

# *Highlights in the Ninety-Nine-Year History of BYU*

ERNEST L. WILKINSON

I find that the writing of *Brigham Young University Centennial History* is in some respects more difficult than being its President for a period of twenty years. While President, I could, within limitations of the rulings of the Board of Trustees, make my own decisions and let others either praise or gripe about them. As historian, I have become the critic and appraiser of eight Presidents whose terms of office have spanned one hundred years, with a student body beginning with 29 elementary students and now enlarged to over 25,000 college resident students and 247,000 involved in off-campus programs of various sorts. You will appreciate that to put this one hundred years of history in a forty-minute talk will require a great deal of condensing. All I can hope to do is to give certain distinctive characteristics of each administration. But here goes.

## **Preludes to BYU**

The founding of Brigham Young Academy, the predecessor of Brigham Young University, was preceded by two elementary schools, one after the other, founded by Warren and Wilson Dusenberry, two brothers who were non-Mormons. They were later converted to the Church. Their school, known originally as the

Dusenberry School, became so successful and popular that the latter one was taken over as a branch by the University of Deseret, the predecessor of the University of Utah. After two or three years it had 300 students. This dwindled to 221, but even then the Dusenberry School was twice the size of the mother institution in Salt Lake City, which had only 116. Because, however, the lack of support by the University of Deseret and inability to generate enough tuition to carry on, it was forced to close.

## **Founding of BYA**

Fortunately, Brigham Young had for some time been contemplating the founding of a school to be given his name. He now came forward and in October of 1875, ninety-nine years ago this month, made a gift by deed of trust of 2.1 acres of land in the center of Provo to establish Brigham Young Academy. Warren Dusenberry, one of the two brothers who founded the Dusenberry School, was elected its principal with the understanding that he would be only temporary and would be suc-

*Ernest L. Wilkinson was president of Brigham Young University from 1951 to 1971. This Founder's Day address was given on 10 October 1974.*

ceeded by a permanent principal. A local Board of Trustees was set up to manage the affairs of the institution. It was to be a private school, not an institution of the Church, although in reality and actual practice it relied on either Brigham Young or the Church primarily for support.

### **Calling of Maeser**

Dusenberry had begun the practice of law and did not have much time to give to the school. He himself proposed Karl G. Maeser as the first permanent principal. While President Brigham Young was deciding whether to ask Maeser or someone else to become principal, there was a terrific explosion in the northern part of Salt Lake City, which practically destroyed the rooms in a ward meetinghouse where Karl G. Maeser, the first convert to the Church from Saxony, Germany, was teaching. He sought out his bishop, a Brother Sharpe, and found him in the office of Brigham Young. Without any formalities, he bolted into the office to tell of the tragedy, which would deprive him of teaching. Brigham Young immediately looked at him and said, "That is all right, Brother Maeser; we have another mission for you." Having served three missions already, Maeser later explained that he wanted to drop through the floor, but Brigham then explained that he had started a school in Provo and wanted him to go there as its principal. Maeser came back the next day and accepted. When he asked Brigham Young for instructions, the only reply was "You are not to teach even the multiplication tables without the inspiration of the Lord. That is all. God bless you. Goodbye." That has, ever since, been the hallmark of this institution.

### **Calling of Abraham O. Smoot**

Since the school, however, was not Church supported, President Young knew that it was necessary for him to have a Board of Trustees with a very strong man as chairman, to whom he could give the financial responsibility for

the operation of the school. Some years earlier, President Young had called to his office Abraham O. Smoot and told him he wanted him to go to Provo and help to colonize that place and become president of the stake. Brother Smoot indignantly demurred. He pointed out that he was mayor of Salt Lake City, to which office he had been reelected several times, he was a federal officeholder, he had already served three missions for the Church, and now for the first time in his life he had been able to build a home in which his family was comfortably situated. He had also engaged in several explorations and settlements for the Church. He thought that Brigham had a lot of nerve in asking him to go and build up a new city in Zion. Brigham, who was not accustomed to members of the Church taking exception to what he said, looked him straight in the eyes and said, "Brother Smoot, you can either go to Provo or you can go to hell." Smoot decided to go to Provo. (Some of the Smoot family afterwards moved to Texas and came up with a different version of what Brigham said. They claim that Brigham said, "You can either go to Provo or you can go to Texas or you can go to hell." Some have questioned whether the addition of Texas gave him any more latitude.)

With the calling of Brother Maeser, President Young made Smoot chairman of the Board of Trustees and gave him the added responsibility of financing Brigham Young Academy. Dusenberry served until the early part of 1876, when Maeser assumed the principalship of the new school.

### **The Maeser School**

Maser started with twenty-nine students and served for a period of sixteen years, until 1892. These were all either elementary or high school students. One of the first ones to enroll was George Sutherland, a non-Mormon who later became an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court. In an address which he gave to the graduating class of BYU in 1941,

Sutherland described the students in those pioneering days as follows:

*Their weekday attire at the maximum consisted of a hat of ancient vintage, sometimes with a well-developed hole through the crown of which a lock of hair might be made to wave like the plume of an Indian on the warpath; a hickory shirt the worse for wear; a pair of pants handed down, perhaps, from a former tenant or series of tenants, held in place (the pants, not the tenants) by one suspender, or allowed to defy the force of gravity with the sole and precarious support afforded by the contours of an immature body. For one to appear among his fellows with any marked elaboration upon his attire was to invoke ironic, not to say insulting comment, often so caustically phrased as to send the misguided lad to the shelter of his home in tears.*

*Nobody worried about child labor. The average boy of ten worked—and often worked very hard—along with the older members to support the family. He milked, cut and carried in the night’s wood, carried swill to the pigs, curried the horses, hoed the corn, guided the plow or, if not, followed it in the task of picking up potatoes which had been upturned, until his young vertebrae approached dislocation and he was ready to consider a bid to surrender his hopes of salvation in exchange for the comfort of a hinge in the small of his back. [“A Message to the 1941 Graduating Class of Brigham Young University from Mr. Justice George Sutherland,” p. 4]*

(May I say that this attire was no more freakish in nature than the present attempt by a few male students to prove their masculinity by growing a beard and by trying at the same time to qualify as one of the fairer sex by growing straggly long hair. But I haven’t seen one yet who could compete with a woman in a beauty contest. Rather, each one of them ought to enter the contest for the ugliest male on the campus.)

The sixteen-year period of Maeser’s administration was a struggle for survival.

On a number of occasions the Board of Trustees did not know where they could raise enough funds to carry on. One year the faculty served without any salary. Tuition was generally paid in vegetables and other produce, and the teachers had to go around to the different homes to collect this in their wheelbarrows. But no one had a deeper devotion to the Church than Karl G. Maeser. He was the spiritual architect of the Academy. Abraham O. Smoot was its financial savior. Without the latter’s personal fortune, which he used whenever the Church permitted him, the school would never have survived. On several occasions the school was threatened with closing, but Smoot never permitted that to happen. Without Abraham Smoot, neither the school nor Maeser would have survived.

In addition to the academic poverty, Maeser found that he had to compete with a large number of denominational schools throughout the territory of Utah founded by the Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. The competition was keen because these sects had raised millions of dollars in a campaign throughout the United States for these schools to convert the benighted Mormons to Christianity. As a matter of fact, by 1888 there were eighteen academies plus seventy-two elementary schools founded by these denominations in Utah, as compared to only ten academies maintained by the Church, of which BYA was the main one. The leaders of these Protestant schools, however, soon came to realize that Mormon students came to their schools, enjoyed all their educational facilities, and then went back to their ward as leaders in the Mutual Improvement Association and other auxiliary organizations of the Church, so most of these competing schools were gradually discontinued. Mormon students accepted the educational training of the other denominations but rejected their brand of Christianity.

Maeser also had other trials and tribulations. One night at the beginning of one of the school terms in 1884, the Academy, which was located

on what is now Center Street and Third West, burned to the ground. The next day Reed Smoot, a son of Abraham O. Smoot, who some twenty years later became U.S. senator, saw Brother Maeser on the street and said, "Brother Maeser, I am sorry to know that Brigham Young Academy is burned."

Brother Maeser looked up and said, "No, Brother Smoot, only the building is burned," and in two days they had rented space to carry on another school.

These were also the days when there were fierce prosecution and persecution of the Saints who practiced polygamy, and Brother Maeser, in response to a request of the leaders of the Church the very year that he became principal, had taken a second wife. He had not wanted to do so, but was so loyal to the Brethren that he accepted their advice. What is generally not understood about polygamy is that in many instances polygamy was entered into to provide homes for women who would otherwise remain single, not for the reasons the gentiles ascribed to its practice. In common with hundreds of others, Karl G. Maeser was arrested and tried for polygamy. He pleaded guilty before Judge Dusenberry the predecessor who had actually recommended Maeser as his successor. Many of the stalwart citizens of Provo, including George Sutherland, pleaded that he not be given a prison sentence. The judge followed his recommendation but gave him the maximum fine of three hundred dollars. The next day the students at BYA, in a devotional assembly, raised the three hundred dollars and paid his fine.

#### **Maeser as Superintendent of Church Schools**

In 1888 Maeser was appointed superintendent of Church schools and began to organize Church schools in various parts of the territory in competition with BYA. This inflamed Smoot, who thought a man could not serve two masters. So in 1890 it was agreed that in 1892 Maeser would retire as principal and devote

his entire time to being superintendent of Church schools.

#### **Cluff Administration**

In looking for a successor to Maeser, the Board chose a convert from England, then twenty-seven years of age, who had been on the faculty since he was twenty years of age and who was probably the most brilliant and at the same time faithful member of the Church on the faculty. His name was James E. Talmage, but before public announcement of this decision the Brethren in Salt Lake City had selected Talmage as president of the LDS College in Salt Lake City. So he never served as principal of Brigham Young Academy. The Board then chose Benjamin Cluff, Jr., who had just obtained his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, as assistant principal with the understanding that when Maeser retired he would be the principal.

Except for their dedication to the Church, Maeser and Cluff were extreme opposites. Maeser was sixty-three years old, staid in appearance, an adherent of Prussian methodology in education, conservative, and sober in his demeanor; while Cluff was only thirty-four, vibrant, impetuous, and imbued with new educational ideas he had brought from Ann Arbor. Maeser advocated a closed society; Cluff gloried in his stay at the University of Michigan and his association with the faculty there. To Maeser, "evolution was taboo," and psychology was "the chimera of the human mind." Cluff's mind was open to new ideas. Maeser thought the Church Educational System, especially Brigham Young Academy, could produce sufficient teachers to supply the needs of the Church, while Cluff felt there was much in the gentile world which the Church could use. Maeser had begun his educational training at sixteen and received a sound German education with a rich classical background. Cluff, a product of pioneer Utah, had not entered the University of Michigan until he was

twenty-nine. Maeser was harnessed and broken in; Cluff seemed almost like an unbroken colt. Maeser had become accustomed to the deliberate and often slow speed of Church machinery; Cluff was impatient with delay.

At the beginning of 1892 the school moved from downtown into the new Educational Building on the lower campus, which was the first building on that block. Maeser bowed out as principal and Cluff took over. A few years later Cluff returned for a year to the University of Michigan for a master's degree, which was the highest degree then held by anyone on the faculty of BYA.

Cluff brought some innovations to BYA which he had picked up in Michigan. He began real college work and separated the high school from the college students so that they had different classes and different training. He introduced college yells, which were an abomination to Maeser and certain members of the Board of Trustees. He introduced athletics, which Maeser, who was a member of the Board of trustees, required him to abandon. Maeser's point of view was, in effect, the prevailing view of university presidents of the time. The president of Cornell was requested to allow a group of students at that institution to go to Michigan to play a football game. He refused the invitation on the following grounds: "I refuse to let forty of our boys travel four hundred miles merely to agitate a bag of wind."

Like Maeser's sixteen years with the Academy as principal, Cluff's twelve years represented a fight for survival. For in 1895 Abraham O. Smoot died and the school no longer could rely on help from him in its emergencies. One year later, in 1896, Cluff proposed that the Church incorporate BYA as an auxiliary organization. This had been proposed before but refused. This time it was approved, and for the first time in the school's twenty-one-year history, the Church had legal control of the Academy and by the same act was financially responsible for its operation.

After being vice-principal or President for about ten years, Cluff, with the express approval of the Board of Trustees, organized an expedition to travel to South America for the purpose of proving the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Besides himself, there was only one other faculty member in the party; the others were students. While the Church leaders gave their consent, it was not to be a Church expedition, but one merely sponsored by Brigham Young Academy, which contributed the magnificent sum of two hundred dollars for this expedition. The members had to supply their own horses or donkeys and other equipment. There were twenty-three members in the party. (George H. Brimhall was left in charge of Brigham Young Academy.) When the party arrived at Nogales, the entrance to Mexico, they were denied admission except upon payment of a large customs fee. While President Cluff was negotiating among the Mormon colonies in Juarez for help in raising this fee and also in trying to have it reduced, Brother Heber J. Grant, a member of the Council of the Twelve, visited the party at Nogales. President Cluff and his assistant, Walter Wolfe, were in Juarez at the time making further negotiations for entrance into Mexico. Brother Grant became convinced that these young men in the party did not have the experience necessary to enter foreign countries like Mexico, Guatemala, and Colombia, where there were constant revolutions. He feared for their lives. He thought, for one thing, that they didn't have the proper leadership, and he had heard reports that the young men in their overland travels from Provo to Nogales had not always acted with proper decorum. He, therefore, returned to Salt Lake City and proposed to the First Presidency and Council of Twelve that the expedition be called off; the General Authorities agreed and had Joseph F. Smith, who was a counselor in the First Presidency and who was on his way to Mexico, report to Cluff that it was the advice of the General

Authorities that the trip be abandoned. But Cluff and some of his men were obdurate. They said they would rather die in the attempt than give up. So they were given permission for a much smaller party to continue on their own responsibility but without any sponsorship or help from the Church or Academy. Of the original party of twenty-three, fifteen therefore returned to Utah and the other eight took 1½ years to make the balance of the journey into Colombia, where they hoped to discover Zarahemla.

During this time they suffered all kinds of hardships, privations, starvation, and serious illnesses. Cluff himself nearly lost his life trying to ford a river. Others were bitten by scorpions and snakes, which made it impossible for them to travel for many days. At one place they were actually arrested and thrown into jail and accused of murder. Finally, however, they arrived in Colombia. But that country was then in the midst of a revolutionary war, and the government denied them the right to pursue further their journey for fear that they would be murdered. Disillusioned, discouraged, famished, and heartbroken, they finally had to abandon the expedition and return to Provo by ship by way of Cuba. One of the hardy souls, Chester Van Buren, stayed on alone to gather botanical specimens for Brigham Young Academy. Had they followed the advice of Brother Grant, they would have saved themselves eighteen months of disease and torture, but they had been given their free agency and they had exercised it.

Cluff returned to Provo in 1902. During the two years he was away from Provo, many of the leaders of the Church under whom Cluff had served had died, including Karl G. Maeser, President Lorenzo Snow, and President George Q. Cannon, who had originally urged Brigham Young to found the Academy and who for over twenty-five years had been the main supporter of the institution in Salt Lake City. The school Cluff found when he returned from South

America was far different from the one he had left. It was enlarged in every way, including a new building. Nevertheless, Brimhall willingly surrendered his office to President Cluff, his former teacher, who again took up the presidency. Cluff had a very successful administration for the next two years. During his entire administration the faculty grew from 21 to 59 and the student body grew from 275 to 1,622.

Tragically, Walter Wolfe, who was Cluff's assistant on the expedition but who had left the party before they arrived in Colombia, then preferred certain charges of misconduct against Cluff, including (1) mismanagement, (2) misrepresentation, (3) misappropriation of funds, and (4) immorality, which allegedly occurred during his Mexican expedition. He was then tried by the Board of Trustees. The charges so shocked him that he made no defense. Nevertheless, he was exonerated of all charges. However, the stigma attached to his public image was so great that even though he had been found innocent Cluff resigned the presidency to return to Mexico as manager of a large rubber plantation. As one of his final acts at the Academy (November 1903), he proposed to the Board that it change the name of the school to Brigham Young University, which had been his aim all fourteen years of his administration. There followed a vigorous dispute over this proposal. Thinking the school was not qualified to become a university, Anthon H. Lund of the First Presidency vigorously opposed it but was outvoted by his brethren. In his diary for the day President Lund recorded, "I hope their head will grow big enough for their hat." Wolfe went to Washington, where he testified against the seating of Reed Smoot as a senator. He later resigned from the Academy.

#### **Administration of Brimhall**

With Cluff's resignation, the Board began its search for a new President. Very shortly after Cluff's return, Brimhall had taken

seriously ill and spent most of two years in California and Canada trying to recuperate. But he had been so successful during the expeditionary absence of Cluff that many of the Board thought he should be recalled. Others thought that Joseph B. Keeler, who had been his first assistant, should be appointed. In a vote of the Board, each man received an equal number of votes. However, one of the Board members, Stephen Chipman, changed his vote in favor of Brimhall, who was formally elected as President.

Brimhall was largely a self-educated man. He had never had the academic training of either of his predecessors. He had not entered BYU as a student until he was forty years of age. His education began and ended at BYU before the school had really achieved university status. But he was a dynamic speaker and had a certain homespun manner that appealed very much to the people of his generation. He was a combination of both Maeser and Cluff. While these two men never got along with each other, Brimhall got along with both. He began immediately to engage a brilliant faculty, a number of whom had their Ph.D.'s, which gave the faculty new scholastic credentials. But by about 1910, Brimhall, in common with many university presidents, had allowed his faculty to assume so many administrative duties that the administration was to a large extent in the hands of the faculty. The new Ph.D. members, who were probably the most popular members of the faculty, began forthrightly to teach the doctrine of organic evolution with all of its implications. This brought violent controversy on the campus in which the Board of Trustees intervened. Two of the most vocal advocates of the doctrine were discharged; others subsequently resigned.

Many thought BYU would not survive this crisis. The newspapers and even the faculty assumed that the teachers were discharged because they had taught evolution. Your centennial history staff has researched this

carefully and found that the teaching of evolution per se was not the real cause of their dismissal. They were discharged because they were as intolerant of others' views as others were intolerant of theirs. The controversy was settled by President Joseph F. Smith, who in a diplomatic article explained that the Church had no philosophy about the "modus operandi" employed by the Lord in his creation of the world. He advised, however, that because of the immaturity of the students it would be wise as a matter of "propriety," not as "belief," to leave evolution out of discussion in the Church schools. Otherwise we would develop a "theological aristocracy in the Church." This pretty much brought the controversy to an end; and, despite gloomy forebodings, during the next approximately ten years of the Brimhall administration the school continued on its course although again it was always in financial trouble. The Church itself during this period had some rough financial years and was unable to give much support to the school. Because of the evolution controversy, Brimhall from then on pursued a very conservative policy and never again embarked into controversial fields.

With the departure of those whose services were terminated and others who left in sympathy with them, Brimhall was once again able to assume the authority that should always have gone with his office. There are a number who think that Brigham Young University during the closing years of Brimhall's administration was nothing more than a religious seminary. This was only partially true, for during that period of time Brigham Young University turned out some of its most renowned graduates, such as Franklin S. Harris, who succeeded Brimhall as President of BYU; Harvey Fletcher, who became second in command at Bell Laboratories; Vern Knudsen, who was later chancellor of the University of California at Los Angeles; Henry Aldous Dixon, who became president successively of Weber College, Utah

State Agricultural College, and a congressman from Utah; David J. Wilson, who became a federal judge in New York City; G. Oscar Russell, who became head of the largest phonetics laboratory of the country (at that time stationed at Ohio State University); A. Ray Olpin, who later became president of the University of Utah; Robert Hinckley, who was chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Authority in charge of all civil aviation in the country; and a number who became members of the faculties of different universities in the country, including Wayne Hales and Vasco Tanner of this University.

Brimhall, during his administration, chose as his first counselor Joseph B. Keeler, who had been his rival for the presidency, and Edwin S. Hinckley as his second counselor. Although passed over for the presidency, Keeler was very loyal to Brimhall. In addition to his teaching load, he took care of the finances and kept the University on an even keel. Hinckley, who like Brimhall was a great orator, dreamed of the future. At about the time that Orville and Wilbur Wright took their first heavier-than-air machine flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Hinckley predicted to his class that he would live to see the day when a man would have breakfast in New York and have dinner in San Francisco. He was scoffed at by members of the faculty. Brother Keeler reprimanded him but said he supposed Hinckley had done no lasting harm because no one would believe such a fantastic story. Hinckley lived to see that dream come true when Lieutenant Russell Maughan of Logan actually carried out that flight. Unfortunately, he died before his son Robert, who was also a student at Brigham Young University during the Brimhall Administration, was appointed chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Authority in charge of all commercial aviation in the United States.

President Hinckley also forecast that the time would come when the University, which was then still on the lower campus, would

extend all the way to Squaw Peak. Including the Language Training Mission, it is now that far. Hinckley's children, led by Robert, have now set up a large scholarship fund for students at Brigham Young University.

During the closing years of Brimhall's administration, he was physically so incapacitated with heart trouble that, in order to preside over the student body assemblies held in old College Hall, he was carried up the stairs by Ed Hinckley, one of his counselors, through a back stairway so that he could not be seen.

At that time the school also lost its momentum and had fewer graduates than in prior years. I had the privilege of graduating in the last class under Brimhall. There were only twelve graduates, so you can see why it was possible for me to be president of my class and editor of the school paper—the students didn't have many choices.

#### **Administration of Franklin S. Harris**

Brimhall was succeeded at BYU by Franklin S. Harris, who had graduated from the institution during Brimhall's presidency. As Cluff was the complete opposite of Maeser, so Harris was the antithesis of Brimhall. Whereas Brimhall had no orthodox earned degree of any kind, Harris was the first President to have a doctorate degree, having graduated with a Ph.D. from Cornell. He had been one of the top officers at Utah State Agricultural College before being appointed President of BYU.

At the time Harris became President, the school was really not organized as a university. He changed this by reorganizing three loosely organized colleges and by creating two new colleges. Also at the time he became President, BYU had not been accredited by any of the accrediting associations. He immediately began to work for accreditation, and during the first six or seven years of his administration he had so improved the organization of the school, the quality of the faculty and curriculum, and established such improved scholarship

standards for students that Brigham Young University became accredited by all of the prominent accreditation agencies. This was a major accomplishment and changed the school from what some thought was nothing but a glorified high school to a recognized university.

He also was responsible for the enlargement of the Brimhall Building and the construction of the Heber J. Grant Library, the Joseph Smith Memorial, and other buildings. But the depression of the thirties prevented the ultimate realization of his goals.

Harris was a great internationalist and world traveler—more so than any other President of the University. On one occasion he was invited by the International Jewish Organization to investigate the prospects of Jewish colonization in Russia. He was chairman of the delegation which went there and spent over six months touring that country and making a careful examination. He recommended the establishment of a separate Jewish state in the Soviet Republic. His recommendations were accepted by the leaders of the Soviet Union, and the state of Biro-Bidjan, which was established for that purpose, still functions in Russia. Even so, the Jews form only a minority of this particular state, which has survived as a state in the Soviet Republic for the last forty-four years.

In 1926 President Harris was invited to read a paper at a world conference for leaders in agriculture in Tokyo. With the consent of his Board, he used this as a beginning of a trip around the world which lasted for nearly one year, during which time he visited a great many universities to obtain ideas for Brigham Young University.

Finally, he was invited by the Iranian government to come to that country and to organize their department of agriculture. This assignment also lasted a year. As a result of these trips around the world, Brigham Young University became well known, and in some

respects better known, internationally than in the United States.

In 1945 Franklin S. Harris resigned to become president of Utah State Agricultural College, being convinced that as an agriculturist he could probably do more good, for the rest of his career, in Logan than in Provo. Indeed, his greatest friend on the Board of Trustees, John A. Widtsoe, advised him that this appointment would cap a brilliant career.

Harris served as President of BYU for twenty-four years—longer than any other President. In order to equal that record, President Oaks will have to remain as President until 1996, which under present rules would be his age of retirement.

#### **Administration of Howard S. McDonald**

President Harris was succeeded by President Howard S. McDonald. Since Harris's resignation was known well in advance of his leaving the school, there was a great deal of speculation among the faculty as to who his successor would be. Dean Carl Eyring quipped that from the gossip of the faculty he had heard of several men who had already been appointed President.

McDonald had his doctorate degree from the University of California. His appointment was of the "dark horse" variety. He had been superintendent of schools in Salt Lake City for only a short time and had not been mentioned among the dozens who were ambitious to be President of BYU or who had been named by their friends. The Second World War ended just before McDonald took charge, and he was faced with a deluge of students which BYU was not prepared to take. In fact, student enrollment jumped from 1,508 to 5,440 during the four years he was here. He managed to take care of these students by obtaining surplus property from an air base in Ogden, which he converted into residence halls, and by appealing to the loyalty of the citizens in

Provo to take in as many students as they could accommodate.

He served for four years and then resigned to become president of Los Angeles City College and Los Angeles State College of Applied Sciences, which had an enrollment about three times that of BYU. McDonald, who was a devoted Church member, was accustomed to working in state universities where the trustees made certain overall decisions and then left the administration entirely to the President. His association with BYU's Board of Trustees, in which the Board took part in the day-to-day administration of the school, was a new adventure to which he did not adjust readily.

He was a very vigorous man and didn't like the Board to turn down any of his recommendations. At one time he made a recommendation for the expenditure of several million dollars for a building program, as a result of which some members of the Board called him "the spendthrift from California." Compared to his successor, he was a "piker." At one time also he proposed a 25 percent increase in salaries. This was really more than the Board could take.

During the short four years he was at BYU, President McDonald did accomplish many things:

1. In response to an assignment given him by the First Presidency of the Church at the time of his appointment to study whether BYU should be abandoned, he reported it should not, thus ending the last of many challenges to the continued existence of the Y.

2. He took care of the phenomenal increase in students.

3. He established a modern health center for the care of the students in times of illness or accident.

4. He made a study of faculty salary schedules of surrounding schools which made the Board conscious of the low salaries of the faculty.

5. He aroused the Board of Trustees to a sharp realization of the need for new permanent buildings; they in turn authorized the Eyring Science Center and the George Albert Smith Fieldhouse, which set the stage for the greatly increased building program under my administration.

6. He was also responsible for persuading the Board of Trustees to have a Utah County stake establish Church branches on the campus. Finally he made a major reorganization of the entire student personnel organization so that it more nearly met the needs of a growing student body.

There was a period of 1½ years between the time of McDonald and my administration which was presided over in a very dignified manner by Christen Jensen, who had been called out of retirement for that purpose.

#### **Administration of Ernest L. Wilkinson**

McDonald was succeeded in 1951 by my administration. I had three distinct advantages over prior Presidents:

1. My philosophy accorded entirely with the philosophy of the Board of Trustees, which was that the Board should set the policy, the President should administer that policy, and the faculty should be involved in administrative matters only to the extent that the President requested, and even then their decisions were only advisory. This got me off to a great start with the Board of Trustees.

2. My predecessors had laid a good foundation for future growth, especially Presidents Harris and McDonald.

3. The Church for the first time was not in financial difficulty and could, therefore, spend more on education. Fortunately, this period coincided with the administration of President McKay who was a great champion of education.

As to the accomplishments which occurred during my twenty years as President, suffice it to say I have been given much more credit

than that to which I am entitled, for the credit belongs largely to the Board of Trustees and the faithful tithing payers of the Church, who have paid the bill. During that period the student body increased in size six times, the faculty five times, the budget seven times, and a building program which cost well over \$100 million was completed. In my opinion, the five main accomplishments during the twenty years of my administration in the order of their importance were (1) the founding of ten stakes composed of over one hundred wards on the campus to serve the religious needs of the students; (2) the distinction of becoming, not only the largest Church-related university, but also the largest private institution in the country; (3) the vast improvement of scholarship among the students, which according to a survey at one time increased as dramatically as did the size of the student body; and (4), which is less important, but which was indispensable for the other three accomplishments—the development of a great campus claimed by many to be the most beautiful campus in America; and (5) the authorization to found a law school.

### Oaks Administration

Neither time nor duration of his present tenure permits even a summarization or appraisal of the Oaks administration. Suffice it to say that he is carrying on in fulfillment of the prophetic utterances of Maeser, Cluff, Brimhall, Harris, McDonald, and myself. In my humble judgment, Presidents of this University have the same prophetic powers with respect to BYU as the President of the Church has with respect to the Church as a whole. Principal Maeser likened BYU to a banyan tree which would spread its branches far and wide to “take roots for themselves.” Given the right kind of soil and nourishment, it could thus spread to the entire world.

President Cluff, in a letter of November 5, 1893, from Ann Arbor, where he was earning

his master’s, wrote to acting President Brimhall that he was

*well pleased with the way you are conducting the school. I think that it is now fully demonstrated that it is not so much the man who stands at the head of the Academy as it is the spirit that actuates the school. For in my hands it did not lose much of its importance and now in yours it continues steadily in its onward course.*

President Brimhall prophesied:

*The time will come when the cry will not be where shall we get the money but how shall we sue the money that we have. [“BYU Faculty Minutes,” 23 May 1895]*

(This utterance, President Oaks claims, has not yet been fulfilled.)

President Harris, in one of his initial addresses, exclaimed: “Behold the greatest university campus in all the world—in embryo” (Daily Herald, 16 October 1923). We then had only the Maeser and Brimhall buildings on this upper campus.

President McDonald prophesied “that under the leadership of inspired men BYU was destined to become a great university” (“Faculty Meeting Minutes,” 3 October 1949).

In 1954 I bore my testimony to the faculty in the following words:

*No one who accepts the Restored Gospel will question the prophecies of the Prophet of the Lord that this will some day have on it the greatest body of scholars in the world because they will have as their sources of knowledge the learning not only of men, but the source of all knowledge, revelation from our Heavenly Father, and because they will be responsive not only to the scholarship of men, but to the testimony and promptings of the Holy Spirit. [“Preschool Faculty Workshop Address, 17 September 1954]*

The faculty at that time had only begun to assume its present scholastic status.

In 1971, in another address to the faculty, I expressed the hope that

*all who are associated with this University will never forget that it was started by a prophet of God and that prophets still guide its destiny. No statement that I can make to you gives me more satisfaction than to say that BYU is now the University many dreamed it would become.*

#### **Future of BYU**

President John Taylor, the successor to Brigham Young, long before the close of the last century predicted, "Zion will be as far ahead of the world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind as we are today in regard to religious matters" (*Journal of Discourses*, 21:100).

Later, Francis M. Lyman, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, proclaimed, "This School will be needed in the Millennium."

We now aspire to fulfill the dream of the Honorable Charles H. Malik, former president of the United Nations General Assembly, who voiced the fervent hope that someday

*a great university will arise somewhere—I hope in America—to which Christ will return in His full glory and power, a university which will, in the promotion of scientific, intellectual and artistic excellence, surpass by far even the best secular universities of the present, but which will at the same time enable Christ to bless it and act and feel perfectly at home in it. ["Education in Upheaval: The Christian's Responsibility," *Creative Help for Daily Living* 21, no. 18 (September 1970)]*

That Brigham Young University will become that university I pray in his name. Amen.