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## The Forgotten Voice of the Oneida Stake Academy

*Fred E. Woods*

“The Physiography class invited me to their Comet Party. We all got up at 3 o’clock a.m. and went to the academy building and there watched Halley’s comet and indulged in outdoor games,” wrote H. Oswald Christensen, a devoted faculty member of the Oneida Stake Academy in Preston, Idaho.<sup>1</sup> His voice, along with those of many other Academy faculty members and students, must not be forgotten.

### The Need for LDS Church Academies

As early as 1867, “Gentiles” began to establish mission or denominational schools in Utah Territory. Protestant and Catholic schools sprang up to counter Latter-day Saint influence in the public schools with the hope that they could save Mormon youth from what the Gentiles felt was a delusion. William E. Berrett explains, “Finding an apparent weakness in the existing elementary schools and a lack of secondary schools, they [Protestants and Catholics] saw the establishment of their own schools as the most effective channel for contact with Latter-day Saint youth.”<sup>2</sup>

Two decades later, the need to spiritually fortify the Latter-day Saint youth became more acute when Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887. This act disenfranchised the Church, put an end to the Perpetual

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FRED E. WOODS is an associate professor at Brigham Young University in the department of Church History & Doctrine. He is also the executive director of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation and has been involved the past year in trying to raise funding to save the Oneida Stake Academy building. The author gives special thanks to Ruth and Soral Hart for research assistance and for the use of all but one of the photographs used in this paper. These photographs came from *Hometown Album: A Pictorial History of Franklin County, Idaho—Horse and Buggy Days and Early Auto Era*, edited by Newell Hart.

Emigration Fund, declared children of polygamous marriages to be illegitimate, allowed federal control of the polls, and denied Latter-day Saints the opportunity of serving on district school boards. Thus, LDS religious training of the youth was hindered, and Church leaders decided to take action by forming academies.

In the spring of 1888, the Church's General Board of Education was formed, which consisted of eight members. Wilford Woodruff, chairman of the board and President of the Church, sent a circular dated 3 June 1888. In his correspondence, he outlined a major decision made by the General Board of Education that would have a great impact on the Saints. "It was decided that a Board of Education, consisting of not less than five and not to exceed eight in number should be selected in each Stake to take charge of and promote the interests of education in the Stake." Woodruff continued, "It was made the duty of these Boards to take into consideration the formation of Church schools, and . . . to report them to the General Board." The circular further explained: "Religious training is practically excluded from the District Schools. The perusal of books that we value as divine records is forbidden. Our children, if left to the training they receive in these schools, will grow up entirely ignorant of these principles of salvation for which the Latter-day Saints have made so many sacrifices."<sup>3</sup> This letter influenced the creation of thirty-three stake academies, established between 1888 and 1909 in Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, Mexico, and Canada.<sup>4</sup> Church leader George Q. Cannon further explained that the purpose of these academies was to create "the means of grounding their pupils in the knowledge of the truth, and when the students obtain this, they will have the means of measuring the statements of men of science and of judging of their value, for they will have pure truth itself as the standard by which to measure all that is set forth."<sup>5</sup>

### **Early Beginnings in Franklin and Preston, Idaho**

The Oneida Stake Academy (OSA) was the outgrowth of this plan devised by Church leaders to provide spiritual education to Latter-day Saint youth in various stakes who they feared were not being taught the principles of the restored gospel in the public school system.<sup>6</sup> The man who first presided over the Oneida Stake Board of Education was the stake president, George C. Parkinson. Parkinson, a former school teacher, had recently returned from the Boise Penitentiary, having served eleven months of a one-year sentence for hiding one of his polygamous brethren in the cellar of the co-op store in Oxford, Idaho.<sup>7</sup> He was assisted in his stake assignment by his two counselors, Solomon H. Hale and Matthias F. Cowley, along with five other board members.<sup>8</sup> Parkinson and other stake presidents oversaw educa-



*Oneida Stake Academy, 1903-1905.*

*Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

tion in their respective stakes and reported educational matters to Karl G. Maeser, the first superintendent of the Church's General Board of Education.<sup>9</sup>

The first challenge faced by the Oneida Stake board was to locate a place for the academy. Inasmuch as Franklin, Idaho, was headquarters for the Oneida Stake, it made sense to have the Academy in Franklin—but where? Matthias F. Cowley wrote of their decision, “Having no suitable building to conduct the school we procured a hall in Franklin.”<sup>10</sup> Two ground floor rooms in the Thomas Lowe Dance Hall were used as the first classrooms, and on 1 October 1888, classes began.<sup>11</sup> Samuel Cornwall of Salt Lake County was hired to be the principal for the first year. Attendees numbered about a hundred, which included the primary department conducted by Miss Mary Thomas of Smithfield. During the second year, James R. Rawlins of Draper, Utah, was appointed principal with Caroline C. Parkinson appointed primary teacher.<sup>12</sup>

Things ran smoothly during the first two years of operation. However, in 1889 when headquarters for the Oneida Stake shifted to Preston, Idaho, the idea was hatched that perhaps the academy should also be moved to Preston. Because of a difference of opinion among Oneida Stake members, the matter was referred to President Lorenzo Snow, who determined that the academy should be moved to Preston. In 1890, the school found temporary quarters in two rooms of a Preston furniture store owned by J. A. Head. That

year, Joseph G. Nelson and his wife Almeda served as instructors.<sup>13</sup> Nelson described the meager conditions in which the academy students gathered for instruction the first day of class in the Preston store. “It was obvious that the



*Almeda Nelson, one of the first instructors at Oneida Stake Academy. Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

opening day must be postponed,” he wrote. “In due time benches were brought from Franklin. I made two blackboards from ordinary lumber and covered them with slate cloth.”<sup>14</sup> In spite of the circumstances, the Nelsons forged ahead: “We had our instruction to ‘teach all subjects under the guidance of the spirit of the Lord,’ and therefore humbly petitioned our Heavenly Father in all we did. Each day school opened with devotional exercises. The first hour was devoted to subjects pertaining to the Gospel, and all students were under obligation to take it. Standard Works of the Church were used as texts. All secular branches followed the rest of the day.”<sup>15</sup>

### A New Academy Building in Preston

Oneida Stake leaders soon recognized the need for a new academy building, and with the support of members, construction was launched in Preston. Matthias F. Cowley publicly announced plans for the new building:

Preston has been selected as the place to build it. Already the basement is excavated and probably 150 loads of rock have been hauled and also considerable sand, lime, and other material. A well has been dug in the ground for water, which was found at about 30 feet below the surface. President Solomon H. Hale [first counselor in the Oneida Stake presidency] has been employed to superintend the works. The basement having been excavated and preparations made, the board of education, with a number of other brethren, met July 2 [1890] on the grounds for the purpose of laying and dedicating the corner stone. The base upon which the stone was laid and the southeast corner of the stone were placed in position by the masons, under the direction of Brother Nicholas Summers, who has been employed as master of the mason work. President George C. Parkinson stood upon the cornerstone at 5:45 p.m. and offered the prayer of dedication, which was dictated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as all could feel the influence thereof; and we trust that the prayer offered will be fully realized in the erection of this much needed building.

Committees have been appointed in each ward to collect means and a gener-

ous feeling prevails in the hearts of the Saints toward the academy, all feeling that such an institution is needed very much in which to educate the youth of the Stake in the principles of the Gospel and every branch of useful knowledge.

The plan for our academy was drawn by Church Architect D. [Don] C. [Carlos] Young. It is to be built of rock, will probably cost about twenty thousand dollars, and when completed will form a beautiful edifice, a credit to the Oneida Stake.<sup>16</sup>

Peterson noted that Young's plans were approved by the stake and the General Board of Education and that "the plans specified that the building would be of cut stone, three stories high, with dimensions of 48 by 64 feet, a capacity of 300 pupils." In addition, "Male members of the stake were called on missions to quarry the rock, others to haul the rock from the John Nuffer Homestead on the divide between Cub River and Worm Creek northeast of Preston."<sup>17</sup> Fred Nuffer explained how the rock was quarried: "The Academy at Preston was started about that time, with my brother John as supervisor of construction. I got a contract to supply stone for this building which called for 2,000 cubic feet at 25 [cents] per foot at the quarry. . . . All work was done by hand. The stone was used for corners, sills and water table. The main hedge was about twenty feet above ground, about twenty feet wide and 400–500 feet long. We used twelve-foot churn drills and blasted large blocks loose from the main ledge. We had to be careful how much powder we used so as not to shatter or cause seams in the stone."<sup>18</sup>



*John Nuffer, who provided the rock for the academy building from his homestead northeast of Preston. He was also the supervisor of construction on the academy. Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

Peterson summarized the last few years of construction: "By October 31, 1891, construction had progressed to the point that the school could be held in the basement. The building was completed in 1894 and dedicated by Apostle Moses Thatcher on July 28, 1895."<sup>19</sup> One week before the dedication, the *Deseret Weekly* announced that the Oneida Stake conference would be held on 28–29 July 1895 in the new academy building. It specifically noted, "The building has recently been completed and will be dedicated on Sunday, the 28th, at 2 p.m. Its seating capacity is about 1,500 and it is expected that it will be filled on the occasion."<sup>20</sup>

### Continual Financial Support Needed for the Academy

Following construction, the building required continual maintenance

and underwent several renovations.<sup>21</sup> Several years later, the academy leaders appealed to the community: “In order to realize all that is hoped for in this institution, after the blessings of God, much depends upon the support it receives from the people; therefore we earnestly solicit the general patronage of all who have ‘true education’ at heart.”<sup>22</sup> Peterson noted: “The major source of income for the building, maintenance and operation of the Academy were the voluntary contributions of the Saints. . . . Without the generosity and united support of the Saints of the Oneida Stake, the building of the Academy would have been impossible.”<sup>23</sup>



*The Oneida Stake Academy building was completed in 1894 and dedicated by Apostle Moses Thatcher on July 28, 1895. Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

At the turn of the twentieth century, the academy’s need for financial support from the Oneida Stake can be clearly ascertained by the following document issued by members of the Oneida Stake Presidency: “Brothers George C. and William C. Parkinson set forth the needs of the Academy and the necessity of closing its doors unless help were forthcoming. The Academy was \$2,000 in debt and the burden was too great for the people of the stake to carry. The Academy received no help from the Church last year. Brother Parkinson also told President Snow that if the Church was unable to help them it was his best judgment that rather than continue the burden upon the people, its doors should be closed as a church school, and the building might be used in connection with the public school system. President

Snow, however, told Brother Parkinson not to close the school but to wait and see what could be done.”<sup>24</sup>

Less than six weeks later, \$2,500 was appropriated by the Church to the Oneida Stake Academy and \$300 more on 7 November 1900.<sup>25</sup> Voluntary contributions were also gathered from the faculty.

The minutes of the Oneida Stake Academy give evidence of faculty support: “The Faculty also decided that we send for six dozen Music books for the vocal music class and that the teachers be responsible for the pay.”<sup>26</sup> Faculty members also canvassed the Saints, requesting donations for the school. For example, H. Oswald Christensen recorded, “I went around canvassing for the academy . . . and had good success.”<sup>27</sup> Several years later, he journeyed beyond the bounds of the Oneida Stake to solicit funding to support the Preston school. On another occasion, he noted, “John A. Morrison and I went to Gentile Valley to canvass for the Oneida Stake Academy. We visited every ward in Bannock Stake including Soda Springs. . . . The people, as a whole made us welcome, and we had a delightful trip.”<sup>28</sup> Students did their part through activities such as musical programs and skits with other teachers to offset academy costs. They also visited wards in the Oneida Stake and gave talks on education, which included the advantages of attending the academy.<sup>29</sup>

### Curriculum and Costs of an OSA Education

Room and board for students from outlying communities was often provided by the Preston community. This service was apparently arranged by Principal John E. Dalley, who became aware of such needs by faculty members. The faculty minutes for the date of 13 October 1893 record: “Sr. [Sister] Nelso [Almeda Nelson] reported that students would come to the Academy from surrounding settlements [and] wanted boarding places and could not obtain them. Bro. Dalley [John E. Dalley, OSA principal] said he would look into the matter at once.”<sup>30</sup> The *Annual of the Oneida Stake Academy* (1898–1899) noted under the caption, “Students’ Expenses: Good board and rooms can be obtained for \$2.00 to \$2.50 a week.”<sup>31</sup> From this we may ascertain that the matter was looked into and that it was successful. In 1905, Principal John Johnson reported that “accomodations [sic] for students are easily obtained in the best families and that healthful homes for the young people are secured.”<sup>32</sup> During the first two decades of the academy’s presence in Preston, students generally paid \$2.50 per week for lodging and meals and a dollar more in the latter years of the school’s existence.<sup>33</sup>

Faculty minutes reveal that for the first several years, the annual cost of tuition, regardless of what courses were taken, was \$5.00. However, needy



*Carpentry Class, 1904-1905.  
Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

families were granted free tuition.<sup>34</sup> Faculty member Joseph G. Nelson recalled: “None were excluded, but were to pay tuition according to their ability to do so. Many never paid and to this day we have among our papers an order on a poor brother for tuition and his two big boys. These boys are now men who hold Doctors degrees.”<sup>35</sup>

Curriculum from 1888–1901 was composed of the following courses: theology, geography, reading, penmanship, arithmetic, hygiene, numerals, physiography, orthography, music, and grammar. For the years 1901–1913, the four-year general high school offerings typically consisted of the following classes:



First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
Life of Christ	Old Testament	New Testament	Book of Mormon
Algebra	Plane Geometry	Solid Geometry	Physics
English	English	English	English
Physiology	U.S. History	German	French
Vocal	MusicDrawing	Civil Government	Trigonometry
Elocution	Vocal Music	English History	Geology
Physiography	Botany	Agriculture	Chemistry
Physical Training	Physical Training	Physical Training	Physical Training <sup>36</sup>

Comparing the LDS curriculum the Academy offered with that of the secular school system of the day, Milton L. Bennion noted, “Practically the only difference of note between the two courses of study is that in the church schools every pupil of Mormon parentage is required to take theology.”<sup>37</sup>

### The Faculty

The academy’s solid curriculum had a competent faculty to match. The OSA could boast that they were the first academy in the Church Educational System in which every faculty member possessed an academic degree. Their normal teaching load varied from fifteen to twenty-five hours per week, depending on the size of the classes and the courses taught. Both teachers and students were held to high standards of behavior on and off campus. Of the ninety-two known OSA teachers between 1888–1922, fifty-two were male and thirty-nine were female, and the average tenure for instructors was three years.<sup>38</sup>

Information concerning OSA faculty salaries is scanty, but apparently money for Church education in general was often scarce. John D. Monnett explained how the Church dealt with the serious financial needs of the academies during the nation-wide panic of 1893. That year, “a program was announced to church school teachers called the ‘pro rata’ plan. Teachers who agreed to teach under the system were called ‘volunteer’ teachers and were considered missionaries by the Mormon Church.”<sup>39</sup> That same year Church General Superintendent of Education Karl G. Maeser called for volunteers “willing to take charge of Church Schools at a pro rata salary, based upon the tuition after deducting for fuel and other running expenses, and to take the risk of getting much, little or nothing.”<sup>40</sup> However, less than a decade later, Church funds for teacher salaries improved as tithing funds substantially increased as a result of Church leaders reemphasizing the payment of tithes.<sup>41</sup> At the turn of the century, one OSA female instructor was hired to teach for \$45 per month or about \$400 annually; and by 1908, salaries ranged from about \$600 to \$800.<sup>42</sup> Oneida Stake Academy faculty member

H. Oswald Christensen recorded in 1908 that he had “Received word from the O.S.A. board of Education that they had accepted my offer to teach the coming [sic] year for a guarentee [sic] of \$825.00 and \$850.00 if they get the appropriation necessary.”<sup>43</sup>

### Campus Activities

Academy dances provided weekend entertainment for the students. Dances were generally held every two weeks at the school. Phyllis Page Palmer commented: “We were allowed one dance in two weeks by the rules of the school. If we went to the dance at home on the weekends then we



*Girls from Oneida Academy, 1917.  
Standing: Lu Carpenter, Ann Thomas, Kate Fjeldsted, Ethel Thomas.  
Front: Eda Fjeldsted, Ann Porter.  
Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

reported it to the Principal before school Monday morning.”<sup>44</sup> Apparently, the academy in Preston often ran short on boys when it came time for dancing. Oswald Christensen wrote in his journal on 15 January 1904: “We attended the leap year dance in the Academy on the 15th. There were 111 numbers [tickets] sold. From one to four girls would ask me for every dance. The girls couldn’t dance only every third time.”<sup>45</sup> Rules at the dances were sometimes violated. “In our Academy dance Oct. 27, some of the boys got quarreling, Christensen wrote. “I went out on the stairway where they were and stopped them, but when I went in to call the next dance, they went out on the street and had their fight.”<sup>46</sup>

In addition to dances, there were activities of a mischievous nature that entertained the OSA student body. On April Fool's Day 1904, Oswald Christensen noted in his journal, "The students tried lots of tricks on the teachers; they hid all the tools in my carpentry department and I couldn't work that day."<sup>47</sup> Mark Hart remembered his former teacher N. L. Nelson. "Man how he could concentrate!" he recalled. "When he had his nose in a book he was gone. I whispered to a kid next to me. 'I'll bet I can sneak right out of that window and he'll never notice.' I inched over to the wall, like this, stopped and checked him—he was still lost—and then I inched along some more. I slipped out the open window, went around to the front steps, into the hall, then sneaked back into my seat. He didn't notice at all."<sup>48</sup> In 1922, OSA student Scott Nelson remembered leaving his mark at the academy when he nearly fell through the ceiling while being pursued by a Brother Bench. He later marveled that he had kept himself from falling through.<sup>49</sup> Others recalled an informal initiation to the school. For example, Lavinia Cutler remembered the following during a visit to the academy: "Here's the deep window sill where Mattie Fjeldsted and Emma Foss taught me to play poker. They were seniors and I was a Freshie. They were looking out for me."<sup>50</sup> Student rivalries were also part of the Oneida campus. Leonard J. Arrington reported that during Harold B. Lee's senior year, his class posted their flag at the top of the flagpole. However, the next morning they discovered that members of the junior class had removed and shredded it. "A brief explanation of the situation states, matter of factly that 'fisticuffs followed.'"<sup>51</sup>

## Athletics and Associations

Dozens of photographs attest to the hundreds of male and female students who played sports at OSA.<sup>52</sup> The women had basketball and baseball teams, and the men's competitive teams were basketball and football. Men's basketball was first introduced in 1908. Three years later, OSA won its league championship. "Our school took an excursion trip to Logan," Oswald Christensen wrote. "We had our special train and took the band down. The occasion was the game of Basketball between our school and the Fielding Academy [Paris, Idaho]. . . . We won the game by a score of 46 to 15, which gave us the championship of South Eastern Idaho."<sup>53</sup> Several years later, Harold B. Lee (future LDS Church President) would be elected as the OSA "athletic manager," the most-sought-after student office because it included free travel to the games.<sup>54</sup> Football came later to OSA—1919 to be exact. "Oneida has football for the first time. . . . Although school began only two weeks ago, most of the boys are in fair physical condition owing to the fact



*Oneida Academy Junior's Team, 1915.  
Left to right: Mabel Christensen, Gretta Rallison,  
Adele Ballif, Mattie Wright, Gwen Nielsen.  
Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*



*This was the girls basketball team, class of 1916; however, it was  
taken in 1914, when they were sophomores.  
Left to right: Luella Collet, Afton Hoggan, Vera Sperry, Althea Wilcox, Hattie Peterson.  
Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*



Boys basketball team of 1908-1909. This image was taken one year after basketball was introduced at the Academy.  
 Standing: Sylvan Weaver, Lonnie Carver, Clyde Packer, Sam Packer, Louis Nuffer, Herman Nuffer, Bert Gooch. Front: Coach Joseph Jensen and Bill Nuffer.  
 Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.



Boys basketball team, 1914.  
 Back: George Lake, George Crockett, Frank Gilbert, Nathan Barlow, Elmer Choules, Charles Cutler, Melvin Neeley.  
 Front: Madison Merrill and Clyde Packer.  
 Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.



*Football began at the Academy in the fall of 1919.*

*Back: Weston Thomander, Abner Larson, Elmer Palmer, Rulon Henderson, Emil Jorgensen, W. W. Romney. Center: Platte Larson, Oliver Nelson, Clyde Lee, Charles Bronson, Chris Struve, Cloyd Hansen. Front: Orvid Cutler, Herschel Neeley, Jerry Meek, Jesse Johnson, Lowell Jensen, Earl Nelson.*

*Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

that most of them are fresh from the threshing machines, the best fields and plows.”<sup>55</sup> There were also intramural sports at the OSA, which included wrestling.<sup>56</sup> George Nelson, who emigrated from Norway in 1906 at the age of sixteen, was a faculty member who began coaching wrestling at the academy in 1915. Nelson went on to become one of the premier light heavy-weight wrestlers in the western United States.<sup>57</sup>

There were also several student associations, including the Literary Society, organized in 1894. They arranged for guest lecturers and were responsible for the school newspaper, *The Oneida*, which was launched in 1911. The Dramatic Association, established in 1908, produced a minimum of one classical production annually.<sup>58</sup> In 1921, the Naeraepsekahs Dramatic Circle was also formed, which took its name by simply spelling Shakespearean backwards.<sup>59</sup>

One very successful organization was the OSA Debate Team. Harold B. Lee and his partner, Sparrell Huff, were considered by their classmates as

heroes when they beat the Fielding Academy at Paris, Idaho, who had been previously unbeaten.<sup>60</sup> This victory, and Lee's success in several other areas, appear to be summarized in a statement in *The Oneida* under his senior picture for the class of 1916: "Harold B. Lee—Athletic manager, comedian, debater, vice-president of class. When you forget the thought of fame, Consult your classmate Lee again."<sup>61</sup>

Another very successful student who was involved in extracurricular activities was Ezra Taft Benson, who would later serve as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and also would serve with his classmate, Harold B. Lee, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.



*Debate Team, Sparrell Huff and Harold B. Lee.  
Courtesy L. Brent Goates, Harold B. Lee: Prophet  
and Seer (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft 1985), p. 49.*



*Missionary Class, 1913.  
Standing: unidentified, Ernest Spatig, Oliver Choules, George Crockett, unidentified,  
Harris Taylor, George Dalton, Harold Jensen.  
Front: Professor John A. Morrison, Tom Peterson, Glen Merrill, unidentified, unidentified,  
Professor C. J. Engar.  
Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*



*Oneida Academy band, 1919-1920.*

*Back: James Miller, Don Nelson, Dennis Lewis, Verlo Petersen,  
Leo Beckstead, Alma Choules.*

*Middle: Carl Engar, Perry Whittle, Ira Sant, Professor C. J. Engar,  
unidentified, Clyde Crockett, Vernal Smith.*

*Front: Oliver Nelson, Cyril Whittle, Rudgar Daines, Howard Peterson, Earl Hollingsworth.  
Courtesy Soral and Ruth Hart.*

Each would later serve as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Author Sheri Dew notes: “It was at the academy that Ezra first met Harold B. Lee, who was a year ahead of him in school. They became good friends, and both sang in the school’s first choir. Ezra also played trombone, though his major interests were agriculture and vocational training.”<sup>62</sup>

### **Closing of the Academy**

Reminiscing about the value of the academy, former OSA faculty member Joseph G. Nelson wrote, “Pages could be filled with experiences of how these roughhewn diamond boys from the cattle ranches and the farms, and girls whose unsophistication [sic] in social affairs . . . were transformed into fine cultured students . . . and from this group Bishops, Counselors, Mayors and County and State officials were chosen in later years.”<sup>63</sup> However, in 1922, OSA closed its doors as an official Church academy.

Factors that led to its closure included the beginning of the Church sem-



inary program in 1912. By 1919, nineteen seminaries had already been successfully put in place.<sup>64</sup> The following year, the LDS General Board of Education made the decision to close the Church-sponsored academies so they would “not duplicate the efforts of the public schools.”<sup>65</sup> Other factors included the understanding that the academies could not compete with the better-equipped public schools. Church leaders also noted that parents had found it was more economical to send their children to a public school, and thus the decision to close the academies would lighten the financial burden of many Church members.<sup>66</sup>

### Aftermath

From 1888 to 1922, the Oneida Stake Academy played a significant role in the lives of many students and Church members in the region of southeastern Idaho and especially in Preston. Although its doors were closed in 1922, academy rooms continued to be used by the public school system until 1990. In 1977, the Oneida Stake Academy was honored by being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The academy has left a lasting legacy. At this historic school, hundreds of students went on to become LDS Church leaders, politicians, educators, teachers, agricultural specialists, and business professionals whose influence has been felt throughout the LDS Church and in the communities where they have lived. Their experiences and contributions that once echoed through the walls of the Oneida Stake Academy should never be forgotten.

### Notes

1. H. Oswald Christensen, Journal, Book II, 14 May 1910, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).

2. William E. Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988), 15.

3. “History or Record of the Oneida Stake Academy,” 9–11, LDS Church Archives, Family and Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives). John D. Monnett Jr. “The Mormon Church and Its Private School in Utah: The Emergence of the Academies 1880–1892” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1984), 192–93, lists four additional reasons why an LDS school system was established at this time: “(1) A school system was a visible outlet for protest against federal encroachment. (2) A school system was a visible, formalized standard to use as a rallying point for church members. (One could be irate and indignant about federal escheatment and polygamy courts but it was difficult to formalize that indignation into positive action on behalf of the group. A school system with local control lent itself to that action.) (3) A school system was a sign to church members that the Mormon Church was still a viable institution and still capable of leadership in social and political issues. (4) A school system was an arena for emotional

appeal and support. Schools have traditionally been places for political changes because of emotional involvement between children and families.”

4. Ken Stoker, “Academy Era Short-Lived, but Impact Long Lasting,” *Church News*, 28 May 1988, 8–10. Although Stoker notes “that the Church founded 35 academies,” only 33 academies are listed on his chart titled “LDS Academies” for the years 1888–1909.

5. George Q. Cannon, *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (1 September 1892): 546.

6. The name of the stake stemmed from the fact that its boundaries made up a substantial part of Oneida County, in southeastern Idaho. The county, created in 1864, was named after Lake Oneida, New York, the area from which most of the early settlers had originated. Lalia Boone, *Idaho Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1988), 277.

7. Fred E. Woods and Merle W. Wells, *Inmates of Honor: Mormon Cohabs in the Idaho Penitentiary, 1885–1890* 40, no.3 (fall 1996): 14. Parkinson was the one of forty-eight Mormons incarcerated in the Boise Penitentiary during the years 1885–1890 and was the only one not convicted for the crime of unlawful cohabitation. All forty-eight Latter-day Saints were from southeastern Idaho at the time of their arrest.

8. “History or Record of the Oneida Stake Academy,” 11, LDS Church Archives.

9. Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, 19. Maeser’s appointment as superintendent was given in the same 1888 circular calling for the stake boards of education.

10. Matthias F. Cowley, “Oneida Stake Academy,” *Deseret Weekly News*, Salt Lake City, Utah, 12 July 1890, 78–79.

11. Floyd W. Peterson, “A History of the Oneida Stake Academy,” (M.A. thesis, Utah State Agricultural College, 1957), 6.

12. Cowley, “Oneida Stake Academy,” 78.

13. Clarence G. Judy, “A History of Preston, Idaho” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1961), 53–54.

14. Joseph G. Nelson, “An Autobiography of Joseph G. Nelson,” 31, Perry Special Collections.

15. Nelson, “Autobiography,” 31.

16. Cowley, “Oneida Stake Academy,” 78–79. The cost of the academy was in the vicinity of \$45,000. A. Snow, “Brief Local Paragraphs,” *Deseret Weekly*, Salt Lake City, Utah, 27 July 1895, 190.

17. Peterson, “A History or Record of the Oneida Stake Academy,” 8.

18. Fred Nuffer, “The Story of My Life,” *Cache Valley News*, Preston, Idaho, no. 45, July 1972, 8. Special thanks is expressed to Soral Hart for gathering all the issues from the *Cache Valley News* that discussed the Oneida Stake Academy. Her father, Newell Hart, was the editor of the *Cache Valley News* and was a great supporter of the academy, along with his wife Ruth.

19. Peterson, “A History of the Oneida Stake Academy,” 8.

20. Snow, “Brief Local Paragraphs,” 190.

21. Renovations included a new classroom (1904), piped running water (1905), and a mechanical arts brick building (1907). The Neilson Gymnasium completed in 1914 at the cost of \$40,000 was about the cost of the entire academy when it was first completed. Peterson, “A History of the Oneida Stake Academy,” 9–10.

22. *Oneida Stake Academy Circular, 1902–1903*, 21.

23. Peterson, “A History of the Oneida Stake Academy,” 26–27.

24. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 14 March 1900, LDS Church Archives (hereafter cited as Journal History).

25. Journal History, 23 April 1900; and 7 November 1900. By 1915, the Church was

able to pay the costs of the Oneida Academy and other stake academies because Church members were faithfully paying their tithes. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 26–27.

26. "Oneida Stake Academy Minute Book 1892–1902," Oneida Stake Academy Records, 1890–1927, LDS Church Archives, 22 January 1895 [1896].

27. Christensen, Journal, Book I, 13–17 July 1903.

28. Christensen, Journal, Book II, 3 September 1909.

29. "Minutes of the Faculty," cited in Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy, 40–41.

30. "Oneida Stake Academy Minute Book 1892–1902," 13 October 1893, in the Oneida Stake Academy Records, 1890–1927, LDS Church Archives.

31. *Annual of the Oneida Stake Academy for the Eleventh Academic Year, 1898–1899*, 8.

32. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy, 14–15, citing the *Oneida Stake Academy Catalogue, 1905–1906*.

33. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 14–15, as cited from the *Oneida Stake Academy Catalogue, 1905–1906*; and the *Oneida Stake Academy Catalogue, 1916–1917*.

34. "Minutes of the Faculty," 4 January 1901, cited in Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 29. Therein, Peterson also points out that commencing in 1901, the cost of tuition varied according to the what courses the students were enrolled in.

35. Nelson, "Autobiography," Perry Special Collections.

36. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 45. The academy also had a "Preparatory Department" for seventh and eighth graders, which would be the equivalent of what would be referred to now as junior high school. Theology, reading, arithmetic, grammar and composition, history, physiology, geography, penmanship, nature studies, and science were required in their two-year curriculum. *Oneida Stake Academy Circular 1902–1903*, 8. Under the section titled "Admission," it reads, "Students are admitted to the preparatory department if they show evidence of a good moral character and have credentials showing that they have completed the sixth grade in some district or church school. Students over sixteen, however, may be admitted without the above stated credentials or scholarship. The high school is open to all who are of good moral character and have completed the eighth grade work." *Oneida Stake Academy Circular 1902–1903*, 6.

37. Milton Lynn Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1939), 167.

38. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 22.

39. John D. Monnet Jr., "The Mormon Church and its Private School System in Utah: The Emergence of the Academies 1880–1892" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1984), 206.

40. Karl G. Maeser, *Juvenile Instructor* 28 (1 September 1893): 554.

41. Monnet, "The Mormon Church and Its Private School System in Utah," 207. The reemphasis on the payment of tithing was launched by President Lorenzo Snow in the spring of 1899. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard note that "For the next two years general conferences resounded with the tithing message, and local priesthood leaders soon reported satisfying progress. The percentage of full tithe payers rose dramatically." James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 455

42. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 31.

43. Christensen, Journal, Book II, 1 May 1908. Christensen's journal also suggests

that he was involved in campus activities that would increase funds for the OSA. One entry from the fall of 1903 reads, "Friday night we attended a banquet and dance given to the donors of the Academy piano. I was on the program and recited a comic speech." Christensen, Journal, Book I, October 1903.

44. "Phyllis Page Palmer (1886–1965) and Her Memories of the Academy," *Cache Valley News*, no. 142, August 1980, 1

45. Christensen, Journal, Book I, 15 January 1904.

46. Christensen, Journal, Book II, 27 October 1905.

47. Christensen, Journal, Book I, 1 April 1904.

48. "Visitors' Stories Continued," *Cache Valley News*, no. 105, July 1977, 4.

49. "A Remembrance of Harold B. Lee and Others Who Were students or Teachers in Our County . . . for the 'School Memories' Series," *Cache Valley News*, no. 132, October 1979, 2.

50. "Visitors' Stories Continued," *Cache Valley News*, no. 105, July 1977, 4. The 1919 OSA paper, the *Quiver*, noted that Fjeldsted became the valedictorian of her 1919 class, and the inscription under her senior class pictured noted that her hobby was "bluffing" and that her destiny was to be a "Ruler of Men."

51. Leonard J. Arrington, "Harold B. Lee," in Arrington, ed. *The Presidents of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 350–51.

52. Newell Hart gathered many images of athletic teams in his book *Hometown Album* (Preston, Idaho: Cache Valley Publishing, 1973).

53. Christensen, Journal, Book II, 17 March 1911.

54. L. Brent Goates, *Harold B. Lee: Prophet and Seer* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 47.

55. Journal History, 26 October 1919. "Because of the late introduction of football into the athletic program of the Academy, the school had little opportunity to develop outstanding teams before the Academy was discontinued in 1922." Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 34.

56. "Students who made the 'A' team either in basketball or football received sweaters bearing the Academy monogram. Wrestling, tennis and track were part of the Academy's athletic program, but only as intramural sports." Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 34.

57. *The Oneida*, Preston, Idaho, 7, no.1, October 1915: 4.

58. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 37.

59. Newell Hart, *Hometown Album*.

60. Goates, *Harold B. Lee*, 47–49.

61. *The Oneida*, "Commencement 1916," 5, in Caine Manuscript Collection #3, Newell Hart Papers, box 9, fd. 10, Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Merrill Library.

62. Sheri L. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 38. In the author's possession is a copy of the "Oneida Academy Commencement Program," dated 19 April 1918, which reveals that Ezra Taft Benson was two grades behind Harold B. Lee and graduated in the class of 1918. Nearly six decades later when the Oneida Stake Academy was placed on the Register of the National Register of Historic Places, President Benson sent a letter to Newell Hart stating, "I do appreciate the efforts being made to preserve the old Oneida Stake Academy Building. I hope my efforts will be helpful." *Cache Valley News*, no. 104, June 1977.

63. Nelson, "Autobiography," 31.

64. Monnett, "The Mormon Church and Its Private School System in Utah," 213.

65. Monnett, "The Mormon Church and Its Private School System in Utah," 215.

66. Peterson, "A History of the Oneida Stake Academy," 57.