state of discouragement. The one exception was an eleven-year period from the summer of 1912 to the summer of 1923, the most successful period they experienced prior to World War II. There were missionaries on the island continuously during that period, and it took them six years, from 1912 to 1918, to secure sufficient baptisms to feel that they were beginning to be successful. The only other time that baptism took place was in the initial two-year stay following the arrival of the missionaries on the island in 1903. It therefore appears that there is some correlation between continuity of effort and conversions, and that one of the reasons for lack of converts in the period prior to World War II was discontinuity.

Another reason for the lack of converts is reflected in the pages of the *Victoria Daily Times*. In 1902, the year before the Mormon missionaries arrived on the island, the *Times* carried a total of thirteen articles about Mormons.³⁴ The six articles that were generated locally were quite favour-

³¹ "Nanaimo Branch Historical Record, 1952-1959," 2 August 1959, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; *Special Victoria District Conference*, 9 February 1975. Copy in the British Columbia Provincial Archives.

³² Annual Historical Reports, Victoria, British Columbia Stake, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Copies in the possession of the author.

³³ *Daily Colonist*, Saturday, 8 February 1975, p. 19.

³⁴ *Victoria Daily Times*, Saturday, 12 April 1902, p. 1; Thursday, 12 June 1902, p. 2; Monday, 16 June 1902, p. 2; Tuesday, 17 June 1902, pp. 3-4; Wednesday, 18 June 1902, p. 5; Thursday, 19 June 1902, p. 3; Wednesday, 13 August 1902, p. 4;

able to the Mormons: five comprised coverage of the Utah Press Association visit to Victoria; the sixth was a detailed and complimentary account of the visit of a Victoria resident to Salt Lake City. The remaining seven were wire service news items that tended to be critical, if not hostile, in reporting such things as the shooting of an Anaconda, Montana, woman by her Mormon husband; plural marriage and the number of Brigham Young's descendants; the jailing of a grandson of Brigham Young on a murder charge; and the controversy surrounding the election of Reed Smoot, a Mormon Apostle, to the U.S. Senate.

In 1903 only three articles about Mormons appeared.³⁵ One of these, again concerning the Smoot case, appeared nearly four months before the arrival of the missionaries in Victoria. Of the other two, one was submitted by the Mormon Elders to announce their arrival in the city; the other was a short "local news" note disapproving of their presence in Victoria. Although there were Mormons preaching in the city for at least two years after this time the press made absolutely no further reference to them. In the thirteen months prior to their arrival the *Times* carried fourteen items about Mormons, and after their arrival only one very short suggestion that they were perhaps not welcome. The lack of converts suggests that the populace reflected this feeling. It is almost as if Mormons at a distance or as tourists were interesting, but on the basis of daily, close proximity it was best to ignore them.

Not until February 1910, when the Elders returned to the island after an absence of five years, did another "Mormon" news item appear. At that time the *Times* ran a wire service story which seemed calculated to keep alive in people's minds an association between polygamy and Mormons: a story of the death of a Utah Mormon who left a progeny of twenty-two children (of two wives) and a total of 153 descendants.³⁶ Nothing more, not even a letter to the editor, was published about the Mormons for over a year, and then when something was published it was hostile to the Mormons: a wire service report on Tuesday, 13 June 1911, of the Ottawa deliberations of the Presbyterian General Assembly with respect to "the menace of the Mormon community to Canada," and the need for an active campaign to combat this menace. Four days later a

Saturday, 13 September 1902, p. 6; Thursday, 2 October 1902, p. 4; Saturday, 8 November 1902, p. 1; Tuesday, 25 November 1902, p. 2; Friday, 15 December 1902, p. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Tuesday, 27 January 1903, p. 1; Wednesday, 10 June 1903, p. 5; Friday, 12 June 1903, p. 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Thursday, 17 February 1910, p. 8.

response to this item, in the form of a letter to the editor, urged that "something be done to drive the Mormon missionaries" from Victoria. That seems to have been the extent of local interest. A wire service article on 16 June questioning whether Mormons had abandoned polygamy was followed by another on 24 June warning Canadians that the Mormons in Canada, because of their ability to become a united political force, were a potential threat to the Canadian way of life. News items on 25 and 28 June were more neutral, reporting the testimony of Mormon leaders before a sugar inquiry in Washington, D.C.³⁷ With that the Mormons once again faded from the printed page in Victoria, and the missionaries disappeared from the island at summer's end, possibly as a result of the flurry of adverse publicity during the month of June.

The evidence is not substantial enough to draw very firm conclusions, but it should be noted that until the arrival of the Mormon missionaries at least some items favourable to Mormons were printed, but that after 13 May 1903 very little was published, and then only items that were at least mildly hostile. Only two locally generated items were published after the above date, both of them hostile. It would appear that there were no other people on Vancouver Island who shared Maria Copley's enthusiasm for the arrival of the Mormon missionaries. At the same time it seems that there was not much in the way of overt hostility, but rather a tendency to simply pay no attention to these Mormon preachers. Consciously or not the residents of Vancouver Island seem to have operated on the principle of "ignore them and they will go away," and it worked — in 1905, 1911, 1923, 1924, 1930, 1934 and even 1937. However, "they" kept coming back with a dogged persistence that eventually paid dividends.

On the basis of the information that is available it is estimated that more than a thousand Mormon missionaries have been assigned to the island over the three-quarters of a century since the first seven arrived. To evaluate the effectiveness of this missionary work the author has surveyed the officers of the church with respect to their place of baptism. An analysis of this survey is enlightening. It reveals that, in spite of a rather slow start in the first half of the period, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is becoming a "home-grown" institution. Whereas in the 1941-1975 period only 22 percent of Mormon leaders on the island were converted locally, 53 percent were local products in 1978. And while 90 percent of the missionaries sent to the island were American, American

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Tuesday, 13 June 1911, p. 3; Friday, 16 June 1911, p. 19; Saturday, 17 June 1911, p. 16; Saturday, 24 June 1911, p. 4; Sunday, 25 June 1911, p. 2; Wednesday, 28 June 1911, p. 16.

Place of Baptism of Officers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Victoria, Nanaimo, Sidney, Duncan (pre-1975 only) and Port Alberni.³⁸

	1941-1975	1975	1978
Vancouver Island	9 (22%)	73 (40%)	119 (53%)
U.S.A.	3 (7%)	20 (11%)	9 (4%)
U.K.	1 (3%)	12 (6%)	15 (6%)
Southern Alberta	19 (46%)	32 (17%)	39 (17%)
Other Canada	9 (22%)	40 (22%)	40 (17%)
Miscellaneous		7 (4%)	7 (3%)
	41*	184	224

*Figures in this column refer to branch presidents only; other figures include all executive positions. (Note that, because the Mormon Church utilizes a lay leadership which is rotated from time to time, executive officers are a representative sample of the total membership of the church in a given area.)

leadership of the Church on the island has not been more than the reverse of these proportions, peaking at 11 percent in 1975 and declining to 4 percent by 1978. Another group which has spectacularly declined in prominence is that from southern Alberta. Whereas it composed 46 percent of the leadership in the pre-1975 period it had fallen to only 17 percent by 1978, having traded relative positions with the locally converted group.

In the first thirty-four years after Mormon missionaries began working on the island (1903-1937) the net growth in members of the Mormon community was not more than twenty, an average annual increase of about one-half person. In the next thirty-one years that number had grown to over 1,600 (1968), an average increase of about fifty per year. Membership in 1978 was over 2,600, a net average increase of approximately one hundred members annually over that decade, with about 85 percent of these being converted locally.³⁹ Missionary work has become increasingly effective with the passing of time.

³⁸ Information compiled from questionnaires circulated by the author to bishops, branch presidents and individual leaders in the church units named in 1975 and 1978. (Referred to hereafter as 1975, 1978 Surveys.)

³⁹ Monthly Correlated Reports of the Victoria District, 1968-74; Monthly Correlated Reports of the Victoria, B.C. Stake, 1975-78; in the possession of the author.

What part then has the movement of Mormons to Vancouver Island from other places played in building a Mormon community on the island, and why has this movement taken place? It seems apparent that the nucleus for the establishment of the first durable Mormon congregations on the island, both in Victoria (1937) and Nanaimo (1946), was provided not by local converts but by Mormons who, for reasons of their own, had made Vancouver Island their home. What were some of these reasons? The following chart indicates that employment opportunity has been the greatest attraction, but the climate has also been an important allurements. Very few Mormons seem to have migrated to Vancouver Island with retirement motives. Nor did they settle on the island because their church sent them. In the surveys taken by the author in 1975 and 1978 less than 4 percent responded that the church had an influence on their decision, and even in those cases the influence seems to have been a self-imposed challenge to help strengthen a relatively weak church community rather than an assignment or request from a church leader. However, a general impression persists that many of those who claim to have moved for employment reasons, but who were not compelled by their employment to move to the island, were influenced in their decision by the presence of the church — i.e., they did not move to the island because of the church, but if the church had not been present they may have chosen not to make the move.

*Reasons for Moving to Vancouver Island: Mormon Leaders in
Victoria, Nanaimo and Port Alberni.*⁴⁰

<i>Stated Reason</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1978</i>
Non-military employment opportunity	68 (60%)	57 (52%)
Armed forces posting	6 (5%)	7 (6%)
Climate, beauty, lifestyle	20 (18%)	23 (21%)
To be near relatives already in the area	13 (11%)	15 (14%)
The challenge of strengthening the church	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
Retirement	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
Other	3 (3%)	4 (4%)
	113	108

⁴⁰ 1975, 1978 Surveys.

On the basis of the information currently available it seems reasonable to conclude that the first thirty-five years of Mormon missionary activity on Vancouver Island were relatively unproductive because of a combination of lack of continuity in the proselyting effort and the apparent indifference of the populace. The successful establishment of durable congregations coincides with the movement to the island of Mormons from other areas, particularly southern Alberta. These migrants seem to have chosen Vancouver Island as their home for reasons unrelated to the establishment of Mormon congregations, but their presence has stimulated the conversion of island residents to the point that those converted to Mormonism on Vancouver Island outnumber those who have moved in from other areas.

Brigham Young's consideration of Vancouver Island as a place of refuge seems to have played no significant part in the growth of the Mormon community, nor have subsequent Mormon leaders attempted to promote movement of their people to the island. The Copley family may have been influenced, but in any case their residence on the island had no significant influence in attracting others. The only scheme for Mormon migration to the island which can definitely be shown to have been influenced by Brigham Young's consideration of the island as a possible haven (that in Britain in 1846) failed to get beyond a very preliminary planning stage.

There seem to have been three different stages in the official Mormon attitude towards Vancouver Island: (1) Beginning in 1846 it was looked upon as a possible haven from persecution, a view that persisted as long as the Mormons were subject to actual physical persecution; (2) Beginning in 1902 it was transformed in the minds of Mormon leaders into a possible source of converts, who might be encouraged to emigrate to Utah to bolster the Mormon population there; (3) With the movement of significant numbers of Mormons from other areas to Vancouver Island during and after World War II and the establishment of stable Mormon congregations, converts were still sought, but with a view to further strengthening what had been started on the island.

Missionary work and unofficial migration can thus be seen to have had complementary roles in establishing and developing a Mormon community on Vancouver Island. Brigham Young's idea of a haven has had no significant effect in the process, most Mormons being totally unaware, until quite recently, that he even knew that the island existed.