

Henry William Bigler: Mormon Missionary to the Sandwich Islands During the 1850s

It is my belief that the Hawaiian race was once a favored people of the Lord and must have had the law of Moses and observed its teachings but through transgression they fell into darkness, error, and superstition, as regards the true God.¹

Guy Bishop

These words, penned by Henry William Bigler for a southern Utah newspaper in 1896, were the 81-year-old Mormon's recollections of the Hawaiian people from his two missions to the Islands some 40 years earlier. Bigler had been born in Harrison County, Virginia (now West Virginia) in 1815. He was an early convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism), and, following the expulsion of the sect from Nauvoo, Illinois in 1846, he served in the Mormon Battalion during the United States War with Mexico (1846-1847). In July 1847 Henry Bigler was "mustered out of servis" at Los Angeles and began his attempt to rejoin his fellow religionists who had, by this time, relocated to the Great Salt Lake Valley.²

The Mormon leaders of the Battalion assigned Bigler to join a party of ex-soldiers who were going to the Great Basin to rejoin their families and friends. Unfamiliar with the geography and the true location of the Saints, and in the belief that they were settled in the vicinity of the Bear River in what is today northern Utah, they plotted a northward route. But, as Henry Bigler revealed in his journal, "We hardly knew what course to take." As fate would have it, the party divided in northern California, and Bigler, along with about 30 others, went to the fort of Johann Augustus Sutter at Sacramento to seek employment in order to earn money to support the remainder of their journey.

Henry Bigler was sent by Sutter to work with a crew which was constructing a sawmill on the American River northeast of Sacramento. While so engaged, he witnessed James Marshall's epic discovery of gold at the site on 24 January 1848. Bigler's diary

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The Hawaiian Journal of History, vol. 20 (1986)

account of this moment is the one which is often cited by modern historians. He wrote, “[S]ome kind of mettle was found [which] looks like goald.”³ Not only has Henry William Bigler left this famous journal entry, but his extant records are thorough and exacting narratives of many other experiences, including the two church missions to Hawai‘i which are the focus of this study. Following the completion of the mill and a brief period of personal gold mining, Bigler continued his trek to Salt Lake City.

Upon his arrival he was pleased to learn that a city lot had been reserved for him, and he soon erected a small, one-room cabin on the site. Bigler was over 30 years old and was as yet unmarried. He now looked forward to settling down and starting a family. But such was not to be the case. In October 1849 he reluctantly took up a mission in behalf of John Smith, an elderly uncle of the deceased founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith Jr. The current church president, Brigham Young, had instructed Smith to send someone to California to mine gold for him so that his declining years might be spent in comfort. Bigler was the man whom John Smith chose for the foray. This came, for Henry Bigler, as “an unlooked for request.” Nevertheless, within a few days he was “[m]akeing preparations to get gold for Father John Smith [although] it was with Considerable struggle with my feelings that I consented to go.”⁴

Just prior to leaving, Bigler had a dream which profoundly impressed him. He noted that “I dreamed I was not going to the mines but was on my way to the Pacific Islands on a mission to preach the gospel.”⁵ Although he never again mentioned the premonition, less than one year later Henry Bigler was called to just such a mission. While mining, and in the company of several other Mormons at Slap Jack Bar on the middle fork of the American River, the men were visited by Charles Coulsen Rich. Rich was an apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the denomination’s West Coast representative. He had come to issue a missionary call to some of the miners, including Bigler, to preach the Mormon gospel in the Sandwich Islands. The dream of the previous year was about to be fulfilled. Most of the Mormons were happy to accept the assignment, since digging gold was back-breaking work and of late had been done with little reward. “[T]he turn of things was not looked for,” recollected Henry Bigler many years later, “[but] all felt it was for our best good.”⁶ A seldom-failing optimism and willingness to serve the cause were characteristic traits of Bigler.

BIGLER'S FIRST HAWAIIAN MISSION, 1850-1854

On 22 November 1850 the ten Mormon missionaries left San Francisco aboard the British vessel *Imaum of Muscat*. They were destined to become the first representatives of their church to preach in the Sandwich Islands. They paid \$40.00 each for passage and were required to furnish their own bedding, but meals were to be provided in the Captain's Mess. But, according to Bigler, "Either this part of the contract was not kept or they lived poor in the [captain's] cabin". The Mormons complained about the quality of their rations throughout the voyage. However, 19th Century trans-oceanic voyages were never noted for their cuisine. On 12 December 1850, after nearly three weeks at sea, the ship dropped anchor at Honolulu. One of the Mormon missionaries observed of Honolulu, "The town is pretty and wears a tropical look." After clearing customs, Henry Bigler joined with several of his cohorts in seeking out a "temperance Hotel" to partake of refreshments in celebration of their safe passage. Afterwards they "hired a small room which was situated [on the outskirts] of town at the rate of ten dollars per month."⁷

Having secured adequate lodging in Honolulu, the missionaries climbed an unspecified "convenient mountain" where they constructed a crude altar, sang hymns, and dedicated the Hawaiian Islands for the preaching of the Latter-day Saints gospel. Such dedicatory services were a common practice at the opening of new fields of proselyting by Mormon evangelists. Of the event, George Quayle Cannon, one of Bigler's companions and a later member of the hierarchy of the Mormon church, recalled:

Having thus dedicated the land and ourselves to the Lord, one of the elders [an office in the Latter-day Saint priesthood which all of the missionaries held] spoke in tongues and uttered many comforting promises, and another interpreted. The spirit of the Lord rested powerfully upon us, and we were filled with exceeding great joy.⁸

Two days later the process of pairing companions and assigning areas of labor was undertaken. Hiram Clark, who had been called by the church authorities to preside over the mission, chose Thomas Whittle as his partner. Since Honolulu was considered to be the centerpoint of the Islands due to the size of its Caucasian population, it was decided that Clark and Whittle should remain there. Four of the missionaries were assigned to preside over other remaining islands (Hawai'i, Maui, Moloka'i, and Kaua'i). Henry Bigler was given the responsibility for Moloka'i. The other elders then drew lots for

companions. Bigler drew Thomas Morris, but before they could leave for their assignment President Clark advised Morris to remain on O‘ahu to work. Henry Bigler believed that the reason for this decision was that the elder was short of funds and could not afford to go to Moloka‘i at that time. As a consequence, Bigler accompanied George Q. Cannon and James Keeler to Maui.⁹

At Lāhainā, the principal town on Maui and a popular seaport for whaling vessels, the Mormons rented a “native house” for \$4.00 a week. George Cannon noted, “These native houses [appeared], in shape and size, like a well built hay stack.” With lodging arranged, the three men began to search for opportunities to spread their message. A few days before Christmas they met with the governor of the island, a “half-white” named James Young, whose father had been one of the first *haoles* to settle among the Hawaiians. The missionaries boldly requested the use of the royal palace, which was at the time unoccupied, as a place to preach.

Governor Young promised to check into the possibility but never gave them a firm answer and was very evasive. Although the reason for his apparent reluctance to assist the Mormons was never clarified, George Cannon thought it evident that the governor “dare[d] not to grant us any favors.” This opinion was, perhaps, reflective of the power manifested by the Congregational mission on Maui. Bigler observed that the magistrate felt it would be a “hard matter” to convert the natives who were said to be steeped in traditional beliefs.¹⁰ In desperation for a pulpit from which to expound their doctrines, they then sought and obtained permission from the Rev. Mr. [Townsend Elijah] Taylor, pastor of the Bethel Chapel at Lāhainā, to hold meetings in his church. Evidently Taylor perceived no competitive threat from the Mormons at this time.¹¹

On 22 December 1850 Henry William Bigler delivered the first Mormon sermon preached on Maui to a congregation of white residents and itinerant seaman. Bigler stated that he was chosen by his associates because “I was the oldest [and] must lead out” (he was 35 years old at the time). The text of his remarks was not recorded. He and his companions were unable to generate any interest among the *haoles* on the island. “There was not a great many white folks living at Lahaina,” Henry Bigler remembered, “and the few who did [reside there] did not seem to take an interest in our preaching.”¹²

Bigler, Cannon, and Keeler soon began to question the Caucasian orientation which they had initially followed. “We soon became satisfied,” George Cannon recalled, “that if we confined our labors

to the whites, our mission to these islands would be a short one.” Accordingly, the Mormon elders now asked themselves whether or not wisdom dictated that they must also preach to the Native Hawaiians. “It [was] true that we had not been particularly told *to* preach to the natives of these islands,” Cannon observed, “but we were in their midst, [and] had full authority to declare unto them the message of salvation” (italics added). Furthermore, it had proved a “hopeless labor” trying to convert the white population.¹³ This change of direction was not without its problems, however, and further demonstrated the conviction of these Mormon evangelists.

Their most pressing need was to learn the language. Not just on Maui, but throughout the islands, the obstacle of mastering the Hawaiian language challenged the ambassadors of Mormonism. Some of the elders seem to have applied themselves wholeheartedly, while for others this cross was too great to bear. The three Maui missionaries appear to have taken the former route and, through intense study and dedication, gained a mastery of the tongue. George Cannon demonstrated a particular gift for the language. He reported that one evening, while attempting to converse with some Hawaiians, he felt an “uncommonly great desire” to understand them. Then, all at once, Cannon detected a “peculiar sensation” in his ears. He jumped up from his seat and excitedly told Henry Bigler and James Keeler what had just happened. They both expressed the belief that Cannon had received the divine gift of interpretation. From that point on he claimed to understand what the natives were saying. In fact, George Q. Cannon eventually became so skilled in the language that he was later assigned to translate the church’s sacred Book of Mormon into Hawaiian.¹⁴

For others, including Henry Bigler, the ability did not come so swiftly. In an 1852 letter to William Farrer, who was laboring on another island, Bigler mentioned that “I am increasing in the language thank the Lord.” But he seemed to never feel totally confident in his capacity, for in a journal entry written over a year later, Elder Bigler lamented “I never can speak fluently and . . . I cannot understand readily what a native says when speaking.” He went on to explain, “I have wanted this language so bad some times that I could not rest and when a lone to give vent to my feelings it would seem as if my heart strings would burst.”¹⁵ Still, he kept on struggling until he could communicate satisfactorily.

Another, though certainly less severe, problem for many of the Mormon elders was the diet of the islanders which was strange to

these newly-arrived foreigners. Bigler never seemed to acquire a taste for the native foods. In August 1853, after over two years in Hawai'i, Bigler wrote in his diary that he chose to go hungry as he had done "a great many times" rather than partake of the local fare which included boiled fish and other delicacies. It was particularly difficult for him to eat shark, although he found "flying fish" palatable if roasted—but never in the morning. The traditional native dish of *poi*, if it were clean, was, in Henry Bigler's words, "about as good eating as I all most wish for." But he did the best that he could, for he hated "like the duce" to go hungry.¹⁶

By mid April 1851 the Mormon missionaries in the Sandwich Islands found their numbers to be rapidly dwindling. Half of the original group from the gold fields had left Hawai'i. Those who remained were Elders Bigler, Cannon, Keeler, Farrer, and James Hawkins. Even the mission president, Hiram Clark, had chosen to leave and see if more success could be found in the Marquesas Islands. He had tried to persuade the others to abandon Hawai'i and accompany him. But, as Henry Bigler observed, they could see no "propriety" in his proposal and rather chose to stay where they had been sent to labor. The remaining elders concern over these desertions was understandably great, so much so that Bigler and the other stalwarts immediately dispatched a letter to Brigham Young requesting additional help in the work. In response to this plea, nine new elders were called at the Church's General Conference in October 1852. They did not arrive in Honolulu until early in 1853, so for almost two years the five forementioned missionaries labored alone in the Islands.¹⁷ During this interim Mormonism encountered mounting opposition from rival religious factions. Protestant evangelists had been in the Islands since before the reign of Kamehameha III (1825-1854), and these clergymen, sponsored by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, were firmly entrenched throughout Hawai'i by the time the Mormons arrived. Also, Catholic missionaries had been active in several locations since the early 1840s. And, as Bigler and his associates were to find out, the further rivalry for native souls which Mormonism offered was not welcomed.

Henry Bigler and George Cannon each recorded interesting confrontations with other missionaries. Cannon's preaching efforts on Maui reportedly drew the displeasure of an unidentified Presbyterian minister at Wailuku who was very "displeased" by the Mormons' presence. This minister was determined to exert all of his influence against the Latter-day Saints' encroachment. Much to Elder

Cannon's agitation, the minister publicly rendered a "most abusive discourse" attacking Joseph Smith and the heresies of Mormonism. "My first impulse," wrote the youthful Cannon, "was to jump [up] and tell the people he had told them a pack of falsehoods." He decided against that rather brazen tactic and, instead, privately confronted his adversary after the service. They discussed the "falsehoods" for half an hour, but the recantation which Cannon had naively hoped for was, of course, never offered.¹⁸

In October 1852 Henry Bigler, now laboring on O'ahu, faced a similar situation with a Calvinist minister (probably the Reverend John S. Emerson) and an unidentified Catholic priest. According to Bigler, the priest, who was French and spoke no English (hence they conversed in Hawaiian), had initially treated the Mormon elders with courtesy and even fed them dinner. He simply seemed to view the Mormons as misguided individuals. The Calvinist, on the other hand, "flew into a passion" and charged them outright with being emissaries of the Devil. In what must have struck the missionaries as an interesting reversal of roles, they found the priest diligently trying to convert them to Catholicism. But when that failed and the Latter-day Saints began to enjoy some success among the natives, the two clergymen, who could have been expected to contend one with another, joined forces to combat the Mormon threat.¹⁹

When the long-awaited new elders arrived early in 1853, Henry Bigler was appointed to preside on the island of O'ahu. He spent the remainder of his first Hawaiian mission there. During this time he worked hard to improve his language capabilities, to strengthen the faith of the native converts to Mormonism, and to fight the opposition from other denominations and, occasionally, from governmental authorities. The nine additional missionaries from Utah had brought with them a copy of a document that would become, for mid 19th Century Mormons, both a blessing and a curse—Brigham Young's announcement which officially acknowledged the church's practice of plural marriage (more commonly known as polygamy).²⁰ Although "Celestial Marriage," as practitioners preferred to call it, had been introduced on a limited and secretive basis by Joseph Smith as early as the 1830s, Young had chosen, in the isolation of the Great Basin, to openly advocate the principle. While the history of plural marriage among the Latter-day Saints has been adequately discussed elsewhere and will not be reviewed here in detail, this formal recognition of the controversial doctrine certainly provided the foes of Mormonism with additional firepower.

Whether or not the new elders brought the first inkling of Mormon polygamy to the Sandwich Islands is yet uncertain, but Henry Bigler's journals make it clear that word about it spread rapidly. In April 1853 Bigler's earlier rival, John Emerson, began telling the natives that it was a fact that Mormons often had more than one wife. Ironically, his source was none other than Bigler. The missionary was quite willing to defend the belief as a "sacred" law of God and made no attempt to downplay its practice in the Utah Territory. It could not, however, be promoted in Hawai'i since the laws of the nation forbade it. But, according to Henry Bigler, it was accepted as a true principle by most of the native Mormons. And, as a recent scholar has noted, marriage had always been "very flexible" in traditional Hawaiian culture and monogamy was adopted as a rule only after the arrival of the Protestant missionaries earlier in the 19th Century.²¹

Also during 1853 the missionaries were faced with another obstacle—one which was beyond anyone's ability to counter. Beginning about May and lasting until the end of the year, the Sandwich Islands were devastated by an outbreak of smallpox. Since the hardest hit areas were on O'ahu, Henry Bigler found himself right in the middle of the crisis. The epidemic may have been introduced by the passengers or crew of an incoming ship, which would help to explain why it initially appeared in and around Honolulu. Following a few isolated incidents during May and June, the disease rapidly spread and soon reached the more distant areas of O'ahu. Bigler, who was then laboring in the vicinity of Kahalu'u, northeast of Honolulu, first mentioned smallpox on 12 July when some local natives expressed fear of him being a carrier of the sickness (apparently indicative of the disease being associated with the *haole* immigrants to the Islands). The next week he was in the village of Puhe'emiki, which had already suffered much as a result of the epidemic. The missionary reported several deaths there and many people who were ill. About the same time he received a letter from William Farrer in Honolulu informing him that "the Smallpox [was] so bad that they had not been able to hold any meetings."²²

As the epidemic spread, Henry Bigler began to express in his diary a genuine concern and sympathy for the victims, attested to in an entry for 6 August 1853:

I went to see Sister Dennis [a Native Hawaiian church member] who is very low with the small pox and I never seen any person in all my life hardly that I felt so sorry for as

I did hur . . . I am afraid she never will recover she was a awful sight to look at and my very soul was filled with pity for hur.

He was later asked to bless a sick child and wrote a powerful description of the severity of the suffering:

I was called in to look at a sick boy with the small pox this exceeded anything I have seen yet the stench was allmost intolerable and he seemed to be a perfect mass of corruption from head to foot. Poor little fellow how I felt for him [I] told his father . . . to nursh [nourish] him well with ginger tea and keep him from the wind and from drinking cold water.²³

At first Bigler had been very afraid of the disease and “dreaded to go near where it was,” but he soon overcame his apprehensions and actively worked to aid the afflicted. Although he was disturbed by the suffering of the Hawaiian church members, Henry Bigler reaffirmed his devout faith when he lamented of the dead Latter-day Saints that “perhaps they are taken for a wise purpose in the Lord.”²⁴

In February 1854 the original missionary party, which now included only Bigler and four others, was instructed by Brigham Young to prepare to return home soon. For Henry Bigler this first mission to the Hawaiian Islands had been very much of a growing experience. After three and a half years he apparently had a solid grasp of the language and customs of the people, he had established friendships with men who would continue to play a part in his later years, and he had demonstrated time and again his dedication to the dictates of his religion. And, contrary to the expectations of those elders who had foresaken their missions some years before, Bigler had seen Mormonism establish a firm foothold in the Sandwich Islands. About 3,000 Hawaiians embraced Mormonism between 1850 and 1853. In July 1854 Henry Bigler, along with his four original devout companions (Cannon, Keeler, Hawkins, and Farrer) secured passage on the steamship *Polynesian* bound for San Francisco. Of his thoughts, as he contemplated leaving the Islands, Bigler wrote: “I thought how different it was when we landed here in 1850[,] ignorant of the language and among strangers . . . but now we [are] surrounded by thousands who seem to love us and are Saints.” Although no exact departure date was noted, the returning five elders landed at San Francisco on 12 August 1854. Henry Bigler finally made his way back to Salt Lake City by the following year.²⁵ He must have returned to Utah feeling that his service had been successful.

BIGLER'S SECOND HAWAIIAN MISSION, 1857-1858

In the spring of 1855 Henry Bigler took up residence near his sister

and brother-in-law at Farmington, several miles north of Salt Lake City. On 18 November he married Cynthia Jane Whipple, whose family he had met in California. With his new wife and a milk cow given to the couple by his father, Henry Bigler began to farm and raise a family. In October 1856 a daughter, Elizabeth Jane, was born to the Biglers.²⁶ However, this long-postponed domestic life was about to be interrupted once again by yet another summons to church duty.

While journeying to Salt Lake City in February 1857, Henry Bigler happened to meet Brigham Young. The church president told him to “prepare for another mission to the Sandwich Islands” and requested a list of all others “whome I [Bigler] knew had the language.” Two months later, at the April General Conference of the church, 11 missionaries, including Henry Bigler, were called to labor in Hawai‘i. This was to be his second proselyting expedition to the Islands within seven years. When these elders left in mid May it was a another heart-wrenching separation for Bigler—no doubt magnified this time because he was leaving behind a wife and young child. As he was about to go, Henry Bigler invoked a blessing upon his family and then gave them over to God’s care, “not knowing when I would see them again perhaps not for several years.” Although he deemed this mission a “hard trial,” Bigler was once again “willing to do anything the Lord required . . . however great the cross mite be.”²⁷

Brigham Young must have heeded Bigler’s recommendations for other missionaries because he listed among his traveling companions William Farrer, James Hawkins, and John Woodbury, who had served with him previously. The party of elders sailed from San Francisco bound for the Sandwich Islands on 22 August 1857. The voyage had enduring consequences for Henry Bigler as the cold and camp conditions brought on an ear infection which lasted for several weeks and probably left him partially deaf. On 4 September Bigler wrote: “This morning when I rise [sic] I found the islands in sight.”

Although he was happy to have returned to Hawai‘i, things were not as he had remembered, and the church seemed to be floundering. Many of the former members had returned to their old traditional religion and forsaken Mormonism. “Everything seems dead and dying,” he wrote. “My soul was paned to hear the Elders all testify that there was no Saints [strong church members] except here and there.”²⁸ Following a local conference held at Honolulu during late September, Bigler reported that “the work on this island [O‘ahu] is at a low ebb.” The next month a gathering of the Mormon elders

was held, and the total membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Sandwich Islands was said to be 3,192—approximately the same number as when the original missionary contingent left in 1854.²⁹ During this same meeting Henry Bigler was sustained by his associates as mission president. But, in light of the mediocre condition of Hawaiian Mormonism in 1857, this must have been an anxious position for Bigler to fill.

At a local meeting which he conducted in October, the dismayed Mormon elder felt as if he were “preaching to the walls” due to the lack of interest among his listeners. Brigham Young must have been experiencing similar doubts about the state of the church in the Sandwich Islands. In a letter addressed to Silas Smith, Bigler’s predecessor as mission president, written from Salt Lake City in September 1857, Young observed:

The reports [from Hawai’i] have for a number of years agreed in one thing, that is; that the majority of the Saints on those islands have either been dead or dying Spiritually. . . . Having taken the matter into consideration I think it best for all of the Elders (with one or two exceptions) to come home.³⁰

Bigler immediately forwarded a copy of these instructions to the other missionaries in the Islands along with his admonition to be prepared to move upon further notice.

By the following spring most of the Mormon elders had left Hawai’i, with only Bigler and a few companions remaining to wrap up church business. Another letter from President Young, dated 4 February 1858, arrived in mid April, advising the rest of the missionaries of conditions in the Utah Territory and urging their hasty return.

You are all, without regard as to when you were sent, counselled to start for home as speedily as you can wind up your affairs and obtain passage money, not even leaving one Elder who has been sent there.

Young’s urgency was then clarified as he recounted the ever-mounting threat of federal actions against the Latter-day Saints in Utah. Fear regarding this movement by the “enemies” of Mormonism was underlined by Brigham Young’s belief that their foes intended to kill “every man, woman, and child” who would not renounce the religion. While this apprehension about an annihilation of the Mormon populace had no factual basis, it was true that President James Buchanan had ordered troops of the United States Army to march to Utah to suppress reported treason and rebellion in the

territory.³¹ Given their past experience with anti-Mormon violence in the Midwest, it was not really surprising that Young expected the worst at this time. Not only did he recall the Hawaiian elders, but also all other missionaries in the South Seas and all Latter-day Saints in the American West outside of Utah. It was felt that this action would strengthen the defenses of the Mormon kingdom should a military confrontation actually develop.

By the end of April 1858 Henry Bigler and his colleagues had all secured passage aboard a vessel bound for California. They left Hawai'i in such a hurry that the only available space was in the hold as steerage passengers. It was, wrote Henry Bigler, "the horriblest, stinkingest place I ever was in. I had not been there 2 minutes before I was seasick." But the returning elders were delighted when their fellow voyagers asked them to preach on two consecutive Sundays. Whether this request was out of sincere interest or the sheer boredom of the trip did not seem to matter to the Mormons. Their recent negative experiences in Hawai'i had made them eager for any calm audience. Henry Bigler observed of his shipmates that they paid "good attention" and rendered "sincere thanks" following the services. The ship arrived at San Francisco on 19 May 1858, and Elder Bigler's second mission to the Sandwich Islands was over.³² It had not been anywhere nearly as fulfilling as his earlier effort, but given the current tensions in Utah he was happy to be returning home to his family.

EPILOGUE

The next chapter in the history of Mormonism in the Hawaiian Islands began in July 1861, when Walter Murray Gibson, described by some critics as the "villain of the Mormon drama" in Hawai'i, seized control of the church's small native colony at Lāna'i, usurped the land, and unsuccessfully attempted to establish a kingdom for himself. This unauthorized action was soon thwarted by representatives from the church's headquarters in Utah, and Gibson was excommunicated.

Under the direction of Joseph F. Smith a new mission was established in the Islands. In 1864 Dr. Rufus Anderson, Foreign Secretary of the ABCFM, reported the adult membership of the Mormon Church in the Islands at around 3,600. And when Ruth Tabrah recently wrote her bicentennial history of Hawai'i, she observed that by the late 20th Century Mormons were "numerous"

in the Islands—especially among the Hawaiian and Samoan population.³³ The efforts which a handful of Latter-day Saint missionaries, including Henry Bigler, had inaugurated in December 1850 eventually bore much fruit.

Some years after his return from the second mission to Hawai'i, Bigler was reunited with several of his companions from the years in the Sandwich Islands when he served the Mormon church as a worker (1878–1900) at the Latter-day Saint temple at St. George, in southern Utah. And one of the counsellors in the temple presidency was David H. Cannon, the son of his old friend George Q. Cannon, who by this time held a position of general church leadership. In 1898, just two years before his death, Bigler was honored by the Society of California Pioneers on the occasion of its 50th anniversary celebration of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill. George Cannon generously furnished him with a new set of clothes for the extravaganza.³⁴

Henry William Bigler, one-time Mormon missionary to the Hawaiian Islands, died quietly at St. George, Utah, in 1900, at the age of 85 years.

NOTES

¹ Henry William Bigler, *Personal Experiences*, ts., William Henry Bigler Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, 23. The St. George, Utah *Union* ran Bigler's experiences in a series between 11 January and 28 May 1896. Hereafter cited as *Union* extracts.

² Henry William Bigler, *Diary*, 16 July 1847, Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Hereafter cited as LDS Archives. Bigler's original spelling and grammar have been maintained throughout. The Mormon Battalion was a force of 500 volunteers which marched from Fort Leavenworth (in present-day Kansas) to southern California. Brigham Young had encouraged enlistments as a means of raising money and expediting the westward migration of the church members.

³ Bigler, *Diary*, 21 July 1847 (incorrectly dated 1849 in the diary). See, also, Erwin G. Gudde, *Bigler's Chronicles of the West: The Conquest, Discovery of Gold, and Mormon Settlement as Reflected in Henry William Bigler's Diaries* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1962) 88 n; and [Henry William Bigler], "Extracts from the Journal of Henry W. Bigler," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 5 (July 1932): 95.

⁴ Gudde, *Chronicle* 129–31; Henry William Bigler, *Journal*, 8 Oct. 1849, Mormon Collection, Huntington Library. Of his sadness at this impending separation from friends and loved ones at Salt Lake City, Bigler wrote, "my feelings were spent in a shower of tears": *Journal*, 11 Oct. 1849.

⁵ Bigler, *Diary*, 16 Oct. 1849.

⁶ *Union* extracts 13. Charles C. Rich must have felt that the quest for new converts to the Latter-day Saint religion was far more important than digging gold.

- ⁷ The best source on the voyage is George Q. Cannon, *My First Mission* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1879) 4–8; see also *Union* extracts 15–16. This first missionary contingent, according to Cannon, *Mission* II, included Hiram Clark, Thomas Whittle, James Hawkins, William Farrer, John Dixon, Thomas Morris, and Henry Bigler.
- ⁸ Cannon, *Mission* 9.
- ⁹ Bigler, *Journal*, 15 Dec. 1850; Cannon, *Mission*, 10–11; and *Union* extracts 16.
- ¹⁰ Cannon, *Mission* 12–14; and Bigler, *Journal*, 20 Dec. 1850.
- ¹¹ Bigler, *Journal*, 22 Dec. 1850.
- ¹² Bigler, *Journal*, 22 Dec. 1850.
- ¹³ Cannon, *Mission* 14.
- ¹⁴ Cannon, *Mission* 15, 58–61; *Union* extracts 26.
- ¹⁵ George Q. Cannon, letter to Henry Bigler and William Farrer, 1 Dec. 1851, Hawaiian Mission Letters, LDS Archives.
- ¹⁶ Bigler, *Journal*, 18 Aug. 1853.
- ¹⁷ *Union* extracts 19; Cannon, *Mission* 46.
- ¹⁸ Cannon, *Mission* 30.
- ¹⁹ *Union* extracts 27–30.
- ²⁰ Among the best recent surveys of plural marriage are Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three Communal Experiences of the Nineteenth Century* (1981; Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984); Danel Bachman, “A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith” (Master’s thesis, Purdue U, 1975); and Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).
- ²¹ Bigler, *Journal*, 17 April 1853. Henry Bigler himself apparently never practiced plural marriage. See, Jane L. Silverman, “To Marry Again,” *HJH* 17 (1983): 64. Also helpful is Patricia Grimshaw, “New England Missionary Wives, Hawaiian Women, and ‘The Cult of True Womanhood,’” *HJH* 19 (1985): 81–82.
- ²² Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The History of Hawaii* (New York: Macmillan, 1933) 185. A later work by Kuykendall and A. Grove Day specifically listed the number of deaths at 2,485: *Hawaii: A History* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948) 127. See also Laura Fish Judd, *Honolulu: Sketches of Life in the Hawaiian Islands from 1828 to 1861* ed. Dale L. Morgan (Chicago: Lakeshore, 1966) 310–311; Bigler, *Journal*, 12, 20, and 21 July 1853. The location of the now-obscure village of Puhe’emiki is specified in *A Gazetteer of the Territory of Hawaii* compiled by John Wesley Coulter (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1935) 188. Its site is given as “Puheemiki (land sect., Puheheniko, Covington, 1881) 21.35 n 157.54 w.”
- ²³ Bigler, *Journal*, 6 and 24 Aug. 1853, and 2 Sept. 1853.
- ²⁴ Bigler, *Journal*, 16 Nov. 1853. On contemporary Latter-day Saint attitudes about death, see M. Guy Bishop, “To Overcome the ‘Last Enemy’: Early Mormon Perceptions of Death,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, forthcoming.
- ²⁵ Bigler, *Journal*, 20 Feb. 1854. Regarding the arrival of the missionaries in San Francisco see Bigler, *Journal*, 12 Aug. 1854. Henry Bigler paused to work at Santa Cruz, California, for several months before returning to Salt Lake City via the Mormon settlement at San Bernadino.
- ²⁶ Gudde, *Chronicle* 133.
- ²⁷ Bigler, *Journal*, 28 Feb. 1857 and 14 May 1857.

- ²⁸ Bigler, Journal, 21 Aug. through 4 Sept. and 13 Sept. 1857. By the mid 1850s the missionaries representing other denominations were also being rebuffed as many natives embraced worldly activities such as intemperance and sexual vices. According to one writer on the subject, "The . . . retreat [from strict, Puritanical behavior] became a rout in the fifties" and the victory for frivolity "was complete by the late sixties and early seventies": see Gavan Daws, "The Decline of Puritanism at Honolulu in the Nineteenth Century," *HJH* 1 (1967): 34.
- ²⁹ Bigler, Journal, 23 Sept. 1857. The estimated number of Hawaiian church members in October 1853 had been nearly 3,000. An official census taken in 1853, which included only those who were full-blooded Hawaiians or part-Hawaiian, listed 2,778 who claimed Mormonism as their religious preference: see Robert C. Schmitt, "Religious Statistics of Hawaii, 1825-1972," *HJH* 7 (1973): 43.
- ³⁰ Bigler, Journal, 4 Oct. 1857; Brigham Young, Outgoing Correspondence, 4 Sept. 1857, LDS Archives; see also, Bigler, Journal, 20 Nov. 1857.
- ³¹ Letter copied in Bigler, Journal, 20 April 1858. See, also, Brigham Young, Outgoing Correspondence, 4 Feb. 1858. The standard work on the entire episode is Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850-59* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1960). Also helpful on the causes is a recent study by William P. MacKinnon, "125 Years of Conspiracy Theories: Origins of the Utah Expedition of 1857-58," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 52 (Summer 1984): 212-230.
- ³² Bigler, Journal, 9 and 16 May 1858.
- ³³ See Kuykendall and Day, *Hawaii: A History* 133; R. Lanier Britsch, "The Lanai Colony: A Hawaiian Extension of the Mormon Colonial Idea," *HJH* 12 (1975): 68-83; James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1976) 335; Rufus Anderson, *The Hawaiian Islands: Their Progress and Condition Under Missionary Labors* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1864); and Ruth Tabrah, *Hawaii: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980) 205-206.
- ³⁴ [Bigler], Extracts . . . of Henry W. Bigler 143.