

University of Nevada, Reno

THE SECRET MORMON MEETINGS OF 1922

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in History

By
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Abstract

B. H. Roberts presented information to the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in January of 1922 that fundamentally challenged the entire premise of their religious beliefs. New research shows that in addition to church leadership, this information was also presented during the next few months to a select group of highly educated Mormon men and women outside of church hierarchy. This group represented many aspects of Mormon belief, different areas of expertise, and varying approaches to dealing with challenging information. Their stories create a beautiful tapestry of Mormon life in the transition years from polygamy, frontier life, and resistance to statehood, assimilation, and respectability. A study of the people involved illuminates an important, overlooked, underappreciated, and exciting period of Mormon history.

The information Roberts presented to both leadership and this group of Mormon intelligentsia remained hidden, denied, and ignored (but not forgotten) for over sixty years. It was discovered and published as *Studies of the Book of Mormon* in 1985. While focus has been placed on the documents themselves and on Roberts as either a top leader who lost his faith or as a “devil’s advocate” who was unconcerned about the contents of his studies, the impact of this information on the people who knew about them at that time has never been explored. In fact, it is often portrayed that no one but Roberts knew about the contents of his studies. This research demonstrates that dozens of people knew about the information contained in Roberts’s studies and that even when hidden and unaddressed, they had a large impact on Mormon culture and belief.